



Museum Tour + Activity Options

2026-2027 School Year

Shoe Design

Recommended Grades: All

Activity Duration: 30-35 min.

Following our tour which highlights information on the history of the shoe making industry in this region, students are divided into small groups. Using the design thinking process, collaboration, and limited construction materials, students are challenged to create a shoe of their own that can overcome a number of challenges. Creativity and perseverance are the key to success!

Fun and Games

Recommended Grades: All

Activity duration: 40

Following the museum tour which highlights information about the life of children working in mills during the Industrial Revolution, students will explore what children also did during their free time for fun. Many playground games like hopscotch and jump rope for instance, began during this time and remain popular today. Through hands-on experiential learning students will have an opportunity to play with many of the toys and try many of the games that were popular with children during the 19th century.

Binary Basics

Recommended Grades: All

Activity Duration: 30

Following the museum tour which highlights early innovation in the creation of power looms and early coding systems to control them, students are challenged to create a bracelet using string and beads showing their initials in binary code.

Mystery Fabric

Recommended Grades: 2 - 4

Activity duration: 30 min.

Following our tour which highlights information on the history of textile production in this region, we will talk about the difference between cotton/wool fabrics and woven/knit fabrics. Looking closely at the different materials under a microscope and with magnifying glasses, students will hone their observational skills and, working with a small group, "investigate" a number of mystery fabrics to see if they can identify them based on what they have learned.



Museum Tour + Activity Options Continued

Design a Fabric

Recommended Grades: 3 and up

Activity Duration: 30-35 min.

Following our tour, which highlights the art of the Bates textile design department and the history of textile production in this region, students will closely examine many of Bates' most popular textile patterns and the specialized materials designers used to create drawings for the jacquard loom. Using examples from our design and textile collection for inspiration, students will combine art and history to create their own detailed colored pencil textile design drawing.

Production Line

Recommended Grades: 4 and up

Activity Duration: 45 min.

Students explore how efficiency, specialization, and innovation transformed textile manufacturing by participating in a hands-on production line challenge. Working in teams, students simulate a 19th-century textile mill by dividing the process of making woven bracelets into specialized tasks, emphasizing teamwork, quality control, and productivity. Through the activity, students discover how factories organized labor to produce goods more efficiently while maintaining consistent quality, gaining a deeper understanding of the manufacturing methods that shaped Maine's textile industry.

Bridge Building

Recommended Grades: 6 and up

Activity Duration: 45 min.

Following the museum tour which highlights information on the Androscoggin River and the canal system that surrounds the Bates Mill complex, students are challenged to build a bridge using simple construction materials. Following the design thinking process, students must build a bridge that can span a model canal and hold as many game chips as it can in a plastic cup. Find out whose design can hold the most weight!



From Maps to Mills

2026-2027 School Year Field Trip

Recommended Grades: 4 and up

Give your students the opportunity to explore Maine's industrial heritage through a full day of hands-on learning at Maine Museum of Innovation, Learning and Labor (Maine MILL) and the University of Southern Maine's Lewiston-Auburn Campus.

Students will investigate how Maine's mill communities shaped the lives of generations of workers and families. At the Osher Map Library's Map Lab, they will examine historic maps of Androscoggin County to discover how mills transformed the landscape and fueled community growth. Through the Franco American Collection, students will explore personal stories, and primary sources that highlight the experiences of the people whose lives were intertwined with the mills.

The experience continues at Maine MILL, where students will tour the museum's permanent exhibits, learn how Maine's textile and shoe industries helped drive the state's economy, and discover the innovations that changed manufacturing. Students will then work together in an engaging production line simulation, taking on specialized roles to experience firsthand how teamwork, efficiency, and industrialization transformed factory production.

This interdisciplinary field trip combines history, geography, primary source analysis, and hands-on problem-solving to help students connect people, places, and industry in a meaningful and memorable way.

This collaborative program is offered in partnership with the Osher Map Library Map Lab and the Franco American Collection at the University of Southern Maine Lewiston-Auburn Campus. Please contact us for more information.