APPROVED Minutes
Education Committee
VIRTUAL via Zoom

June 18, 2026
1:30 p.m.

Present: Dr. Denise L. Walters, Ram Venkatachalam, Dr. Robert Winn, Elsa Falls

Staff Present: Rich Conti, Ash Harris, Courtney Moyer, Timshel Purdum, Martha Quinn, Maggie Gercken, Ada Sue Siler.

Other Attendees: J.C. La Riviere, Office of the Attorney General

Mr. Ram Venkatachalam called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Venkatachalam called the Education Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Ms. Purdum shared her screen and reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Committee members were asked to review the minutes from the previous meeting. Mr. Venkatachalam called for questions, corrections, or revisions to the previously approved meeting minutes. No changes were proposed by committee members.

Mr. Venkatachalam called for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes as presented. Dr. Walters made the motion, and Dr. Winn seconded.

The motion was approved by a show of hands, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Inspiration Index

Ms. Purdum presented the Inspiration Index and highlighted educational programming, community engagement efforts, volunteer contributions, accessibility initiatives, and summer learning opportunities completed during the previous two months. She reported continued growth in youth engagement, volunteer participation, and community partnerships while emphasizing the Science Museum's commitment to increasing access to STEM learning experiences.

- The Spring 2026 Teen Leadership Program engaged 28 participants, who collectively contributed more than 1,150 hours of service and learning.
- An additional 10 teens are participating in the inaugural summer Teen Leadership session, which is funded by the LEGO Foundation.
- Volunteers contributed 2,799 hours of service in support of Science Museum programs, events, and operations.
- Mr. Tom Modena was recognized for ten years of volunteer service to the Science Museum.
- Through Science Within Reach programming, the Science Museum directly served 1,783 individuals.
- Audio descriptions were completed for three giant screen films, expanding the Museum's accessible film library to a total of 12 titles.
- The Science Museum received a Richmond Regional Tourism Community Connector Award in recognition of its community impact.
- The Science Museum welcomed 12 college and high school summer interns.
- Staff recognized Cristo Rey intern Jordan for contributing more than 70 hours of service during the school year.
- More than 30 community and environmental organizations participated in the Museum's Earth Day activities.
- The Forge expanded community partnerships through projects with Groundwork RVA Green Team, Compass Academy, Sacred Heart Center, and the Red Shield Boys & Girls Club.
- The recent Camp-In welcomed 96 participants for an evening of hands-on science activities and overnight programming.
- A recent Sunrise Science program explored the science of music and its effects on mood, culminating in a performance of traditional Indian raags accompanied by immersive Dome visuals.
- During the reporting period, 175 schools and 14,658 students visited the Museum.
- Financial assistance supported 18 percent of student visitors, representing approximately $130,371 in access funding.
- Eleven weeks of The Mix summer programming began on June 2 and continue to provide free educational opportunities for teens.
- Weekly themes for The MiX include movie week, game week, noise week, textile week, and cooking week.
- The MiX is supported through funding provided by organizations including the Massey Foundation and the Nunnally Trust.
- Curiosity Camp began on June 8 and provides nine weeks of summer camp programming.
- Approximately 60 campers participate each week, and enrollment is nearly sold out for the season.
- Through the Museums for All program, 10 campers each week are receiving scholarships with a total value of approximately $31,500.

Ms. Purdum discussed recent operational adjustments within The Forge, including changes to weekend programming intended to more closely align with the structure of weekday workshops and challenges. She explained that studio hours will continue to be available for members and guests while allowing staff to provide more consistent educational programming.

Dr. Winn asked about the motivation behind the programming changes at The Forge. Ms. Purdum explained that the adjustments were driven by a desire to increase accessibility, improve staffing efficiency, strengthen program management, and make more effective use of the space for visitors and participants.

Committee members discussed the continued growth of educational programming and community partnerships. Particular attention was given to the success of youth engagement initiatives, volunteer participation, scholarship-supported access programs, and efforts to expand accessibility through resources such as audio-described giant screen films.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Ms. Purdum reviewed the schedule of upcoming programs and events. She highlighted a diverse lineup of offerings designed to engage a wide range of audiences:

- July 9 Sunrise Science featuring Astronaut Donald Pettit
- July 14 Rescue opens
- July 15 Senior Science: Gyotaku
- July 16 Laser Show: Outcast
- July 18 Minds of All Kinds
- July 23 Science on Tap: Upside Down
- August 13 Laser Show
- August 15 Operation Rescue family festival
- September 7 Survival of the Slowest closes
- September 9 Sunrise Science Phil Martelli Jr VCU Basketball
- September 10 Laser Show
- September 12 Teacher Resource Fair
- September 15/16 Senior Science: Robotics
- September 25 Science After Dark

Ms. Purdum shared a video produced by the Science Museum's Communications team highlighting student field trip experiences at the Science Museum of Virginia. The video showcased the educational impact of Museum visits and illustrated how students engage with exhibits, programs, and hands-on learning opportunities.

New Business

Mr. Venkatachalam called for any new business to come before the committee. No new business was presented.

Adjournment

Mr. Venkatachalam then called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Falls made the motion, and Dr. Walters seconded.

The motion was approved by a show of hands, with all members voting in favor. The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

The Education Committee will meet again on October 22, 2026