The Best Possible Visitor Experience
Mansion Docent Training 2022-2023
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

"Learning is a journey, not a destination." Brooks and Brooks, *The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*

Training Goal Statement

The "best possible visitor experience" engages visitors in a dialogue that helps them develop an understanding of three important ideas embodied at Hillwood: interest in and study of the collections; the role of Marjorie Merriweather Post as a collector, philanthropist, business executive, and engaged citizen; the estate as an exemplar of a particular lifestyle within a residential setting. The training program will provide the knowledge, skills, and methods docents need to facilitate visitor experiences that are informative, participatory, and compelling.

Rationale

Educational research is clear about the importance of involving learners actively in their learning. Identifying a model of the "best possible experience" as a facilitated dialogue or conversation assures visitors' active participation and fosters development of skills that will be useful in other settings.

Objectives

After completing this training program, docents will be better able to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and methods required to facilitate an engaging museum visit;
2. Develop and facilitate meaningful experiences for Hillwood's adult visitors.

Agenda for September 19

Introduction to the Mansion Docent Training Program

I. Welcome and Introductions
   A. Your name; Why you are embarking upon this hard-work adventure; Something you would like us to know about you
II. The Mansion Docent Training Program
   A. The overall plan: schedule, lectures, readings, workshops, assignments
   B. The museum's mission statement and vision statement
   C. What kind of museum is this?
   D. The vision of the docent program at Hillwood
   E. The advance organizer—an introduction to what it is
III. The Guided or Facilitated Tour
   A. Review readings
   B. The changing approach to visitors' experience: the usual approach versus Hillwood's
   C. The Venn Diagram framework---what do you have to know and be able to do to facilitate an accurate and compelling experience for visitors?
      a. Knowledge
      b. Skills
      c. Methods
IV. Introduce concept of object-based learning
V. Demonstration of object-based learning with a can of Coca-Cola, then discussion
VI. Step back—what do you take away from this session?
VII. Assignment for next class on Wednesday, September 28: readings