**Library Block Parties**

**Information and Application**

**Background**

A Block Party is an hour long free play session with a set of universal blocks (350), people, vehicles, animals, scarves and other accompanying materials where preschoolers have the freedom to build and play as they wish. Young children learn best when they are able to construct knowledge through meaningful play. With the materials provided children will build and experiment, manipulate objects, work with others, count and measure, talk about what they are building and building vocabulary; all activities that will help children to achieve the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for early childhood in not only STEM areas, but also in language and literacy development, physical development and social and emotional development.

Library Block Parties began in Tacoma, Washington at the Pierce County Library System. The library wanted to reach out to at-risk families who were not using the library and were possibly intimidated by books and reading due to literacy issues. Pierce County began by working with Head Starts and other early childhood programs to bring kids to the library to play. Today, they are still doing that and more. Now each of the their branches has a set of blocks and provide Public Block Parties each month, some during the day, some at night and on weekends to reach working parents.

**Pennsylvania Block Parties**

Block Parties began in Pennsylvania three years ago with selected libraries offering at least one Block Party to an early childhood program each month and one Public Block Party. This STEM program requires very little set up and yet can yield great gains. Parents and educators can see the growth of their child’s play and vocabulary. This year the program is expanding and not requiring the early childhood Block Party, though the ability to provide at least one will increase your chances of receiving the materials. Not everyone who applies this year may receive the materials, but each year the Office of Commonwealth Libraries will add more libraries to the program.

**Requirements**

* An open area for building in either the children’s department or program space that is at least 10’ x 16’
* Space to store the block unit that is about 47"w x 12"d x 28"h (it is on wheels)
* Make at least 15 of the books on the Block Party book list available for circulation.
* Provide at least one 60 minute Public Block Party once a month (through November 2017) that is **not** attached to another program (story time, play group, etc.). The materials can also be used in other programs. The intended audience is preschoolers with an adult
* Staff member or volunteer will prepare for the sessions by reading the materials provided about Block Play, descriptive vocabulary, and open-ended questions.
* Keep statistics and survey adults who attend twice each year for a minimum of two years
* Enforce only two rules: No throwing blocks; no knocking down anyone else’s building
* Complete a final report and submit it no later than December 5, 2017

**If you have any questions please contact Susan Pannebaker by email spannebake@pa.gov**

**Library Block Parties**

**2017 Application**

*Please use Word to complete the application*

Library Name:

Street (Delivery) Address:

Town and Zip:

Contact Name:

Email:

Phone number:

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***The library agrees to fulfill* all of the requirements listed on the previous page**

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Library Director’s Signature Date

You may return the application through email or through the US Mail to

[spannebake@pa.gov](mailto:spannebake@pa.gov)

Or

Susan Pannebaker

221 Forum Building

607 South Drive

Harrisburg, PA 17120