

JIADING LIBRARY GETS CITY NOD AS CHILDREN-FRIENDLY FACILITY

Jiading Library, which receives an average of 530,000 minors per year, was recently listed among the first batch of Shanghai Children-Friendly Facilities. The nomination was jointly launched by the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission, the Office of Shanghai Municipal Women and Children Committee, and the Shanghai Municipal Housing and Urban-Rural Development Commission. Yang Yujie and Yang Yang provide insights.



Jiading Library features a children's zone where parents and children can enjoy quality time together.

One-meter children's perspective

On a wintry afternoon, the spacious venue for children at the Jiading Library was radiating in bright sunshine, which further highlighted its vibrant interior and children-friendly designs.

Children love this space for its thoughtfully designed "one-meter perspective" tables, chairs and furniture, as well as the natural decorations like greenery and bird nests.

The children's quarter offers tiered reading services to meet the various needs of babies and toddlers, children and teens. The books range from literature, history, geography, aerospace and children's caricatures, with the experience enriched by digital reading facilities and VR (virtual reality) equipment.

The library also has a picture book reading corner, tailored for parents and child readers.

Lin, a Jiading resident, was reading a picture book with his four-year-old son.

"The book collection here caters to both young children and teens," he noted.

With safety in mind, Jiading Library has expanded the children's activity area to include outdoor spaces. Children can sit on the grass under the sun or inside a wooden house in a clearing.

Yu Chengyang, an eight-year-old, often chooses to read outdoors on a sunny day.

"I love the outdoor reading space at Jiading Library. I can be closer to nature and breathe fresh air," Yu said.

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Reading under the sun and a clear blue sky is enjoyable for children.

Catering to diverse needs

With improved facilities, Jiading Library has launched diverse reading promotion events for its minor readers.

On December 22, 2024, Luo Yuming, a Chinese Language and Literature Department professor at Fudan University, gave a lecture on ancient poet Li Bai (AD 701-762). He explained the poet's works as well as his philosophy of life.

"The event helped us explore the stories behind Li Bai's poems and enabled us to get to know the poet personally, thanks to the professor's academic exploration and humorous delivery," said Chen Jing, a Jiading resident.

The reading promotion activities are held at varied levels to meet different requirements of children of different ages.

For example, children below six years old are guided to read classic picture books by teachers at the library's Weekend Story Moment held on Sundays.

The Parent-Kid Music Appreciation and Reading is an event series for music enlightenment, ethnic music education, interactive games, and music-related picture book reading.

For children above six years old, the library hosts traditional Chinese culture knowledge competition, lectures, children's programming courses, science education trips and classic film appreciation.

In fact, the traditional Chinese culture knowledge competition for youth and the Weekend Story Moment were city-level award-winning programs in 2023 and 2024, respectively.

In addition, the library also fully makes use of the night time: offering parents and kids opportunities to engage in fun activities such as fan painting, traditional Chinese paper making and bookplate printing.

"The library tries to focus on five major areas including reading environment, activities and services to make itself a friendly space," said Zhang Yanyun, head of the training department at Jiading Library.

During the winter vacation, it will continue to organize parent-kid workshops and lectures for minors.



Children's Council for more feedback

In September 2024, Jiading District launched its Children's Council on how to create a children-friendly urban reading space. Twenty-two young council members, based on their daily observations and reflection, passed on their observations and ideas on improving services at children-friendly libraries.

Other adaptations toward a children-friendly reading venue include: training staff on improving child services; cultivating professionals for promoting reading among children; asking residents to be guests and observers; and inviting families with kids into the venue.

From January to November 2024, Jiading Library hosted a total of 259 children's activities, attracting 117,000 participants. About 359,000 minors visited the library during the 11-month period.

From January 1 to December 23, the total children's book circulation number reached 789,000. The children's quarter registered around 2,000 visitors per day on weekends.

"We'll continue to explore new models and scenarios to better serve our young readers and cultivate their interest in books," said Cui Zheyuan, curator of Jiading Library.

At the Children's Council meeting last September, 22 young members proposed ideas to enhance children-friendly services in public libraries.

