

Summer 2026

STEM Learning with Dotty's Place

A Year of Growth

As this school year comes to a close, I've found myself reflecting on all the moments that made it meaningful. Moments like the excitement when students walked in, the quiet focus during building, and the small but powerful shifts in confidence over time.

This year, I had the opportunity to work with a number of consistent groups, which made it easier to see growth firsthand. Students who once waited for instructions began creating on their own. Others who struggled to stay engaged found their place through hands-on exploration.

While I didn't track every number this year, looking back at the groups and events, I estimate that over 1,300 students participated in STEM Game Times and activities through Dotty's Place.

What I've Learned

This year reinforced something I've been noticing more and more:

Children don't need more instructions. They need more opportunities.

When given space, time, and simple materials, they begin to:

- Solve problems in their own way
- Take ownership of their ideas
- Build confidence through trial and error

I've also learned to step back more. I've become more of an observer instead of rushing in to offer direct instruction. That shift has made a noticeable difference in how students approach learning.



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Behind the Scenes

While much of the year is spent working directly with students, a lot happens behind the scenes:

- Refining and reorganizing STEM kits
- Testing materials and activities
- Building out the STEM Learning Page
- Creating simple, flexible resources for families and educators

This quiet work has helped shape a more consistent and thoughtful experience across all settings.

Summer Pause & Preparation

Dotty's Place will be taking a step back this summer.

This time will be used to:

- Organize and improve materials
- Continue developing learning resources
- Work on current projects (including upcoming books and activity sets)
- Prepare for a stronger, more structured year ahead

Sometimes the most important work happens when things are quiet.

Summer Thinking Prompt

What could you build using only:

- cardboard
- tape
- and something found outside?

Draw or describe your idea!



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Looking Ahead

As I look toward the next school year, the goal remains the same:

To create spaces where children feel comfortable exploring, thinking, and creating without pressure.

There are a number of ideas in progress, including:

- Expanded STEM kits and materials
- Additional downloadable resources
- Continued growth of the STEM Learning Page
- New ways to support both classrooms and home learning environments

Thank You

I would like to extend a thank you to the families, educators, and community members who have supported Dotty's Place this year.

Your encouragement, participation, and trust have made it possible to continue growing this work in a meaningful way.



What Real STEM Learning Looks Like

Sometimes STEM learning looks like:

- testing an idea that doesn't work
- rebuilding something three times
- sketching before building
- borrowing materials from another bin
- or quietly observing before jumping in

Not every meaningful learning moment is loud.