

# Build a Better World with Magna Tiles

[Norman Public Library West](#)

Children

## **Build a Better World with Magna Tiles**

Jun 28, 2017

**\$251-500**

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Byline

Stephen Lai, Library Assistant, Norman (Okla.) Public Library West

Build a Better World with [Magna-Tiles](#) was one session of our STEAM and community engagement-focused summer reading program. This session used Magna-Tiles (clear plastic 2-D geometric shapes that are lined with magnets and can be combined to create 2- and 3-D designs) in a hands-on, student-led program.

### **Advanced Planning**

This program was designed as part of our Build a Better World summer reading program, which focused on both community engagement and STEAM skills. The main goal of the program was to provide an opportunity for our young customers to take the lead in creating structures of their own, using and building early math and engineering skills. A secondary goal was to provide a less challenging first program for one of our hourly library assistants to lead.

At the system level, planning for the program (by purchasing a Magna-Tiles Maker Kit for use in all branches) began in fall of 2016. At the branch level, planning for this specific program began in early spring as we set the schedule of our summer programs. The branch manager worked with the hourly staff member (who was lead on this program) to schedule the event and reserve the Maker Kit for the necessary dates.

About one month out, the program lead developed scripting and instructions for the program, and two weeks out the program lead began working with the kit and creating models of what can be created using the tiles.

## **Marketing**

This program was included in our print summer reading calendar, which went out to all students in the Norman Public School system. It was also given to every child who signed up for our summer reading program and was available in the branch.

In-branch publicity included posters and small handouts with information on all our summer STEAM programming, and the program was included in our online calendar of events.

## **Budgeting**

The only cost of this program, beyond staff time and the printing of some templates, was the cost of the Magna-Tiles themselves. These are part of a circulating maker kit provided by Pioneer Library System as a programming aid for the use of all branches. The total cost of the kit was \$390, though less expensive kits are available as well.

## **Day-of-event Activity**

Two staff members set up the programming space very simply. We had one long row of tables and moved chairs out to the perimeter for parent seating.

The program lead printed out design templates (available at [Totschooling](#)) and scattered them over the table. The two staff members distributed the tiles along the tables.

## **Program Execution**

We had around 30 adults and children attend this program. Since our goal was to encourage child-led creativity and creation, staff mostly functioned as encouragers, clean-up crew and (in a couple occasions) mediators as children negotiated who could use which piece.

Children took the lead in thinking of their own designs and finding pieces to fit. Since pieces were limited and attendance was high, children had many chances to build their sharing and negotiation skills, with some elaborate trading of pieces happening.

## **Advice**

Depending on how much of a focus on sharing you want the program to include, capping attendance may be a good idea. Especially for older children, each child may want to use up to 15 or 20 pieces each, which means quite a bit of interaction and negotiation as each child looks for just the right piece to complete a masterpiece.

This is a good first program for a new library staff member under supervision, as it builds skills in planning, customer interaction and adaptability.

## **Supporting Materials**

Document

[steamprogramsposter.pdf](#)

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

## Slideshow Images



## More Programs

Jun 22, 2015

Children (9 and under)+ | \$

[Image](#)



**[School's Out! Pick Up Some STEAM!](#)**

**Audiences:**

Audience

Children (9 and under)

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Feb 10, 2012

+ |

[Image](#)

Welcome to the National Girls  
Collaborative Project Webinar:  
Bringing STEM Learning to Public  
Libraries: Collaboration and Resources  
for Librarians

Thank you for joining us! We will begin  
at 1:00 AM Pacific/ 2:00 PM Eastern.



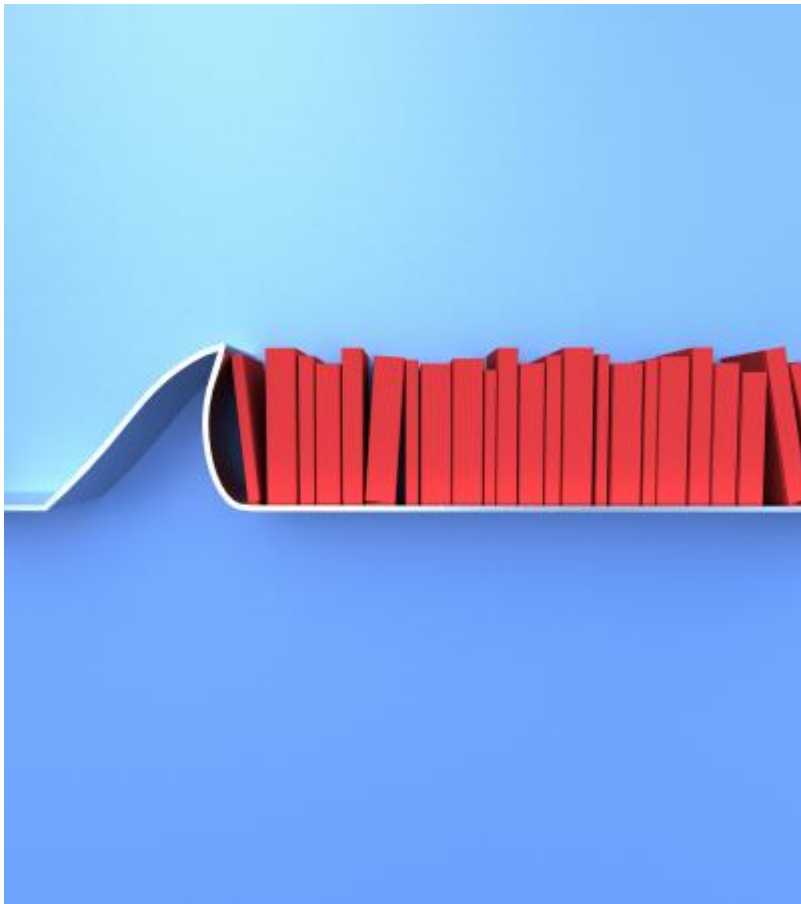
**[Bringing STEM Learning to Public Libraries](#)**

**Audiences:**

Dec 10, 2016

Children (9 and under)+ | \$

[Image](#)



## 'I Survived': STEAM Learning for Teens

### **Audiences:**

Children (9 and under)

Tweens (10-12)