



HANDS-ON-LEARNING: Play Spaces @ the Library

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What is a Play-to-Learn Space

A space intentionally structured to encourage early learning through play.

The space encourages social interactions as well as interactions with the physical environment.









Why should we have Play Spaces?



- More kids will visit the library!
- Encourages meaningful interactions between adults and kids and kids and kids.
- Gives kids meaningful play opportunities while they are in the library.
- Provides important early learning support for kids and caregivers.

What We Did

- Redesigned and repurposed our space to create open areas dedicated to play.
- We weeded and made the decision to operate with a smaller collection.
- We added higher shelves.
- We removed desktop computers and the tables that housed them.

What REALLY Works

Comfy adult seating
keeps adults in the area
and encourages
reading together.



Have books in your play space!



Good Books for Grown-Ups

What Kids Use the Most

KitechNaple

Amazing Tracker



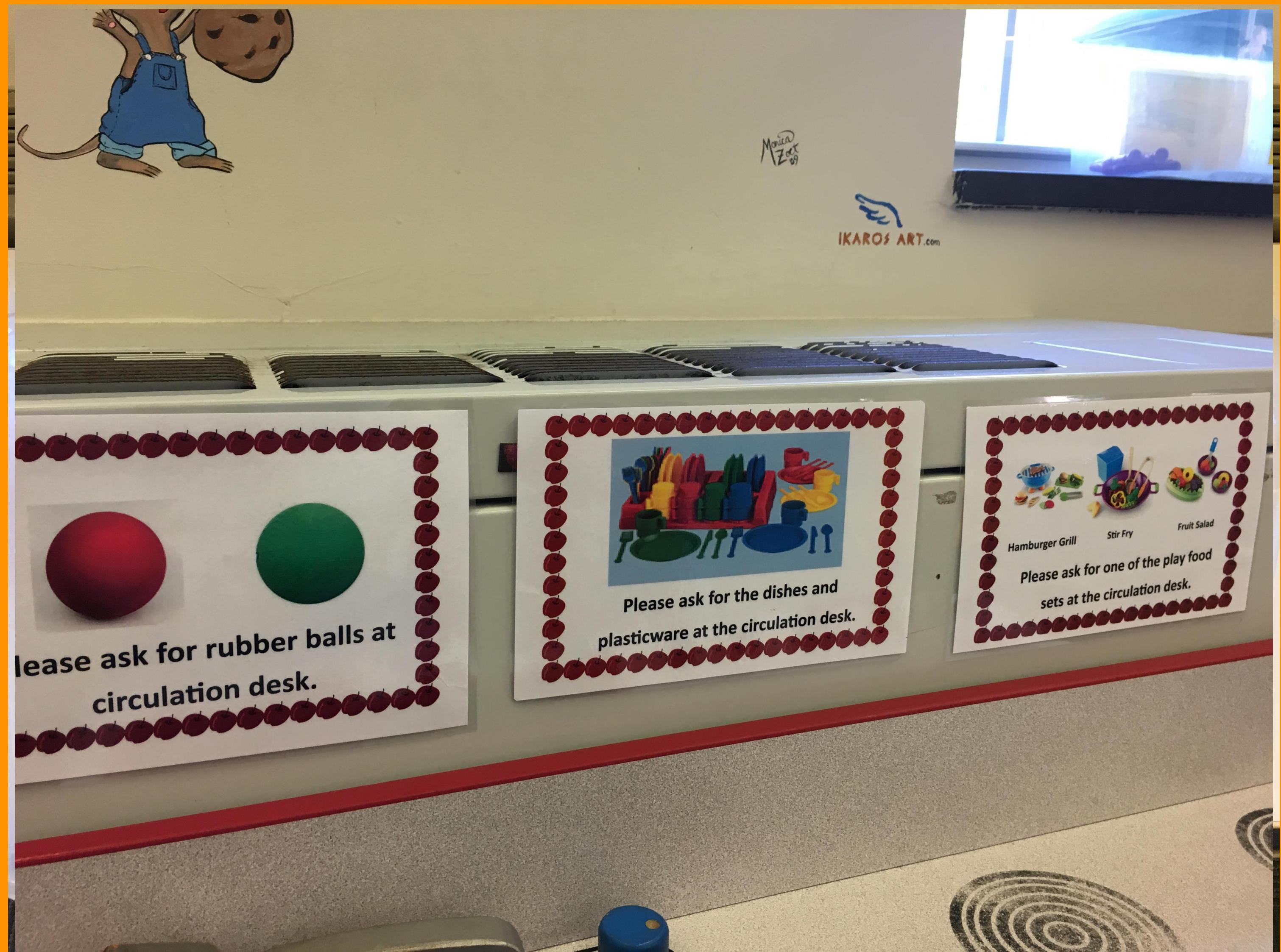
How We Shelve Kits



Color-coded for easy clean up!

Play Kit Storage

- Bins are labelled with name and/or photo of kit.
- Simple instructions on how to clean up!



Challenges

- Material loss and damage.
- Continuing evolution of play kits:
 - Some kits had too many pieces.
 - Total amount of kits available was reduced.
- Things need to be cleaned: toys, kits, tables, chairs.
- BODILY FLUIDS!

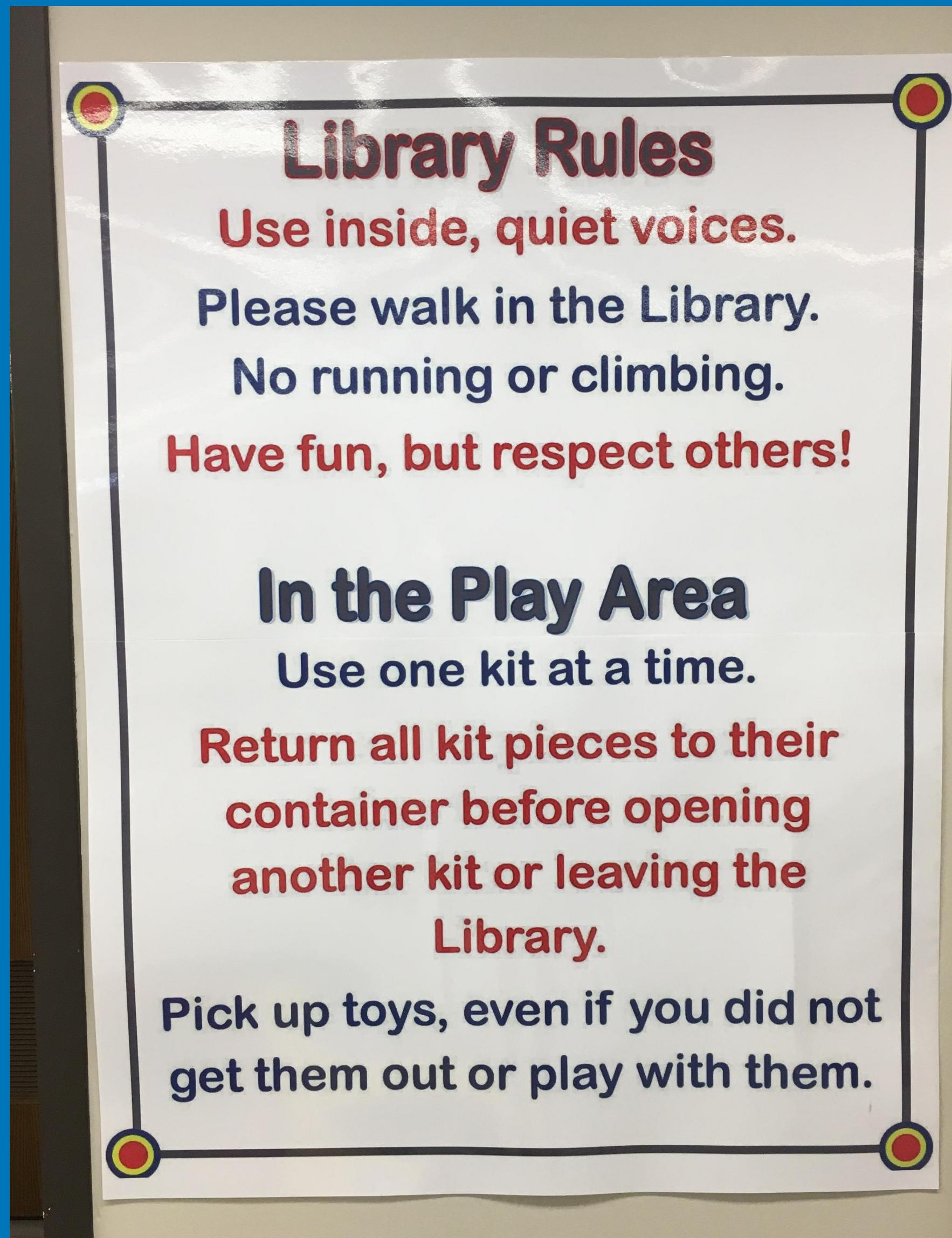


Challenges

- NOISE LEVEL!
- Kits and toys must be replaced and refreshed regularly.
- Kits are used without adult assistance.
- Behavioral issues.
- Staff



Play Area Etiquette





Explore-to-Learn

A space created with the goal to offer STEM exploration for kids 7 to 12 years of age and their parents or caregivers.









What Kids Use the Most



Materials

Board Games



Challenges

- Material loss and damage.
- Replaced a broken Programmable Robot with a Fisher Price Code-A-Pillar.



Challenges

- Continuing evolution of STEM Kits.
- Area became an attraction for younger children. Kits had to be simple to use.
- Items like LittleBits and Microscope were not as popular as anticipated.



Challenges

- Director and staff.
- Money and space.
- Overall maintenance.



What We Learned

- Items that are used the most are easily accessible and easy to understand.
 - Building “materials” such as City Blocks, MagnaTiles, and Panda Blocks.
- Informational signage was unnecessary—just put up pictures of kids!
- All items work best with adult supervision!



Maker & More Time



In the summer teen volunteers help us showcase a variety of Explore-to-Learn Activities that are not available throughout the school year.



BUILDING WITH STRAWS & CONNECTS!



SAND TABLE!



ARTS & CRAFTS!



Vendors We Use

Amazon

www.amazon.com

Childcraft/School Specialty

www.childcraft.com

www.store.schoolspecialty.com

Constructive Playthings

www.constructiveplaythings.com

Hatch

www.hatchearlylearning.com

Jonti-Craft

www.jonti-craft.com

Kaplan Early Learning Company

www.kaplanco.com

Lakeshore Learning

www.lakeshorelearning.com

People Friendly Places

www.peoplefriendlyplaces.com

TAG—Think and Grow

www.tagtoys.com

DIY Cleaning Solutions



Simple Cleanup Solution

1 gallon water
1 tablespoon bleach

Use to clean toys and play tables.

Non-Bleach Cleanup Solution

Empty 1-gallon jug
1 bottle of rubbing alcohol
5-6 drops of liquid dish soap
1 cup vinegar

Mix all ingredients in the empty jug. Fill jug with water.
Use to clean toys and play tables. Will not leave a residue.