

Beyond the Classroom: Discovery Gateway Children's Museum Builds Brighter Futures Through Hands-On Play

Salt Lake City, UT — Sept. 16, 2025 — Children spend much of their day in classrooms, but some of the most powerful learning happens outside of school walls. Discovery Gateway Children's Museum provides families with hands-on, play-based experiences that both supplement what children may miss in school and enhance the lessons they're already learning. For parents seeking meaningful ways to spend weekends, holidays, or after-school time, the museum is a one-of-a-kind resource that transforms free time into a foundation for lifelong learning.

Children today have 9 to 12 fewer hours of free play each week than a generation ago, and up to 40% of U.S. school districts have reduced or eliminated recess altogether. Research shows that this loss of unstructured play is linked to higher rates of anxiety, lower creativity, and missed opportunities for critical social-emotional growth—making hands-on learning spaces, such as children's museums, more important than ever.

"Schools do an incredible job teaching core academics, but children also need hands-on opportunities to thrive," said Kathleen Bodenlos, CEO of Discovery Gateway Children's Museum. "At the museum, kids experiment, imagine, and explore in ways that give depth to what they learn in class while sparking creativity, problem-solving, and confidence."

Research additionally shows that children learn best by doing. In fact, studies have found that students retain up to 75% of what they actively practice, compared to far less when only reading or listening. Hands-on learning engages multiple senses, builds stronger brain connections, and leads to higher achievement in core subjects like science and math. By giving kids opportunities to dig, build, experiment, and create, Discovery Gateway Children's Museum provides the kind of learning that is both memorable and transformative—something most classrooms can't offer every day.

Every exhibit at Discovery Gateway Children's Museum is designed to support essential early childhood development while reinforcing academic concepts:

- **Kids Eye View Exhibit** – Role-playing as mechanics, construction workers, or a store clerk strengthens communication, collaboration, and social-emotional learning, which are often underdeveloped in the classroom.
- **I Dig Dinos Exhibit** – Exploring fossils, digging for dinosaur bones, and investigating the prehistoric world strengthens curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, providing hands-on learning experiences often missing in the classroom
- **STEAM Lab** – Extends classroom lessons with real-world and hands-on experiments in science, technology, engineering, art, and math, building critical thinking and inquiry skills.
- **Art Studio** – Encourages self-expression and creativity, which research shows is essential for innovation and overall academic achievement.

Whether it's a weekend family visit or a school field trip, Discovery Gateway Children's Museum extends learning far beyond the classroom. Parents gain a trusted resource for engaging, screen-free experiences, while educators can find a partner in reinforcing lessons through immersive, hands-on exploration. By blending play with purposeful learning, the museum equips children with the curiosity, resilience, and critical skills they need to succeed today—and to build brighter futures for tomorrow.

About Discovery Gateway Children's Museum

Located in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City at 444 West 100 South, Discovery Gateway Children's Museum is a premier destination for hands-on learning and imaginative play. A staple in the community for almost 50 years, it features 60,000 square feet of interactive exhibits designed to spark curiosity and creativity in children of all ages. Additionally, it is Utah's only museum with a dedicated focus on STEM education, offering immersive experiences in science, technology, engineering, and math, alongside exhibits that highlight art, health, and community. Welcoming 177,000 visitors annually, Discovery Gateway Children's Museum is committed to educational experiences that inspire lifelong learning and foster the next generation of innovators and leaders.

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