

# The Magic Library Card!

## The WLN™ and Storytime STEM-packs™

by Charles Greenberg

For those of us in the Westmoreland Library Network (WLN) who helped give birth to the project now known as Storytime STEM-packs, the trademarked name of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 Math & Science Collaborative embodies years of invaluable STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics) professional development for library staff. That is even especially so for the Children's Librarians who have learned to seamlessly integrate STEM into Summer Reading Club programming for preK-4 children.

I want to tell you about the product, Storytime STEM-packs, that has arisen with the professional development. I will quote liberally from the Collaborative itself, beginning with one of its earliest marketing tools, a larger-than-usual bookmark.

"Storytime STEM-packs are an educational innovation that enables any educator to incorporate STEM concepts into children's programming from preK-4 with minimal preparation time." Included in each Storytime STEM-packs unit are: "(1) a popular children's book; (2) all the materials needed for an engaging STEM activity; (3) a facilitator guide that makes connecting the story to the STEM activity easy."

"All our activities are based on the Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core Math Standards, and are grounded in cognitive research findings on how children learn." This one



sentence carries all the power of the professional development and the accompanying product.

For Children's Librarians in the WLN who enrolled in the annual professional development year after year, they realized ongoing reinforcement of skill, and took back to the library new versions of the product each time for that year's Summer Reading Club. The staff of the Collaborative enabled this by continually developing new Storytime STEM-packs units based on the age-appropriate PA state standards and their knowledge about "cognitive research findings on how children learn." It is not a trivial thing that participating WLN libraries were positioned to take advantage of the great skills of the Collaborative staff. If you were enrolling your child in Summer Reading Club at a library where this treasure was being integrated into the usual reading experience, your child received something special.

In 2019 and 2020, the offering was even more special than usual. It was re-titled Storytime

thinking, problem-solving and communication skills."

Storytime STEM+C units come with Bee-Bot® robots and a colorful vinyl mat, the mat being, for example, a representation of moon surface. In that case, the accompanying children's book is a grade-appropriate "moon" book. Amazing to me, library staff learned in the professional development how to convey a simple robot-guiding algorithm to such young children! That's what your child got if he or she attended Summer Reading Club in 2019 and 2020 at a participating library.

Now that I have told you this sort of back-story, you'll want to talk with your Library Director and/or Children's Librarian about Storytime STEM-packs, and about how to take full advantage of them all year round. Ask about them!