The mission of the school library is to function as a comfortable, safe, and student-centered location to facilitate 21st-century learning. The library seeks to promote an appreciation for literature and understanding of traditional print, periodicals, and reference materials as well as the skills necessary to be technologically savvy during schooling, career, and beyond. "The library seeks to ensure that our students acquire the necessary information literacy skills they will need to become productive learners with skills and knowledge necessary to lead successful meaningful lives in the 21st century" (Pingry). The school library has an essential role in leading students to become competent users of information in responsible and creative ways.

Evaluation

As I entered the library at the middle school where I am a teacher, I felt like I was transformed back into time. In fact, it almost seems like time has stood still for me and I am again an awkward middle school student anxious to search the shelves for the newest Babysitter's Club series book or a Sweet Valley Twin. Part of this nostalgia comes from the fact that the library at my school looks just like a library from twenty five years ago. The current librarian has been in this position for the past thirty six years at the same school. I have worked with her for over a decade. From personal experience and interactions with other staff members, I know that the librarian has been unrelenting in keeping the library exactly as she has always had it. She is the only librarian with no assistants or additional staff, and I truly believe she prefers it this way.

Upon entering the library, I immediately notice how quiet it is and how few students are using the library services. There are two students at a computer hub, working on make-up testing. Because we do not have computers in our classrooms for student use, if a student needs a computer to complete a task, the teachers often write a pass to the library to use one of the dozen computers there. Other than the two students, there is no else in the library.

While inspecting the bulletin boards, posters, and wall displays, it becomes obvious that there is no evidence of celebration activities. The bulletin board is a very tired display of faded paper and

two old posters about book festivals from 1993 and 1995. The lack of student work is typical for this library. There is no evidence of literature activities or student productions. In terms of leisure reading, it is not an activity which I feel is encouraged in the library. Students visit the library once every two weeks with their Language Arts teacher and are given 15-20 minutes to check out some books. Students then take the books back to the classroom or home. Students are not given many opportunities to read in the library. There are several tables with chairs for school work, but the hard plastic chairs would not be comfortable for long term reading. On the floor are a half dozen deflated bean bag chairs that are considered to be too small and uncomfortable by most of the student body.

While the library provides very little in terms of comfortable spaces to read, it doesn't lack for work space. We have 12 tables of varying sizes sandwiched between rows of books and many plastic stacking chairs. Teachers are encouraged to bring their classes to the library and use the grouping of six tables and 30 chairs to conduct lessons in the library, such as a research project. The other six tables are smaller in size and scattered near the entrance to the library. They are often used by individual students. There are two small offices near the front of the library entrance for the speech pathologist and the attendance coordinator, but the library lacks separate rooms for group work or teacher/parent space.

In terms of physical access, students are very limited on when they may visit the library. Students are not allowed to go before school starts and can only visit during the day with a signed pass from their teachers. A small group of students are allowed to eat lunch in the library and read quietly. The library closes with the final school bell, so there are no after-school accessible hours. The circulation desk is up front and center, so students are aware of how to check out a book. The library set up is a little more difficult to manage because unlike the local public library, our school library does not have any labels on the book shelves to help navigate the different sections. We have an online card catalog, but a student must obtain permission to log into a computer in order to access that system, which is time consuming. In my opinion, the students do not get the sense that their

needs and interests are the driving force behind the library's operations. There is no student art work or written work displayed despite a large library with many open shelves. The rules of the library are in place for the convenience of the librarian, not to help the students.

The hours severely limit the accessibility for the students, and with the rural setting of my school, many of the students do not have the opportunity to use technology at home. Best use of physical access include "flexible scheduling", during which students and teachers have the ability to use the library throughout the day (Empowering Learners, 33). It is imperative that students be given the time to use the computers in the library to complete work and projects outside of class time, and this protocol does not happen at my school. While it would be ideal for a library to "design and maintain a library website that provides 24-7 access to digital information resources, instructional interventions, reference services, link to other libraries and academic sites, information for parents, and exhibits exemplary student work", this is not the case at my middle school (Empowering Learners, 33). The school technology requirements include a website for every teacher, but the library is not required to design or maintain a website for the library services.

In terms of economic access, students are assessed fines for overdue books. It's a nominal fee of three cents a day, but for some students, it can add up quickly. A student is unable to check out any other books while there is a library fine, so this can prevent a student from utilizing the library at all during the school year. For many students, the fine becomes an excuse to avoid the library altogether.

A "library", in the traditional sense, brings forth the image of a silent tomb where rows upon rows of books are neatly arranged next to tables of students silently reading and working. It is very much a place for individuals and lends itself towards solitary work. In comparison, a "learning commons" serves a "unique purpose in the school as a bridge between educational philosophy being practiced and the real world" in terms that it "serves the school curriculum but also is known as a place for experimenting, playing, making, doing, thinking, collaborating, and growing" (Loertscher and

Koechlin, E3). A learning commons supports 21st century learning skills with a focus on collaborative team work, student discovery, technology and skills that can be imperative to a future career. Although a learning commons may be implemented in different ways in different school settings, "it must be the center of inquiry, digital citizenship, project-based learning, collaborative intelligence, advanced literacy, as well as the center of creating, performing, and sharing" (Loertscher and Koechlin, E4). While the traditional school library performed the same singular function for all students, the beauty of a learning commons is that it can do many jobs for different groups—"it would be a place to make learning visible, allow groups and classes to meet and use the space, be flexible…" (Stephenson and Stone, 4).

There are many reasons that I do not consider my current school library to be a "learning commons". One reason is the complete lack of displayed student work. A common area that is "filled with the work of child is a delight to be in and sends a message to students that their work and their learning are important" (Clayton, NSFC). There is also a lack of celebratory activities, such as recognizing holidays or dates that are important or interesting to the students. While this would not be necessary for a library to run smoothly, it tells the students that their passions and interests are important. For example, April 18th is "Poem in Your Pocket Day". What a great day to celebrate in the library by challenging students to create or memorize poems or even making small copies of teachers' favorite poems available to the students (Winner, busylibrarian.com).

Librarians have had to adapt to a changing job description. Many librarians are "hold outs" from the archaic way of running a school library, preferring to maintain a silent area for studying and reading instead of increasing their knowledge base on running a 21st century library. Ideal librarians are "masters not just of traditional materials; they also keep up with the technology and lead the push to harness the power of technology to improve teaching and learning" (Loertscher and Koechlin, E6). My school's librarian is a very sweet woman, but she is not a leader in technology. We switched over from a physical card catalog to an online program about eight years ago, and that was a very

overwhelming experience for her! Another aspect of being an up-to-date librarian is keeping up with current trends, information, and requirements by meeting with a collaborative group in a professional setting, such as attending conferences. I have known our school's librarian for over ten years, and she has never attended a library conference during that time. Attending the multitude of conferences available to her would "continue her own professional learning" (Loertscher and Koechlin, E6).

There has been current trend towards creating a space in the school library where students are able to design, build, create, tinker, and mess around to their hearts' content with a variety of materials. These areas are called "fab labs" (short for "fabrication") or "makerspaces". While many teachers and administrators are endorsing makerspaces for middle school and high school libraries specifically, the most resistance has come from "either long-term librarians or library staff members" (Colegrove, 2). Makerspaces have traditionally included technology usage such as student movies, coding, or editing; science and math activities; or graphic art and design; or a combination of all the above and then some. My library does not have a makerspace, nor are there any plans to create one. A makerspace has very few requirements, but some things that do help with its collaborative nature are open working areas and whiteboard walls, which my library does not currently have available (Colegrove, 3).

Another important area of reflection is the lack of support for 24-hour learning. As previously mentioned, my school's library does not even have a website. A student with questions would be hard pressed to find answers through my school's internet presence.   A well-planned website "connects learners to existing school library services and provides additional services tailored to the learner's needs" (Empowering Learners, 34). The website does not have to be extensive but should include "scaffolding tools, graphic organizers, downloadable interventions, links to citation sites, reading lists to support projects, and writing guidelines for research papers or reports" (Empowering Learners, 34). Ideally, a school website should become a "24/7 support portal featuring tutorials and

rich resources for students working out of school hours" but this is just not the case for my school's library (Cicchetti, dougjohnson.squarespace.com).

Renovation Plan

There are some aspects of the current library that I would like to reuse in my new plan. For example, we have ample tables and chairs for group work, and I would like to use several of the longer tables in an open area near the back of the library to give an area for groups or classes to meet for collaboration. In my new plan, two of the smaller square tables and chairs will be used near the entrance of the library for individual or paired work groups. The two computer hubs will remain the same because they are meeting the current technology needs of the students. I will be adding two area rugs to define specific areas—mainly a work area and a reading/lounging area.

A big component that is currently missing from the library is a place for leisure reading. In my new design, the library will include a large sofa and several comfortable arm chairs. I will use the sofa and two bright yellow chairs to create a conversation area while positioning two red armchairs near a quiet area of the library. The sofa/chairs area will also include an end table and coffee table, which can serve several purposes. First, they can be used to display new periodicals or books to catch the students' attention. Second, they can be used as work surfaces for students. The chairs are all lightweight enough to be moved from area to area to create customized work zones. I also added three oversized bean bag chairs to the front of the library which will take the place of the small, deflated ones currently collecting dust from lack of use. These bean bag chairs encourage students to stretch out on the floor, either sitting in the chairs or using them as oversized floor pillows. It is my hope that an increase in comfortable seating options will encourage the students to use the library for leisure reading and group work. Another seating option that I have included is two bar-height seating arrangements near the front of the library. These two sets both include a tall tabletop and four backed stools, which will remind the teens of a coffee shop. They provide work space for small

groups and a possible snack area. Four new ottomans will be situated near the new group work area and can be used in a variety of ways, such as additional seating, modular furniture, or footstools.

Because the library is currently one large open area, my new design includes two modular screens that can be moved to create private work space. The first screen has a "teen friendly" water/rock design that is neutral enough to blend in with any décor and will be located near the library entrance to create a small work zone in the corner. A dry erase whiteboard has also been included in the budget to be used in this work area. The whiteboard should assist with spontaneous group work and also be helpful for students who don't have supplies with them in the library (no paper, pen, etc.) The second screen is much larger and is made up of six canvas panels. This screen will be used to display student art work and will be rotated out on a regular basis. I have planned to place this screen near the back group work space. Wall space is taken up by mostly book shelves, so display areas are not readily available in my current library. This large screen can be used on the front and back to create eighteen linear feet of display space.

I wanted to include a "makerspace" for the library, and because my current library does not have one, I would be starting from scratch. To anchor the new makerspace and provide some manipulative hands-on activities, I would create an "epic Lego wall" using plywood and base plates from Lego. Part of my budget would be used to purchase the construction supplies along with a base set of Lego pieces to start the building process. Our science department has Lego kits from robotics kits that they previously used and could donate those Lego pieces to the makerspace area (the basic robotic kits and the extra Lego pieces). I have incorporated one of the large tables that was already in the library to use as a makerspace "base" and since the makerspace is adjacent to the group work area, additional tables could be used, depending on projects.

Student ownership should be a big facet of the library. If the students don't feel that their needs and wants are being taken into consideration, they will not want to spend time there. In my new design, I have included some quotes by authors to decorate the space and inspire curiosity in

the students. I selected classic (Jane Austen) and new authors (JK Rowling) and will place these vinyl wall decals in the open wall space above the built in book shelves. This area is currently open wall space, and since it would be impractical to reach this area for student art work display, the decals could be used as long-term decoration.

All of these features were chosen because they help create a "teen friendly", student centered learning commons instead of a cold, impersonal library. The traditional role of the library, including books, references, and periodicals, and the new aspects such as collaborative learning, work zones, modular furniture arrangements, and technology are blended so that students experience the best of both worlds. As stated by Loertscher and Koechlin on page E4 of their article "Climbing to Excellence", "it will sometimes take on a role as "third space", neither home nor school. It is the place young people love—their space."

LIBRARY BUDGET REQUEST

Quantity	Item	Cost per Item	Justification	Picture	Total Cost
2	Yellow chairs (IKEA Ekero chairs in yellow)	$129.99	-comfortable place for students to read -creates seating area for conversation with the sofa -can be easily moved to create working environment for pairs or groups		$258
2	Red chairs (IKEA Tullsta chair in Ransta Red)	$99.00	-comfortable place for students to read -can be easily moved to create working environment for pairs or groups -great alternative to plastic stacking chairs when students are reading for extended periods of time		$198
1	Sofa (IKEA Klippen Loveseat)	$299	-comfortable place for students to read -creates seating area for conversation with the sofa -bright color and pattern are durable, hide stains and wear, -fun pattern creates a pleasant place for teens -pattern ties together several other solid color furniture pieces into cohesive look		$299
4	Faux-leather ottomans	$29.00	-modular seating for spontaneous group work -easy to clean, durable covers -can be used as footstools, seats, side tables, etc.		$116.00

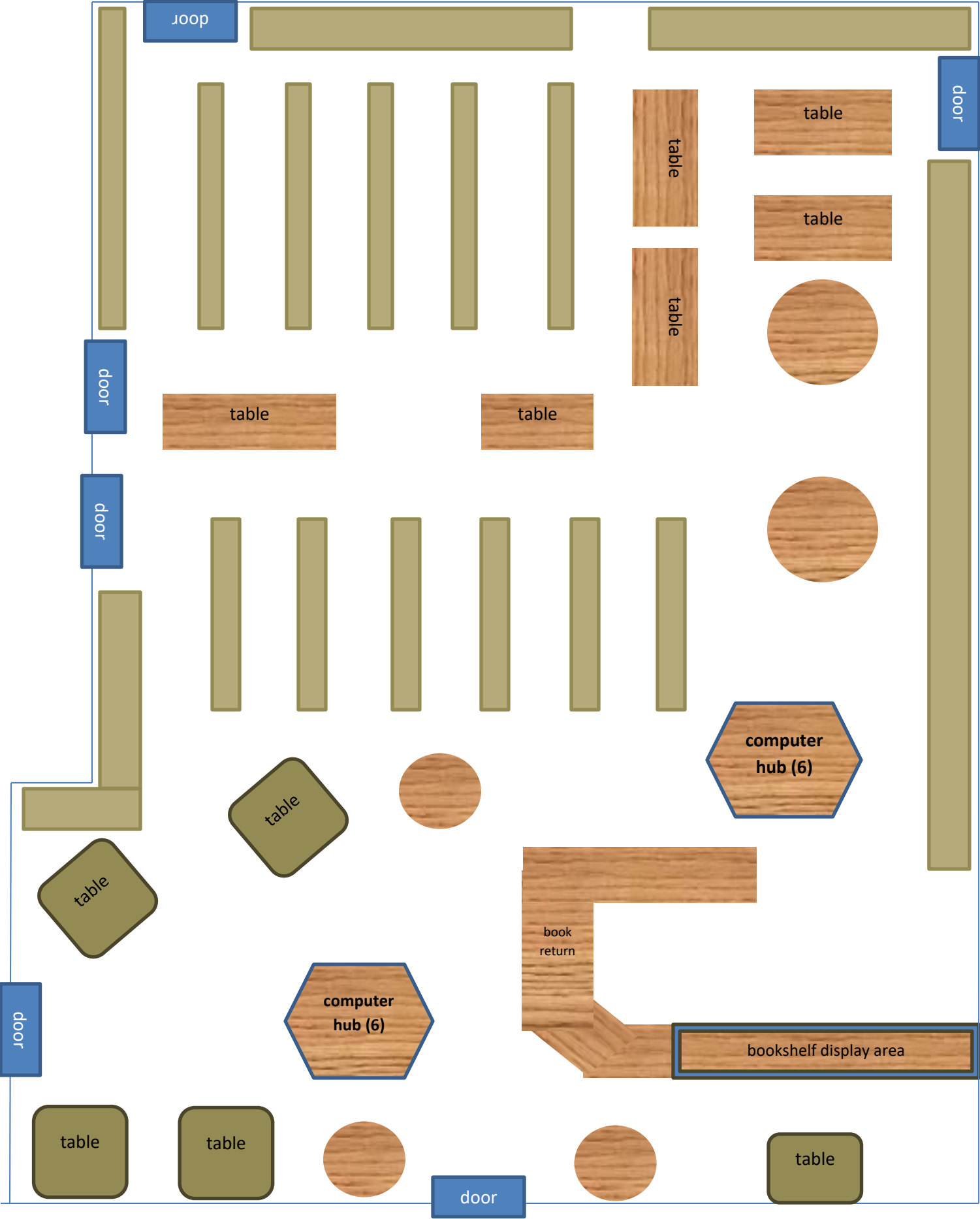|					
3	Area rugs (6 foot square)	$109	-bright color to energize space -defines areas for group work -creates a soft area for students to stretch out and work on the floor -low pile is easy to keep clean and won't cause a tripping hazard		$327
1	LEGO epic wall materials (plywood, construction adhesive, LEGO base plates, LEGO blocks starter kit)	$80 plywood $20 adhesive $300 base plates $84 blocks	-create a base for the new makerspace -creative outlet for students who need kinesthetic activities -hands on manipulatives -does not require instructions/training to use -can be used by several students at once -accessible to students with disabilities		$484
1	Foldable/moveable screen (Walmart double sided Water Zen screen)	$129	-moveable divider to create working space -can be moved around the library to be used in different applications -creates privacy and lessens distractions -neutral design is soothing and interesting to look at without being bright or distracting		$129

1	Canvas screen (Walmart 6 ft tall do-it-yourself canvas screen)	$320	-moveable divider to create working space for groups -will be used as interchangeable art display for student and faculty artwork -situated right next to makerspace -the canvas surface can be painted to match decor or left "as is"—can use different adhesives to display art		$320
2	Bar height café sets with round table and 4 stools (Bizchair.com)	$289	-creates casual setting area -"teen friendly" / similar to coffee shop -provides work area for small groups -possible drink/snack area -great option for tall students who may not be comfortable stretching out on the floor		$578
3	Bean bag chairs (Target Circo brand oversized corduroy in blue and orange)	$39.99	-creates casual setting area -"teen friendly" -great option for students who want to stretch out on the floor -can be moved easily to another area -encourages collaboration		$119.97
1	Coffee table (IKEA LACK coffee table)	$19.99	-display area for magazines and books -additional work/writing surface -can be used as table by group sitting on the floor -durable surface is easy to clean		$19.99

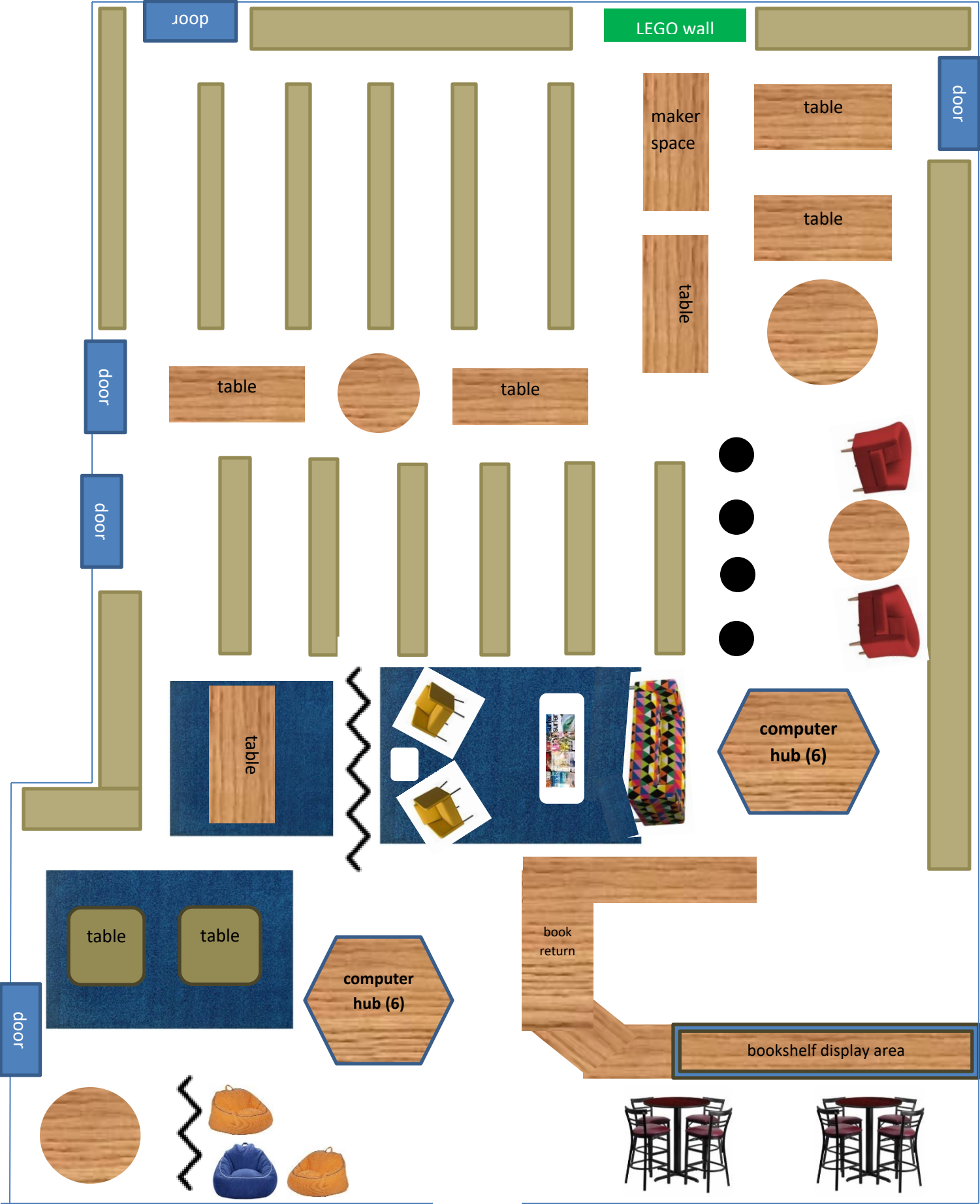|					
1	Side table (IKEA LACK side table)	$7.99	-display area for magazines and books -additional work/writing surface -can be used as table by group sitting on the floor -durable surface is easy to clean		$7.99
1	White board (dry erase) (officesupply.com 36 x 48 inch dry erase white board)	$32.36	-will be situated in the flexible group work area -can be moved from one area to another -allows groups to brainstorm and collaborate quickly and easily without bringing paper/pencils to the library (allows and facilitates for spontaneous collaboration) -can be propped against the wall or laid out on the table		$32.36
6	Vinyl decal wall quotes (various Etsy shops such as iheartdecals and decalsforthewall)	Ranging from $11.99 – 15.97	-create teen friendly wall décor -students can relate to quotes from famous/favorite authors -provides neutral and updated décor -relatively inexpensive and can be installed over all wall color -can be removed without damaging the wall -does not compete for attention with student artwork display		$104.50

TOTAL BUDGET COSTS: $2993.81

Current Floor Plan: Library

door

door

door

door

door

table

table

table

table

table

table

table

table

table

table

table

computer hub (6)

computer hub (6)

book return

bookshelf display area

table

table

table

Dream Floor Plan: Library

door

LEGO wall

door

maker space

table

table

table

door

table

table

table

door

table

door

computer hub (6)

computer hub (6)

book return

table

table

table

bookshelf display area

door

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