



About The Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM)

The Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) is a vital destination and resource for New York City children and their families, cultivating life-long learners from different boroughs and backgrounds. A steward of early childhood development, CMOM develops immersive exhibitions and programs designed to spark children's imagination, curiosity, and intellect. Beyond the museum walls, CMOM conducts outreach programs in 60 sites across the city; forges long-term partnerships with community organizations, schools, and nonprofits; equips colleagues with professional development training programs; and shares its award-winning content through traveling exhibitions and online offerings. After decades in its current facility, CMOM is planning a forthcoming move to an expanded space that will enable the museum to better serve the diverse communities it welcomes.

HISTORY

Founded in 1973 by parents as a grassroots, neighborhood organization, CMOM has grown over the years into a beloved destination and resource for children, family, and educators throughout NYC and for visitors from around the world. In addition to welcoming visitors to its Upper West Side location, CMOM engages audiences through its outreach programs in partnership with schools, libraries, shelters, Head Start centers, and hospitals throughout New York City, and reaches audiences nationally and internationally through its touring exhibitions and its online tools and curricula.

In response to growing public demand for its programs and resources, CMOM purchased the landmark First Church of Christ, Scientist, on Central Park West and 96th Street and is in the process of restoring and transforming the historic structure into the children's museum of the future—a warm, welcoming space that inspires connectivity, exploration, and play. Designed by FXCollaborative with exhibition design by Local Projects, CMOM's future home will triple the museum's programmatic capacity, marking its first expansion in decades.

EXHIBITS

CMOM's exhibitions—including both long-term installations as well as rotating exhibits—provide engaging experiences for children and families with a diverse set of interests and abilities. Rooted in research and guided by the understanding that children learn best in nurturing, interactive environments, CMOM's exhibits focus on art and creativity, health and the environment, science, and world cultures. For each, CMOM collaborates closely with a team of advisors and early childhood experts to ensure that the latest research on child development is incorporated—from pedagogical methods for promoting literacy and math skills, to conceiving new ways to design physical spaces in order to create an environment that supports learning through play.

Long-term exhibits at CMOM include:

- ***PlayWorks™***, which provides an immersive, sensory-rich environment supporting pre-school readiness for children from birth to age 5. Launched in 2004, *PlayWorks™* is groundbreaking for its use of technology to create experiences across art, music, movement, and language.

- ***Adventures with Dora and Diego***, inspired by the popular Nickelodeon series characters, and including content in English and Spanish. This installation uses interactive elements to help visitors learn preschool science and animal facts.
- ***Dynamic H2O***, a seasonal outdoor exhibit that explores the role water plays in the local environment and teaches children about NYC’s water supply system through interactive activities.

Current special exhibitions include: ***Right to Vote***, launched in 2020 to commemorate the centennial of women’s suffrage; ***Inside Art***, CMOM’s first exhibit featuring artwork and art installations by contemporary artists; and ***Superpowered Metropolis***, designed to help children from birth through age 6 develop their executive function skills through play. Past special exhibits have explored a range of issues and concepts, from *America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far*, reflecting CMOM’s commitment to introducing children to world cultures; to *EatSleepPlay™: Building Health Every Day*, an interactive exhibit focused on building healthy life practices informed by the latest medical and behavioral research, developed as part of a larger partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

PUBLIC AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Drawing from its research-based curricula and exhibits, CMOM provides a range of programs and resources for students, parents, families, and educators on-site and online. These have included professional development programs for early childhood educators to enhance classroom learning through arts-based curricula; in-school residencies and community workshops for students and families that focus on art, theater, science, and culture to encourage inquiry and foster personal and academic success; as well as music, science, and art-making classes within the museum’s galleries.

More recently, in spring 2020, CMOM launched ***CMOM at Home***, a series of virtual programs offering educational resources and activities for families, children, and educators. Highlights include “Storytime Saturday” featuring prominent New Yorkers reading their favorite children’s stories; and “Parenting in Place,” a series offering advice, tips, and resources from experts in child development, psychology, health, and more.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

CMOM outreach and engagement programs are designed to meet children and families where their needs are—emotionally and physically—through initiatives that take place on- and off-site. Working in partnership with institutions and agencies throughout NYC, CMOM spearheads a range of comprehensive and targeted programs to serve distinct needs and populations.

At the core of these programs has been CMOM’s ongoing work with **families in NYC shelters**, beginning with a program launched more than 25 years ago welcoming teen mothers and their children to the museum for weekly writing, arts, and parenting workshops. Since 2013, CMOM has partnered with the Department of Homeless Services to create new resources for these families, including permanent Learning Hubs, which to date have brought elements of CMOM exhibitions to some 40 shelters, low-income housing, and Head Start centers across New York City.

In fall 2020, in response to isolating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for families living in shelters, CMOM launched an in-museum play and learning program, which welcomes families from shelters in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan to CMOM for specially curated visits. The program offers exhibit

exploration, artmaking and storytime activities, led by educators, and offers each family a free museum membership and a backpack of art and literacy activities that they can take with them.

In addition to this ongoing work, CMOM conducts targeted outreach programs, including:

- A first-of-its-kind in-museum program that brings incarcerated women from Rikers Correctional Facility and their children to CMOM for monthly arts-based programs, launched in partnership with the Department of Correction and NYC's First Lady Chirlane McCray.
- A partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center that includes weekly hospital visits by a CMOM educator to provide children living with cancer and their families opportunities to explore and heal together through art.
- A long-term partnership with NYC Department of Education's District 75 schools to provide museum access to children on the autism spectrum and with learning challenges at times when CMOM is otherwise closed to the public, allowing children to explore exhibits at their own pace and practice social and communication skills in a safe and stimulating environment.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

CMOM is a leader in the field of early childhood development, partnering with experts and institutions to spearhead new research in areas including literacy, health, and executive function. This work informs the museum's exhibits, programs, and curricula and is conducted through long-term partnerships with institutions including New York University, Barnard College, John Hopkins University, and the National Institutes of Health.

Current key initiatives include a three-year-long program launched in 2019 in partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation's Fund for Early Learning (FUEL) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to pioneer new strategies for early childhood literacy and executive functioning in under-resourced communities and shelters throughout New York City. Collaborating with early childhood development researchers at Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University, CMOM is installing permanent learning hubs for children and families in shelters across Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx as well as developing a suite of family resources.

CMOM has also spearheaded the development of early childhood curriculums, including:

- *EatPlayGrow™*, the first ever curriculum to be developed in partnership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) focusing on developing healthy lifestyles in early childhood. The initiative resulted in a groundbreaking, multifaceted exhibit *EatSleepPlay™*; family health programs at the museum and obesity prevention outreach programs in high-need communities throughout the city; and a three-year study implementing CMOM's curriculum in the South Bronx and New Orleans to advance health awareness.
- *All the Way to K and Beyond!*, a curriculum and training model to advance early childhood literacy developed with Johns Hopkins Science of Learning Institute, NYC's Department of Education, and the Administration for Children's Services. The program offers free literacy resources for parents and caregivers to help prepare children from birth to five years for learning and school readiness and remains accessible on CMOM's website.