

An article that connect to the presentation **Sci Tech to STEMulate the Mind** with Cynthia Brawner, for Preschool to Second Grade

Article One

[Building Bridges to Understanding in the Pre-K Block Center: A Morning in the Block Center](#)

by Lee Ann Christenson and Jenny James

Emma, 4 years old, carefully steps around the other block structures to inspect the hospital she helped build. She is problem solving. What will the community need next? Dylan and Rohit, frequent players in the block center, are deep in conversation. How should the river flow through the community? Nearby, Aditya, who recently began to play in the block center, chimes in, saying, "I think you need a bridge over the river. The ambulance has to get to the hospital." Further down the river, Ms. Lisa kneels down to examine Emma's work. Emma discusses with her the merits of building the doctor's bed next to the hospital.

Weeks earlier scenes in the block center looked much different. Children wandered in and out of the area, playing without a clear purpose and rarely for any sustained period of time. When Ms. Lisa introduced the design process used by engineers—a methodical, creative, and recursive approach for problem solving—the block center was transformed into a child-centered hub of collaborative play.

STEM in the block center

With an increasing emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) at the pre-K to 12 levels, as manifested by the creation and adoption of STEM standards by many states, early childhood teachers and administrators may wonder how these STEM standards fit with developmentally appropriate practice and the needs of young learners (Moomaw 2012; Lindeman, Jabot, & Berkley 2013). An intentionally crafted and stocked preschool classroom block center can support planned intentional learning experiences, specifically in the area of engineering (Wynn & Harris 2013). Teachers can maintain all the hallmarks of child-directed play in the block center while incorporating STEM—in the form of the engineering design process—in developmentally appropriate ways. . . . [Continue reading](#)

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http://www.naeyc.org/yc/article/building_bridges_to_understanding_Christenson

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