

The Concord Free Public Library was recently awarded a Library Services and Technology Act grant for \$7500 from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. "We're excited about the innovative local library projects being developed with the help of these grants," said Cindy Roach, Head of Library Advisory and Development at the MBLC. "They benefit local residents and communities."

The Concord Free Public Library plans to use the **Mind in the Making** grant funding to develop innovative programming and spaces that encourage invention and tinkering, where children ages 0-6 can explore simple concepts in tactile, real ways. This kind of space fuels a child's natural curiosity and teaches valuable lessons by helping them develop fine motor skills, problem solving abilities, and peer relationships. Activities will include family programs on literacy and creativity, board book bins with manipulative panels for toddler play, portable theme play areas including space and pirate dramatic playtimes, and creativity kits that can be borrowed by local preschools.

Since 2012 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.

LSTA is administered on the federal level by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) and in the Commonwealth by the MBLC. More information about LSTA can found at www.mass.gov/mblc.