

Lego Literacy

Submitted by: Erin Moehring
emoehring@greenwoodlibrary.us

Greenwood Public Library
310 South Meridian Street
Greenwood, IN 46143

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Play has been shown to impact creativity, problem solving skills, and can even increase attention span among children. Lego Literacy builds upon these skills by using playtime as an opportunity to connect kids with literature.

Each session is designed around a theme, such as *Space Travel*, *Architecture* or *the Titanic*, and is introduced by short book talks. In January, GPL will host a LEGO Star Wars program in collaboration with IndyLUG, a group of Lego builders based in Indianapolis. Participants will help build a display that will be featured at the 2012 BrickWorld Convention.

Lego Literacy is good for any time of year, can accommodate both large and small-sized groups, and is flexible enough to incorporate many themes and popular genres. A great all-ages program that children and their parents can enjoy!

Supplies List

- Tables & Chairs
- Several large bins to keep the LEGOS contained as they are being used (one for each participant)
- A ton of LEGOS (try asking for donations from staff or community)
- Some good books that play into your chosen theme

Optional Supplies

- Volunteers for the day of event
- LEGO displays to inspire your participants (try contacting a local LEGO user group)
- Some additional crafting supplies to complement theme

Preparation

- Choose a Theme and some materials from your collection to feature on your program Book List
- Give participants about a week to read materials from the Book List
- Leave at least 30 min to prep the day of event

Preparation Steps

- 1) First, begin your program by choosing a theme. LEGO sets have some good themes, but it's best to start with some good books in your library. Find some interesting books, for instance fantasy and sci-fi, which work well with LEGO building, and structure the program and activities around them.
- 2) Make a large list of books and other materials (both picture books, fiction and non-fiction selections) to complement your theme. Pick just a few to read prior to the event, but keep the list to inspire participants to continue reading after the program is over.
- 3) On the day of the event, set up enough tables and chairs to accommodate however many participants registered for the program. Set up each section in a U shape, with a large bin of LEGOs set in the middle and empty bins distributed among all the tables. Display program books along the walls or around the outside of the space. (approx. 30-40 min)
- 4) If you are also doing a craft with the event, set up one table with crafting supplies. Once participants are finished building, they can return to their seats to craft while others finish working.

Activities

- 1) Begin the program with a few short book talks or read-aloud stories. If you have invited your local LEGO user group, this is generally a good time to let them discuss their displays, talk about their organization, etc. (approx. 15 min)
- 2) Next, participants take turns getting blocks from the bins, using their small bins to bring LEGOs back to their seats and spend the rest of the time building creations inspired by the program's theme. (approx. 60-90 min)
- 3) If your program includes crafts, participants can get up and get materials for crafting at any time during the program. Generally, however, participants choose to craft after they are finished building.
- 4) Transfer creations to display case if you want to keep them on display. Otherwise, have participants break down their creations and dump the blocks back into the nearest bin. Clean-up & put away tables and chairs, etc. (approx. 60 min)

Extra Hints & Tips

Volunteers can be very helpful, but if you make the event open the whole family, you'll have no trouble finding parents to help control the chaos.

Consider holding LEGO building contests and finding creative ways to display participant creations. For instance, during the holidays Greenwood Public Library challenged program attendees to create LEGO ornaments to display on the Christmas tree.

LEGO programs can draw large and diverse audiences, so Erin from Greenwood Public Library suggests combining LEGOs with all kinds of topics:

"You really have endless angles. You can pair the program with crafts, books, science projects, and story times. We have recently discussed conducting a program geared towards physics that would involve LEGO launching!"