

**Model Program**

**Program title:** Art Shop

**Program summary:** Art Shop is a family-focused, hands-on program that promotes financial literacy, decision-making, resourcefulness, and creativity. The program combines budgeting, process art, and project design. Kids answer the question, “What can I create with $5?” Provided with a “wallet” containing $5 in play money, participants browse the “art shop” for supplies to make their own masterpiece. Creativity abounds, but the key is the opportunity for children to gain experience planning, making choices, “purchasing” supplies, and working within a budget. Parents gain tools for facilitating conversations about finances.

**Duration:** One to two hours

**Suggested venue:**  ☑ In Library ☐ At Home ☐ Either

**Instructor-led:**  ☐ Yes ☑ No ☐ Either **Facilitation required:** ☑ Yes ☐ No

**Target audience:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ☑ | Kids (ages 3–7) |
| ☑ | Tweens (ages 8–12) |
| ☐ | Young adults (ages 13–18) |
| ☐ | Adults |
| ☐ | All ages |
| ☑ | Other: Could easily be adapted for young adults by providing a different prompt (project rather than art), different materials, and a larger budget. |

**Program budget:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ☐ | $0 |
| ☐ | $1–$50 |
| ☐ | $51–$100 |
| ☑ | $101–$250 (about $2 per patron depending on type of supplies used) |
| ☐ | $251–$500 |
| ☐ | More than $500 |

*(Special thanks to Plano Public Library in Texas.)*

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**Goals:**

* Facilitate family engagement around the concepts of budgeting and spending. The activity is for children, but we encourage parent participation to begin conversations about budgeting, planning, and goal-setting that may extend beyond the library program.
* Engage children to think critically about purchasing, returns, wise use of resources, and pooling resources.
* Allow children to practice basic budgeting and math skills through simulated purchasing transactions.
* Integrate personal finance with STEAM subjects (art and math in particular).

**Advance planning:**

About one month in advance, begin to collect and organize supplies, assemble the “wallets,” and create signage and price tags to create the “shop.” Preparations can be managed by one or two staff members. The program can be presented by two to six facilitators depending on the audience size. Art Shop is simple enough to be managed by one staff person along with community volunteers. Plano Public Library in Texas, for example, has staffed the program with up to six total people, including teen volunteers, to facilitate activities and clean-up. The program is straightforward and can use any art or craft materials the library may have on hand. It does not require special equipment.

**Supplies:**

* Wallets
  + Ziploc bag or envelope to hold play money
  + Shipping labels to list content of the wallets
  + Play money, total of $5 in each wallet (3 one-dollar bills, 5 quarters, 5 dimes, and 5 nickels). This can be play money, available for purchase from suppliers. If your budget is limited, printed play money using online templates can work equally well.
* Poster board to create art shop supply and price list
* Art supplies/merchandise
  + Can be anything you have on hand or that is easily collected. Suggested supplies include construction paper, paper bags, stickers, feathers, paint, ribbon, craft foam, coffee filters, paper plates, fabric scraps, buttons, pompoms, glue, glitter, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, etc.
* Cash register. This can be a cardboard box or any item to organize the play money. It should be stocked with additional play money to make change for participants.
* Optional:
  + Program tickets, if necessary, to limit attendance
  + Butcher paper or other disposable materials to protect work surfaces
  + Trays, paper plates, or baskets for participants to carry “purchased” items to their workstations

**Partnerships/Collaborations:**

This program does not require partners. However, there is potential to involve community volunteers to help run the “store,” distribute the wallets as participants enter, and photograph or display completed artwork.

**Budget:**

The costs associated with this program are for art materials, play money, and supplies to create a “shop.” The estimated cost assumes the library will purchase all art supplies and play money. This is a generous estimate. Donated or previously purchased art materials may be used.

Estimated total cost: $200 or less

Cost per patron: $2 or less

**Day of activity:**

We recommended the following set-up:

* Material stations – “The Store”
* Up to three tables organized by material type
* Labeled art supplies and assigned prices
* Creation stations
* Multiple tables or workspaces for participants to create their art projects
* Cover the creation stations with butcher paper or other disposable material to protect surfaces from spills and messes
* Trays, paper plates, or baskets for participants to carry supplies from the “store” and to facilitate clean up

Plano Public Library, for example, sets up three “vendor” stations with craft materials for purchase, with a staff member or volunteer acting as cashier for transactions at each station.

**Program execution:**

Plano Public Library offers this program as a ticketed event, meaning attendance is limited by the number of wallets prepared in advance. The program admits a maximum of 50 children, plus parents. Free tickets are distributed starting 30 minutes in advance of the program.

As families enter the room, they are given a “wallet” and orientation to the art shop, including the rules for conduct, purchases, and returns. Facilitators encourage kids to spend a few minutes budgeting the supplies they want to purchase and to think about what kind of art they want to create, but participants are allowed to begin purchasing materials immediately. Once begun, participants need little guidance. The lead staff member circulates through the room to answer questions. Facilitators prompt participants to consider how they are spending their money and to think creatively about how they could meet their goals and make their art project. As this is process art\*, no guidelines are given on what they are to create. Children are encouraged to consider pooling their resources to purchase what they need and to think about sharing items with others. Siblings in attendance do this often.

**\*** What is process art?Process art emphasizes the process of creation over the end product. For children, this is particularly valuable as it can reinforce sensory exploration, creativity, self-expression, spatial reasoning, language and motor skills, and more.

The program maintains a “return policy,” which allows participants to return unused items and have their money refunded to purchase additional items. No returns are given for partially used items (for example, paper that has been cut).

At the end of the program, parents complete and return a brief survey before exiting.

**Advice:**

The program length can be adjusted depending on library needs and participant preferences. Children often need extra time to complete their art projects after taking time to plan, budget, and purchase supplies. Another option is to offer the program in a two-hour, come-and-go format.

When participants leave, their wallets can be refilled with play money and given to new participants.

**Optional activities:**

* Pre-program lesson for kids: Before the “art shop” opens, walk participants through a basic budgeting lesson.
* Older tweens or teens: Include the budgeting and financial literacy elements as part of a larger design challenge whereby participants are tasked with purchasing supplies to solve a problem or provide a solution to a real-life issue (for example, build the tallest structure or design an object that would solve an everyday problem like losing your keys). This would replace the process art project.

**Feedback:**

Plano Public Library has welcomed between 40 and 50 attendees at each program. Parents have given overwhelmingly positive feedback and expressed gratitude for the opportunity for their children to learn financial skills such as planning, budgeting, making change, pooling and stretching resources, making a return, and being responsible for funds. Many parents are surprised and impressed by what their children are able to accomplish.