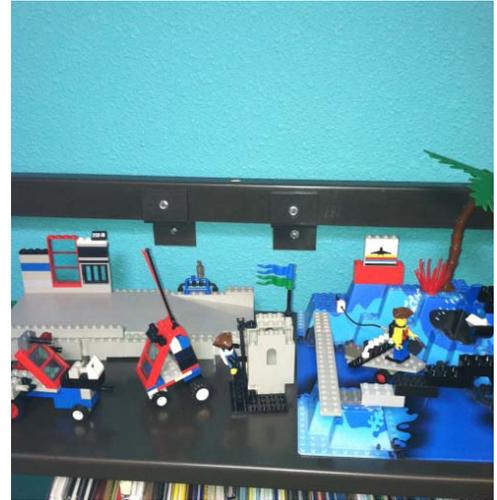


## Lego Club at Boise Public Library's Hillcrest Branch

By Jennifer Redford, Youth Services Librarian

Like many Librarians around the state, I've been looking for a way to incorporate STEM concepts into regular Library programming. My colleague Phyllis VanBuskirk and I added a "Math Moment" to our preschool storytime each week, but I really wanted to do something with Block Play. I'd heard about other libraries across the country that were doing Lego programs, and I thought it would be interesting to try doing a Lego program at Hillcrest. Since last summer, my library has held a regular monthly program we call Lego Club that has not only been well-attended each month, but that has also been easy to implement at our location.



Here's how we do Lego Club at Hillcrest: each month I write a one-page (or less) lesson plan to help the kids who come to Lego Club focus their building efforts. The lessons usually revolve around a topical subjects (i.e. "Monuments" around President's Day), or an architectural concept (pyramids, arches, etc.). I find a picture book, or sometimes a chapter from a longer book, that relates to the focus of the month to include in the lesson plan, along with open-ended questions about the topic to help get the kids' imaginations going. The lesson plan always includes a reminder to kids and parents that "Playing with blocks is a great way to encourage brain development! Blocks help your children: Develop Fine Motor Skills, Learn about problem-solving, Work in Teams, Learn about physics, Develop Math & Science skills, and Have fun!"



A Hillcrest staff member is assigned to moderate Lego Club on the third Sunday of each month. That person gathers the kids and parents together at 2:00 p.m. to read the book from the lesson plan and begin a discussion with the kids about how they would use Legos to build something related to the month's topic. At this point, the kids' imaginations take over—it's always fun to hear about the elaborate structures they have created in their heads. We try to give the kids a few new vocabulary words to work with during each lesson, and during the discussion time they have the chance to use their new words. Then we bring out our huge tub of Legos (donated by one of our staff members) and Duplos (our newest addition to the program) and get ready to build.

After a reminder of the Lego Club Rules (Keep blocks in the conference rooms, no mixing Legos and Duplos, share blocks when you can, work together, help others if they need it, be respectful), we give each child a cup of Legos. After everyone has received some Legos and have started building, children can come back for additional blocks. The staff member stays in the room and assists kids when asked, but most end up working with their parents. We let the kids build until 4:00 p.m., and then put their creations on display on the top shelf of our picture book collection. We keep the display up until the next Lego Club, so kids can come back and "visit" their creations.

This program is really successful for us because it doesn't take up a lot of staff time (around 20 minutes a month to create a lesson plan, and then any staff member can moderate for two hours), it's well-attended (between 40-60 people each time), and while we have a lot of regular Lego Clubbers, we also see new families each month—many of which are new to the library and take time to get Library Cards while the kids are building. In general, the ages of the kids range from 3-11, and most are boys, but we always get some girls too. Sunday is a good day for us because we can offer something for families to do together on the weekend and we typically don't have to schedule around other programs or meetings.



At Hillcrest, Lego Club is a successful, low-stress program that kids and parents love. It's a fun way for our staff to offer STEM programming at low cost (thanks to donations) and with little staff effort. Please email me ([jredford@cityofboise.org](mailto:jredford@cityofboise.org)) if you would like copies of the lessons plans that I've created or if you have any suggestions!