



**Whitewater**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

# Early Learning Center

## Standard:

The standard used in developing early learning centers in public libraries is based on Every Child Ready to Read's five early literacy practices: Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing, and Playing.

### **Talking**

Children learn language by listening to people speaking and by participating in the conversation. Toys provide lots of opportunities for talking. For example, a child and parent might discuss what a child is making for dinner at the play kitchen. The child has the opportunity to narrate what they are doing. They might learn new vocabulary words, like *colander* or *eggplant*. Both narrative skills and vocabulary are precursors to reading.

### **Singing**

Singing slows language down so that children may hear the different sounds that make up words, what experts call *phonological awareness*. Toys that provide access to singing include baby dolls to sing lullabies to and puppets to act out nursery rhymes.

### **Reading**

Exposure to books and reading is an obvious precursor to early literacy. Learning toys can provide access to reading in a variety of ways. A dramatic play center designed as a market might have items written on the front telling customers how much each item at the market costs. A doctor's office can provide an opportunity to read a patient's chart. And of course, if the child plays with something that sparks an interest, like trains, the library has many books that can be checked out and read at home with a caregiver.

**Writing**

Writing aids in letter recognition, decoding text, hand-eye coordination, and symbolic thinking (understanding that words represent something else). The same toys that provide access to reading can also provide access to writing. Take the dramatic play center referenced above. For the time period that it's a veterinary office, children can write the hours on the front, list the kinds of animals they treat, and write prescriptions for sick pets.

**Playing**

One of the most important ways that play encourages language development and early literacy is through symbolic thinking. Is that box just a box, or does it represent something else? This helps children understand that words on a page also have meaning. Play also provides opportunities for self-expression and understanding the world. Playing Post Office connects children to the real world experience of sending and receiving mail, for example.

## Recommendations for Purchase:

### Dress-Up Tree

Lakeshore Learning \$499



Every Child Ready to Read Standards: Playing and Talking

Of the four libraries visited, only Matheson Memorial had a small space for dress-up. They placed hooks on a pillar in the imaginative play area where the costumes hang.

**Additional purchases to support this piece:**

**Career Costume Set \$399**



## Make Believe Stand

The Library Store \$697



Every Child Ready to Read Standards: Play, Talk, Read, and Write

Both the Milton Public Library and the Matheson Memorial Library have make-believe stands. Picture below is the stand at Milton, which is currently serving as a puppet stage.



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Additional purchases to support this piece:

**Pet Vet Center**  
**Lakeshore Learning \$40**



**Pretend & Play Mail Center**  
**Lakeshore Learning \$40**





# Let's Go Shopping Food Baskets Lakeshore Learning \$159



## Touch and Explore Sensory Butterfly

Lakeshore Learning \$359



Early Child Ready to Read: Play and Talk

Of the four libraries visited, only Milton Public Library had wall manipulatives designed for babies and toddlers. Two of these are pictured below.



## Sensory Hideaway

Lakeshore Learning \$1,499

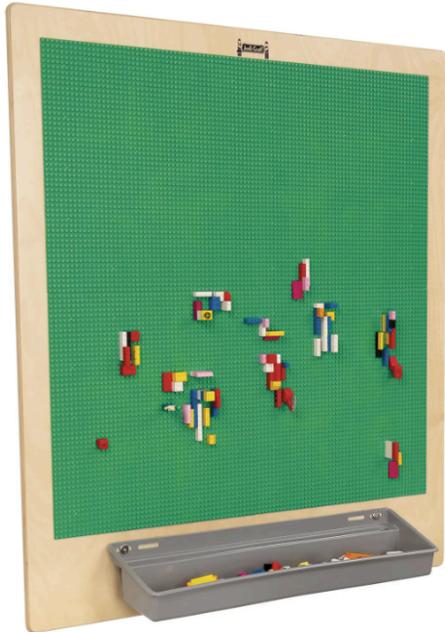


Every Child Ready to Read: Play and Talk

There were no pieces similar to this at any of the visited libraries. This would be a piece unique to Whitewater.

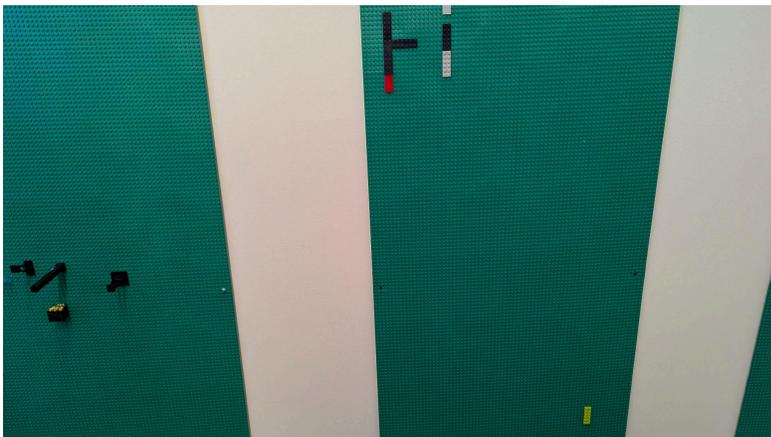
## LEGO Wall

Demco \$349



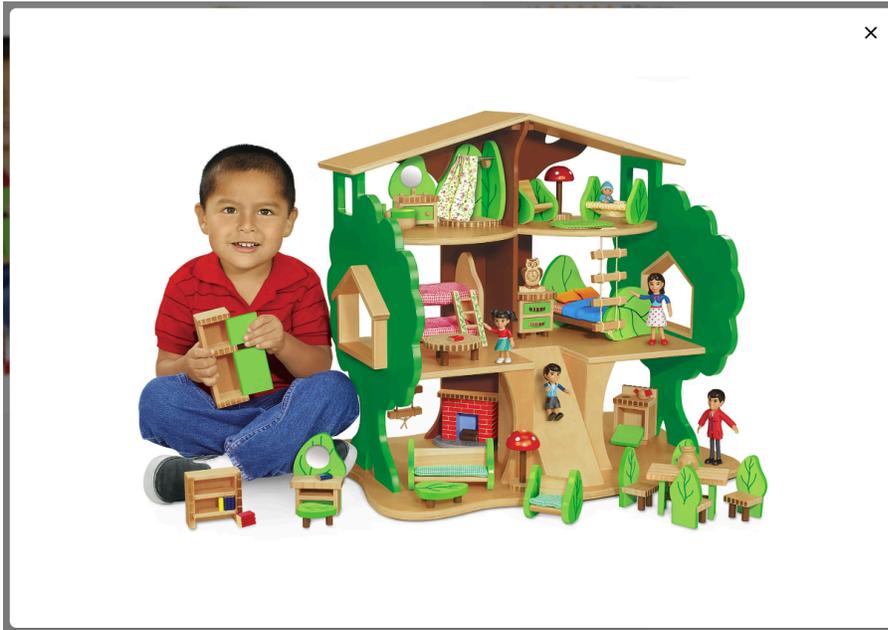
Every Child Ready to Read: Play, Talk, and Write

Matheson Memorial Library has a LEGO wall in their youth services department. It was advised that we did not seek one from their vendor.



## Giant Treehouse

Lakeshore Learning \$329



Every Child Ready to Read: Play and Talk

Jennifer Wharton, the Youth Services Manager at Matheson Memorial mentioned a doll house, but it was not in the youth services department at that time.

**Additional purchases to support this piece:**

**Treehouse Furniture Set  
Lakeshore Learning \$179**



**Pose & Play Families Complete Set  
Lakeshore Learning \$119**



## Baby Dolls

Lakeshore Learning \$119



Every Child Ready to Read: Play, Talk, and Sing

Dwight Foster Public Library had a selection of baby dolls to play with. Photo below.



**Additional purchases to support this piece:**

**Baby Doll Blankets and Bottles**  
**Lakeshore Learning \$30**



**Baby Doll Clothes**  
**Lakeshore Learning \$50**



**Bedtime Doll Clothes**  
**Lakeshore Learning \$45**



**Total funds requested: \$5,022**

**Sources:**

Visits to the Milton Public Library, Matheson Memorial Library, Jefferson Public Library, and Dwight Foster Public Library and conversations with their staff.

Stoltz, D., Conner, M., & Bradberry, J. (2015) *The Power of Play: Designing Early Learning Spaces*. American Library Association.

Email communications with the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Children's Center staff.

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