



# Create the Ultimate Child-Friendly Library

Libraries provide a myriad of learning opportunities for young readers. This month, we are excited to share a list of suggestions to support the creation of child-friendly libraries and learning spaces that sustain the interest of children as they grow and continue learning.

## Listen & learn

-Libraries act as safe havens for young learners to share their thoughts, questions, concerns, findings and more. A child-friendly library setting strives to create an attentive, accepting space where students can share with one another openly and feel heard by others. This intentional attentive space paves the way for enriching discussions among students and their teachers, librarians, caregivers and mentors.

-Libraries can offer select times for guided or open book discussion sessions among students either one-on-one or in group settings. As students and teachers or caregivers listen to one another, they foster a community that continues to grow and support an open-minded approach to learning by reading and listening to diverse perspectives.

## Inspire genuine interest

-A child-friendly library inspires interest and excitement among young readers. Teachers, librarians, parents and other caregivers have the world at their fingertips when trying new library or learning space activities. From group read alouds led by teachers or community volunteers to story show-and-tell among students, the list of library activity possibilities is endless. Don't be afraid to get creative!

-By ensuring consistent time is spent reading and exploring in libraries, educators and caregivers can help to inspire students' interest in reading and encourage them to think critically about what they read. Library leaders should do their best to organize book collections in a way that is easy to follow for children, such as by literary genre or reading level. Within an organized reading space, young learners are more motivated to explore and find topics that interest them most.

## Books, books, books!

-Books in a library? Why of course! But let's talk about what kind of books are offered for students. A child-friendly library should offer books for young learners of all reading abilities in order to support their unique educational needs and journeys. It is crucial for libraries to attend to every student's reading level by offering a diverse selection of books.

-Librarians, teachers, parents and caregivers can expand the diversity of library book collections in many ways — by choosing authors from different countries, featuring creative and unpredictable storylines, selecting books with protagonists that shed light on different experiences and perspectives and showcasing books that challenge young learners to put themselves in others' shoes.

## Responsibilities are clear

-In order to create a well-managed library or learning space for children, clear responsibilities must be established, implemented and upheld by both young learners and leaders alike. While these responsibilities may vary across different school libraries, it is important that these responsibilities all contribute to supporting a community of young learners and library leaders and fostering an inclusive, fair and safe environment.

-For example, student responsibilities can include cleaning up books after library time by placing them back on their appropriate shelves, or requiring students to be respectful of each student's quiet reading time within a library session. Adult responsibilities can include preparing the library space before students arrive or keeping track of the library checkout and return system.

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## Approachable & accessible

-An important aspect of all child-friendly libraries is the layout of the library space. While adult libraries often showcase the spines of books along tighter and higher bookshelves, child-friendly libraries should display books in an open-faced manner along shorter and more spaced-out bookshelves. With an approachable and accessible layout, a library appeals to the child's gaze, allowing a young learner to see and read the book covers more easily.

-Child-friendly libraries and learning spaces should also strive to offer dedicated spaces for children to sit and read, either among peers or by themselves. These reading spaces contribute to building an open and welcoming learning environment that places young learners' needs first.

## Relax & reflect

-Library time can be exciting and interesting for students, and also relaxing and comforting. A library space may act as a refuge for children as they spend time reading and reflecting in a safe learning area. As students feel more comfortable in library spaces, they in turn can feel more comfortable reading on their own or talking to other students and library leaders.

-A library that encourages time for young learners to relax with a book in hand can further support young readers in developing a healthy habit of reading in which they read because they want to, they read often and they read for enjoyment both at school and at home.

## Yearn to learn

-A child-friendly library provides infinite opportunities to learn. A library for young readers should establish an allocated space where students yearn to learn more as they discover new books, learn more about the world and themselves through the written word and develop a deeper and more habitual relationship with reading. Books are windows to the world, and libraries should act as physical gateways that support children on their literacy journeys.

-As children continue to learn, libraries should too. Keeping libraries dynamic and open to change as students bring new findings to the table allows libraries to be sustainable, not static.