

Block Party

Allie Schwartz, Library Reference Assistant
Central Library Children's Room

Audience

Pre-school children, School age children, Families

Description

See what you can build! We will provide the blocks, and you will bring the creativity.

Budget

Free

Mix

- Build Mix - Box 1: Magna-Tiles
- Build Mix - Box 2: LEGO sets

Learning outcomes

- Mostly have fun and build things together.
- Explore STEM concepts for all ages.

Advance Planning

I requested the Build Mix - Box 1: Magna-Tiles about 3 weeks before the program, and a week in advance of the actual program so I had time to explore the box ahead of time. I reached out to a few different departments and collected all the blocks I could. I used:

- Cardboard boxes covered in paper
- [Soft foam blocks](#)
- [Stuffed blocks](#)
- Animal stacking blocks
- [Snap dino blocks](#)
- [Photo people wooden blocks](#)
- [Sensory blocks](#)
- LEGOs & Duplos (my library owns these, but you could easily request Build Mix - Box 2: LEGO sets)

We have a roll of brick paper and I used that to wrap cardboard boxes to make giant blocks, but you could just as easily cover them in plain paper, wrapping paper, or use them uncovered.

I also created a DIY light table using a clear storage container, parchment paper, and white Christmas lights -- all things I found around the library. Tutorial here:

[tinkerlab.com/homemade-easy-low-cost-light-table](#)

Marketing

The program appeared in the MPL print and online calendar, plus a bulletin board in the children's room.

Budget Details

I used only stuff we had on hand. If you were buying blocks it might get spendy, but I think you can successfully do this program for free.

Day-of-Event Activity

Set up was extremely easy. I set up different block stations and divided them up developmentally.

- Babies & toddlers: easiest + softest blocks (stuffed blocks, foam blocks, Sensory blocks) in the middle of the room.

 **MKE MIXERS** BUILD MIX

- Pre-school kids: Medium blocks (Snap-Dinos, Creanimaux, Duplos) on the mid-range table.
- Older kids: Legos on a higher (standard height) table. Wrapped cardboard boxes stacked up behind where I read the story.
- All ages: Magna-Tiles + the light table on the floor but near a wall outlet.

Before everyone was cut loose, I introduced all the different types of blocks and where they would be in the room. I also brought out two small town rugs and put them out to encourage some dramatic play building.

While set up was very easy (set everything out); and clean up took longer. All the kids helped me pick everything up, but I had to make sure all the blocks were sorted properly at the end.

Program Execution

I read one story ([Not a Box by Antoinette Portis](#)) and introduced some simple rules (be kind, you can work together or build solo but you must respect what everyone is building).

Advice

Pretty minimal! The program pretty much ran itself. I had a lot of fun playing with blocks too!

Program Outcomes and Evaluation

I am definitely going to do this program again, and incorporate a craft. It was on a week we anticipated being slow, but I had over 50 people pretty equally split between kids and adults. Everyone played together better than I expected, and I didn't have to break up any block conflicts or talk to anyone about knocking over someone else's structure. Everyone had a really fun time and there were enough exciting block options that no one was bored or fought over them.

Photos

