# Unplug Making for Summer

Batteries, paint brushes, fabric scraps, and robots. Pencils and paper, Legos, glue sticks, and magnifying glasses. This list could be an inventory of my home office—which serves double-duty as toddler arts and activities closet—or a few of the delightful materials that we might find in school library makerspaces. In both instances, opportunities abound for discovery and no small amount of mess and organized chaos.

Family fun aside, it is exciting to see makerspaces evolving and expanding into diverse ways of making and learning. From high-tech to no-tech and everything in between, from the sciences to the humanities, making, playing, and tinkering encourage inventiveness, problem solving and critical thinking, and collaboration. These pursuits align with the *National School Library Standards,* not to mention content area standards and curricula. As Judi Moreillon describes,

> Curriculum-integrated, team-facilitated makerspaces have the potential to spread curiosity, experimentation, and creativity throughout the learning community. Makerspaces can support inquiry learning (2017, p. 41).

In addition, makerspaces often encourage a playful approach to learning. As the school year draws to a close—and attention spans are at their minimum—you might find it's a great time to spark some unplugged inspiration. Following Angela Galik and Adriane Bradberry's suggestion in this issue to unplug computing to promote access and success, I curated a short list of ideas for making activities that are unplugged and simple (that is, light on materials). Try these suggestions to sustain inquiry and making into the summer.

| Topic or Activity | Resources & Materials |
|---|---|
| Coding and computing | CS Fundamentals Unplugged<br>https://code.org/curriculum/unplugged<br><br>NCWIT Computer Science-in-a-Box: Unplug Your Curriculum<br>https://www.ncwit.org/CSunplugged<br><br>CS Unplugged Printables<br>https://csunplugged.org/en/resources/ |
| Card making and stamping | Provide old greeting cards, stamps and ink, and general art/office supplies. See "Making Kindness Count" by Angela Ramsey German and Tammy L. Henderson for kindness challenge ideas. |
| Game design and game play | Set out dice, dominoes, game boards, cards, game pieces, and art/office supplies for game design inspiration. Model and discuss strategies for inventing new ways to play, game mash-ups, or original games.<br><br>Invite students to play new or familiar games. Try cat's cradle and other string games: https://www.wikihow.com/Play-The-Cat%27s-Cradle-Game. Sharpen some pencils for pencil and paper games, like Pictionary, Dots and Boxes, Word Ladders and more: http://www.papg.com/. |
| Weather | Guide students to create an "observation station." Provide weather books, blank grids, paper, and/or white boards to record, predict, and draw. Search "weather observation chart" on Pinterest for samples. |
| Black-out poetry | Offer markers and pages of weeded books (if permissible according to school policy), newspapers, or other texts for students to mark up, black out, and create poetry. For examples, see this article by John DePasquale: https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/blackout-poetry/ |
| Weaving | Create plarn (plastic yarn) or provide yarn, cardboard for looms, and scissors. Search "plarn projects" or "easy weaving for kids" on Pinterest for how-to's, and paper plate and popsicle stick weaving. For instructions for a plarn travel seat, see pp. 76-83 in Leslie Preddy's *School Library Makerspaces* (Libraries Unlimited 2013). |

Try some ideas with classes or as independent explorations, or, if you have materials to spare, consider simple take-home kits. With older students, pose a year-end design challenge to create unplugged maker stations for fellow students. If your students tend toward the unplugged already, you might guide them to design kits for younger students or to explore a new dimension, audience, or application of their interests. For instance, creative writers might attempt a screenplay; fabric arts fans could try a new stitch or type of material; and experts in circuits (or other topics) could construct instruction manuals to share their skills.

And don't forget, the year's end is always a good time for reflecting and journaling. Invite students to make lists of favorite experiences, book recommendations, or "how to survive ___ grade" tips to share with next year's classes. What do they hope to try or learn next school year? Your learners' recollections just might shape your thoughts for the fall, when you plug back in—or not.

**Work Cited**

Moreillon, Judi. *Maximizing School Librarian Leadership: Building Connections for Learning and Advocacy.* ALA Editions, 2018.

## About the Editor

**Rebecca J. Morris**, MLIS, PhD, earned her master's degree and doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh and her undergraduate degree in elementary education at Pennsylvania State University. Rebecca teaches graduate courses in school librarianship and youth library services. Rebecca has published articles in journals including *School Library Research, Knowledge Quest, School Libraries Worldwide, Teacher Librarian* and the *Journal of Research on Young Adults*

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