



Designing **LIBRARY** reading time to build **STEM BRAINS**

Imagine a library reading time that goes beyond books to include lessons on shadows, constellations, dinosaurs or mud. Salt Lake County Library Services is providing STEM-enhanced experiences for young learners.

“It’s our first time transporting dirt through the library system,” said Susan Spicer with a laugh as she described a reading time activity where kids learned about mold-making with water and dirt.

Spicer is the new early learning program manager for Salt Lake County Library Services. When she started her position in January she sat down with each youth librarian to discuss their projects. It was in these meetings she learned several librarians had been incorporating elements of STEM into their reading time sessions.

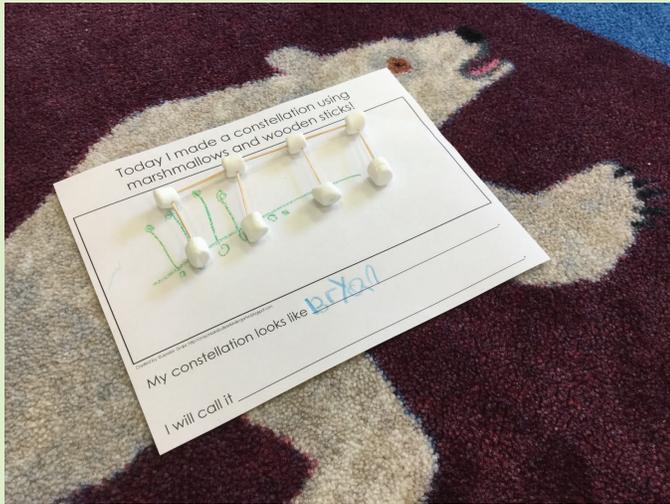


“A number of our librarians are doing awesome STEM programming in their preschool story times and toddler story times,” Spicer said. “After I finished my listening sessions with the librarians, I realized we need to support these folks and help have the materials they need. Then they can expand the programming because parents are loving the STEM story times.”

Spicer emphasized that one of the greatest impacts of the STEM reading times is that parents are now engaging more with their young children.

“The thing I find most endearing with these story times is that the grownups say ‘I’m really afraid of science or math’ and then we have a fun hands-on

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activity and introduce the kids to the scientific theory, experimentation and models for experimentation and suddenly the parents are more empowered. These fun, simple things empower the parents, and they take the activities home and continue to engage and learn with their kids.”

Spicer is planning an event in August to train youth librarians on how to incorporate STEM in the reading times.

“We’re planning a sort of science fair for our librarians to show and tell what they’ve been doing with their reading times,” Spicer said. “We have a group of eight librarians that are very intentional about incorporating STEM. But many librarians have been doing it anyway—from reading times about trucks and showing kids how the pieces of a truck fit together to making batteries to how movement helps with brain development. Our motto is ‘we build brains,’ so if we can build science brains and technology brains that’s even better.”



Learn more about STEM Action Center programs at stem.utah.gov

