

## **Thoughts and Suggestions related to the Interpretation/Educational Process at the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Monument**

### **1-Viewing the Screening sites as Part of the Interpretation/Educational Process**

Currently the screening sites at Liberty State Park and Battery Park are viewed as adjunct operations with little or no relationship to interpretive possibilities or educational opportunities. And the sites often are staffed by people who have had no experience as rangers or guides in the National Park Service and by people who have had little or no experience at either the Statue of Liberty and/or Ellis Island.

In contrast, the screening sites should be viewed as the beginning of the educational/interpretive process at our park. Specifically, the following should be happening at the screening sites:

1. The distribution of park brochures (in English and foreign languages) should start at the screening sites.....or at least, the brochures should be made available for visitors so they can better plan their visit.
2. The rangers and guides should be trained in the history of both the Statue of Liberty; during their training, they should spend at least a week at each site so as to familiarize themselves with how each site operates and with what each site offers; and perhaps the rangers and guides at the screening sites should be regular rangers and guides from the other sites---regularly rotated so that everyone knows what others are doing. Regularly rotating positions throughout the Statue of Liberty sites (Liberty Island, Ellis Island and the screening sites) in general would have many advantages.
3. The screening sites could be more helpful to visitors by adding pictures and maps and helpful information on the walls. With people spending time in the lines---sometimes hours---the sites could be developed with displays and exhibits pertaining to the sites, the ferry system (hours and how they operate), etc.
4. Every school group that comes to the screening sites is logged into a file complete with the lead teacher's name and phone number. This list could be used for regular surveys of what is working, what isn't, and what could be improved.

### **2-The initial contacts with teachers and schools could be significantly improved.**

Currently incoming phone calls and emails can be answered by a number of people, responses can vary from person to person, and the scheduling of school programs and events can be a little haphazard. Far better would be a very coordinated educational program managed or coordinated by one person or a small group of people. This would help in a number of ways:

1. The primary contact with teachers and schools would be by a dedicated educator who is committed to the educational mission of the park and to the educational needs of schools and students.
2. The educational coordinator (or committee) would be well versed in all the alternatives available to teachers and groups. And the coordinator could help manage the best programs available based on the size, grade, and interest of each group.

3. The educational coordinator hopefully would be focused and friendly---something not possible with those answering the incoming phone calls being people who have a number of different responsibilities and obligations.

### **3-Improving Group Visits and Class Trips to Ellis Island; and improving visitor satisfaction in general.**

Currently, only a few ranger led programs a day are offered; and few rangers are visible and available throughout the building. Simply stated, rangers usually are not greeting visitors as boats arrive, they are not roving high traffic areas like the Great Hall, and they generally are not available to help visitors or answer questions.

In contrast, far more could be done. More programs could be developed, rangers could be made more available to school groups and for special tours, and generally rangers could be made more visible throughout the park.

Proper management of staff could resolve most of these problems fairly quickly.

Specifically, the following staffing schedules would free up rangers and guides to be far more responsive to visitors and school groups:

- Two rangers or guides at the front desk at all times
- One ranger responsible for both theaters each hour---when only one theater is open, the ranger will fill in the rest of the hour roving. Otherwise, the ranger will open each theater and introduce the movie twice each hour.
- One ranger will conduct the regular hourly ranger led tour
- One ranger will be assigned to “special projects”
  
- One ranger will greet visitors in the dock area, on the ramp, or within the front doors
- One ranger will work in the Great Hall every hour

Essentially, this would involve only seven rangers or guides every hour and would increase the current visibility of staff throughout Ellis Island.

And any and all rangers above seven could be focused on school groups, special tours, educational programs, etc. And currently there are many days when there are at least seven rangers or guides on duty.

Bruce E. Schundler  
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