

Engaging kids from 1 year in playful science learning - through co-creation with families and professionals

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In 2014 Experimentarium initiated a transformation from a middle sized science centre located in an old brewery to a large science centre located in a new building (build on the same site as the old centre). The masterplan embraced new ideas on how to maximise the impacts of science communication and build better futures for our communities.

We decided to allow ourselves to innovate in all possible ways throwing everything up into the air. We decided to rethink our ways of operating and maintaining the centre, the design of our exhibitions and activities, ways of communicating science and technology etc.

And we decided to take a close look at our target groups in order to reach both existing and new target groups and maximise the impact of our communication.

Experimentarium opened for the first time in 1991 and closed down for the new construction work in 2014. During that period our main target group had always been school classes and families with children between 6-12 years of age. At the same time we kept telling ourselves that influencing people and creating interest in science and technology started the day you took your first step – or even before that.

Influenced by the success that children's museums in the States had attracting crowds of adults with very young children a new idea started growing in our minds. Why not extend our main target group and provide visitors from 1 year and up with science communication. We succeeded in convincing our board about this new strategy, we teamed up with professionals within the field of children's psychological and physiological development, and we found a sponsor who believed that it was a new and innovative idea to integrate a societal trend for reaching out and involving children at a very early age.

It took us about two years and a lot of new experience co-creating with families and children's institutions and evaluating ideas with professionals before Her Royal Highness Princess Mary in April last year finally opened a large indoor area with science activities strongly dedicated to children between 1 and 5 years together with their adult(s). The title of this permanent state-of-the-art experience is "The Miniverse."

The Miniverse consists of seven unique areas that inspire kids to play and learn.

With this "Lightning talk" I will use "The Miniverse" as an example of how to integrate a societal trend – approaching young kids (from 1 year) with playful learning – in the communication of science at a science centre and develop a new and innovative experience through co-creation with families and professionals.

