

Early Literacy Space Planning Guide

Children's library spaces are multifunctional places serving a wide range of ages, academic levels, social skills, personal interests and physical needs. One way to successfully serve this diverse group is to zone your children's library collection, activities and overall space by age and function.

This piece focuses on early literacy service and space for birth to age 4. This age group requires services that engage and inspire their young minds and corresponding interactive and flexible spaces that encourage literacy development on a variety of levels. Through engaging play, age-appropriate materials and access to dynamic programs, libraries can foster emergent literacy skills essential to school readiness.

The following checklist is a guide to help evaluate space for your youngest patrons and their families.

Choose Decor & Furnishings That Welcome the Young

Decor

- Use a warm color scheme for your overall space. Be aware that color brightness and intensity are useful for attracting attention, but they may not be conducive to learning. Consider brighter colors for accents.
- Strategically place carpets for the safety of children who are crawling, learning to walk and actively interacting with the space.
- Include engaging posters, artwork and other visually appealing items in your space.
- Use pictorial signage and images to help young, nonreading patrons find their way through your collections and your space.



[Joshua Hyde Public Library, MA](#)
 Play and browsing unite. The collection is accessible in face-out ColorScape® book browsers.



A cozy corner welcomes little ones and their caregivers.



[Kidovation®](#) furniture fits kids and includes literacy-building elements in its design.

Furnishings

- Include child-size furnishings for kids to sit on by themselves or to interact with one another.
- Incorporate floor cushions or other soft seating (10" H seats) for storytime and other programs.
- Display picture books and board books in floor-level, face-out, flip-through book browsers to actively engage your youngest users and increase your circulation.
- Use all available space to actively engage children. (For example, use end panels for interactive elements.)

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Interactive Spaces Encourage Imaginations and Development

Interactives

- Provide a variety of interactive elements that encourage individual exploration as well as group play.
- Make use of interactive end panels, learning walls and flannel boards.
- Give young kids natural gathering spots like play kitchens, train tables, general store sets and farm stands.
- Incorporate early literacy technology workstations for ages 2 and up that include educational software programs and book preview kiosks that encourage children to explore the library's collections.
- Provide a place for kids to be creative through singing, inventing stories and/or acting out stories they've read. This could simply be an open area that encourages general activity, a puppet theater or a small "stage" with puppets and/or dress-up accessories.

Organization & Storage

- Encourage kids to clean up when they are finished playing. Stickers and stamps are simple ways to reward young helpers.
- Provide storage bins and/or shelving labeled with both words and pictures for easy organizing.



Extend storytime literacy practices to the home reading environment.

Caregiver Spaces Create a Community Hub and Encourage Family Involvement

- Provide adult-size seating for caregivers to interact with their children (e.g., encouraging read-aloud) as well as other grown-ups.
- Arrange the space in a way that provides clear sight lines to play and collection spaces.
- Place relevant parenting resources and materials conveniently throughout the space. Add parenting books and magazines, storytime kits, etc.
- Make your space technology-friendly for adults watching and/or waiting for their children. For example, provide access to computers or outlets for laptop plug-in; create adult work areas and social spaces for caregivers to talk.



3branch Discovery Table offers creation stations encouraging children to build and invent.



Play encourages kids to use their imaginations and express themselves.



This early literacy area has space for exploration, play and loads of seating close to the collection.

[Northside Branch Library, Kenosha, WI](#)



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from Demco

Get INSPIRED! Find programming ideas, professional development resources, community engagement tips, space design concepts and more to help your library transform at ideas.demco.com.

MONTHLY PROGRAMMING

Early Literacy Calendar

Get storytime tips, kindergarten readiness ideas and more. Calendars are full of best practices for parents.

Daily Fun with Your Little One!						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5 Stories Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	6 Play On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, play a game with your child. Choose a game that is fun and interesting.	7 Reading Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	8 Science Do a simple science experiment with your child. Choose an experiment that is fun and interesting.	9 Reading Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	10 Songs Sing a song to your child. Choose a song that is fun and interesting.	11 Writing Write a simple sentence with your child. Choose a sentence that is fun and interesting.
12 Rhymes Recite a rhyme to your child. Choose a rhyme that is fun and interesting.	13 Stories Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	14 Math Do a simple math activity with your child. Choose an activity that is fun and interesting.	15 Writing Write a simple sentence with your child. Choose a sentence that is fun and interesting.	16 Reading Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	17 Science Do a simple science experiment with your child. Choose an experiment that is fun and interesting.	18 Songs Sing a song to your child. Choose a song that is fun and interesting.
19 Play On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, play a game with your child. Choose a game that is fun and interesting.	20 Reading Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	21 Rhymes Recite a rhyme to your child. Choose a rhyme that is fun and interesting.	22 Writing Write a simple sentence with your child. Choose a sentence that is fun and interesting.	23 Stories Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	24 Math Do a simple math activity with your child. Choose an activity that is fun and interesting.	25 Songs Sing a song to your child. Choose a song that is fun and interesting.
26 Reading Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	27 Rhymes Recite a rhyme to your child. Choose a rhyme that is fun and interesting.	28 Science Do a simple science experiment with your child. Choose an experiment that is fun and interesting.	29 Writing Write a simple sentence with your child. Choose a sentence that is fun and interesting.	30 Stories Read a story to your child. Choose a story that is fun and interesting. Use props to help tell the story.	31 Play On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, play a game with your child. Choose a game that is fun and interesting.	

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WEBINARS

Playful Learning in the Library

Play spaces encourage the development of literacy skills through active and experiential learning.



IDEA GALLERIES

Make Your Children's Library a Destination

Creative additions to pump up the fun, including a range of hands-on, sensory experiences and learning activities.

Kenosha Public Library

This renovated space provides a colorful background for young learners.



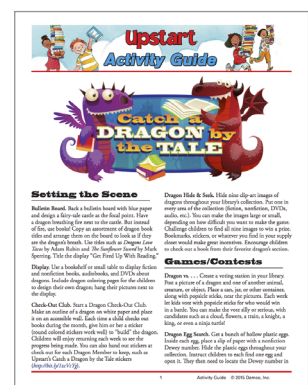
ACTIVITY GUIDES

Fun With Mo Willems!

Join Mo Willems characters for activities like a cookie toss with The Pigeon, a shape hunt with Knuffle Bunny and much more!

Catch a Dragon by the Tale

What has scales, breathes fire and gets kids excited about learning? No, not dragons. Dragon activities! Check out dragon-themed book lists, games and decor.



Create Inspiring Spaces

Demco offers a complete range of interior services and an extensive collection of furniture designed for learning environments. No matter what stage you're at or the size of your project, our interior services experts will collaborate with you and your partners to create spaces that are full of lifelong learning opportunities.

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