11. Staff and Volunteer Interactions

We strive to have a strong relationship with the staff and volunteers of the museum. Each day you test, make sure you greet all staff and volunteers in the area. Keep them informed about your research, and if possible, make sure to demonstrate your study. This will not only give them insight into the science of cognitive development, but it will also empower them to answer visitor questions about our presence and it will create a more cohesive environment where our research is really a part of the exhibit space.

When possible, offer to demonstrate or explain your study to any staff/volunteers who might be interested. Offer as much knowledge and time as the staff person would like.

Suggested format for a sit-down discussion with demo:

1. Introduce yourself! Who you are, what you do at NYU, what you do in the lab, how long you've been with the lab.
2. Introduce your study:
   a. What is the background, what are the motivations?
   b. What questions are we asking? What are the hypotheses?
3. How are we approaching these questions:
   a. Study method. Explain your studies and the conditions. Run volunteers as “subjects”.
   b. Explain why each condition is important (to see whether children know/will do x, as a control for z...).
   c. What do we expect? What do we want the kid to do? What happens when they don’t do what we want them to do?
4. What are the results so far?
5. Are our hypotheses supported? Remind them what we want to show
6. Why is this interesting? Why should parents care?
7. Connections to parent/child world, or connections to interactions in the museum... what/where can parents find this behavior in every day life?
   a. Make it clear that we are doing basic science, and don’t claim any direct application or benefit in our research. We can hope to inspire future research and general interest in how kids learn.

The “Q&A” section of this document will also be useful. Remember that we’re talking about science to informal educators, some of whom are parents themselves. They will want to know how they can relate the science to their own lives and experiences. Think about how you can relate your study to different contexts:

1. Why is this study important?
   a. For science?
   b. For parents?
   c. For the museums?
2. How can parents at home use this research? How can educators use this research?
3. Important notes:

   a. This is a conversation. Keep it simple, in your own words. Provide clarification and answer questions, when needed.