

Goals For Library Maker Spaces

Pop-up or dedicated, small or large,
here are the elements of a successful maker experience!

The Environment

Invites curiosity and wonder. Display unusual objects and offer unexpected components and parts. Post interesting questions. (Example: What else can glue be used for besides bonding things together?) Post or share interesting scientific information or unsolved mysteries to inspire makers.

Encourages playfulness. Playing is about enjoyment, and about the journey. Offer plenty of choices, including goal-oriented and non-goal-oriented making.

Celebrates unique solutions. Have show-and-tell sessions, refer one teen to another's creation or idea, and display unique solutions and one-of-a-kind creations in the library and on social media. Look for opportunities to call parents' attention to tween/teen's achievements.

The Principles

It's about the experience; it's not about the equipment. Whether you have a 3D printer or glue, paper, and markers – the value is in the experience the tweens and teens have.

It's not about the quality of what's made; it's about tweens and teens trying things. It's about teens and tweens learning through experience, making connections, and building community.

It's okay to fail. When they do, encourage tweens and teens to "fail forward" by getting curious when things aren't working according to plan. Remind them that "failure" is really the first, or second, or twenty-fourth step to success. Thomas Edison reportedly said, "'I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.'" Share that quote! Big ideas are built on the lessons learned from smaller failures.

Breaking things is not an atrocity to be avoided at all costs. Unintended damage happens. Require and provide training for expensive machinery, but cultivate mistake tolerance. Approach the damage as another maker opportunity: "Oops! Not what we thought would happen, I guess! How can we get this working again?" Communicate that mistakes happen, and we fix them, or work around them, and move forward.

Collaboration is always encouraged. Sharing knowledge and helping each other is how problems are solved in real life.

The Guide (Also Known As You)

Characteristics: Resourceful, failure tolerant, collaborative, and always learning.

Role: Recognizing talent, liberating potential, challenging others to grow, encouraging productive debates, and investing resources into the space and the makers.

Process: Alternately cheer and challenge the makers. Answer questions with questions (the Socratic method) whenever possible. If you provide the answer, then you become The Expert when your job is to remain The Guide. An excellent byproduct of not becoming The Expert is that, as tweens and teens become more adept, they become mentors and guides – which empowers them!

Reference:

<http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/2014/06/18/educational-makerspaces/>