



Massachusetts Libraries

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

Mind in the Making:

FACT SHEET

Engaging Young Children in Interactive Learning and Doing

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program allows public libraries to apply for a one-year grant ranging from \$7,500 to \$10,000 to carry out a program to establish or enhance play spaces for children ages 0-6 in public libraries. These play spaces are aimed at early learning and social interaction among children and their caregivers. Funds may be used to support a limited amount of additional staff hours.

Suggested components include:

- Create an interactive play and flexible learning space that may include an interchangeable or rotating space for a post office, store, kitchen or school. An area may be set up to include a writing center, art cart and a special area designated for babies.
- Materials may be purchased in support of emergent reading, writing, and fine motor skills. These activities will help develop the young child's imagination and cognitive development.
- Space designated for tinkering and invention. Children will be encouraged to explore in tactile, real ways about simple concepts that are presented. Tinkering fuels a child's natural curiosity about life but can also teach valuable lessons by helping develop fine motor skills, problem solving abilities, and peer relationships.
- Complementary activities could include development of a Countdown to Kindergarten program, family programs on "Brain Building in Progress" or creation of Creativity Kits to be borrowed by parents and caregivers and used in local preschools.
- Funds can be used to develop collections of print and digital materials and realia such as maker and DIY kits e.g. Snap Circuits, Little Bits. Small interactive panels such as those developed by Burgeon group or created by local craftsmen could be placed on shelving units to provide independent opportunities for hands-on learning.

ELIGIBILITY

Any public library that meets standard eligibility requirements for Direct Grant programs and has identified a need to serve young children in their long range plans are eligible to apply.

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent form with the "Mind in the Making" option checked off. If you need more information about this program, call Shelley Quezada at the MBLC at 800-952 7403 ext. 235 or email shelley.quezada@state.ma.us

BACKGROUND

Since 2012 the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has invested over 8.5 million dollars in projects supporting early learning. In a recent publication ***Growing Young Minds***, IMLS highlighted how libraries and museums can support the development of executive function and “deeper learning skills” through literacy and hands on-experiences. These practices help address the important social, emotional and cognitive aspects of learning and foster persistence, self-direction, critical thinking and problem solving.

Ellen Galinsky, President and Co-Founder of the Families and Work Institute whose book Mind in the Making has grouped research into 7 critical areas that children need most. These executive function life skills include: focus and self-control, perspective taking, communicating, making connections, critical thinking, taking on challenges and self-directed, engaged learning. Library programs that provide play and inquiry-based programs can demonstrate how to create new and innovative ways to promote these skills through family engagement and by working with community partners such as local preschools, Head Start and youth organizations.

It has been observed that tinkering is critical to children’s motor skills as they learn to use their hands to shape, move, and manipulate objects. Tinkering activities can also build peer relationships among children by encouraging collaboration as they work on projects together. They may provide opportunities to strengthen family relationships when children and caregivers are learning together.

Taking note of information about ‘deeper learning skills’, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care is currently in the process of developing Pre-School and Kindergarten Standards in the Domains of Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning. Expanding opportunities for young children to participate in creative play activities in the library as well as to build, problem solve, think critically and even embrace failure will result in their becoming more confident and engaged learners.

2013 -2017 MASSACHUSETTS LONG RANGE PLAN GOAL & OBJECTIVE

Goal 1: Support learners of all ages with their individual educational and learning goals.

Objective 2: MBLC supports literacy programs for all ages.