**Growing Young Minds:  How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners**

There is a crisis in early learning in the United States.  Eighty percent of low income children are NOT reading on grade-level by third grade. Too many children are not ready for school and the sad fact is when they start behind they stay behind.

From the White House to the state house and in board rooms and living rooms across the U.S. there is growing demand that we do a better job of preparing our children for school and supporting their learning in the early years.  And museums and libraries are part of the solution.

A new report, [Growing Young Minds: How Museums and Libraries Create Lifelong Learners](http://www.imls.gov/earlylearning), from the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and the Institute for Museum and Library Services calls upon policy makers, practitioners, and parents to make full use of the nation’s network of 17,500 museums and 123,000 libraries, and the skills and talents of those who work in them, to close knowledge and opportunity gaps and give all children a strong start in learning.

The [Campaign for Grade Level Reading](http://gradelevelreading.net/) is working in 134 communities to improve school readiness, fight chronic absence and reduce the summer slide in an effort to improve reading proficiency by third grade, a key predictor of school success.  The federal [Institute of Museum and Library Services](http://www.imls.gov/)  made more than $2.5 million in grants to support the goals of the Campaign last year and will be making additional grants this year.

Together they have released Growing Young Minds,  the first ever report to examine museums and libraries as an early learning community resource.  The report:

* Frames the opportunity that makes libraries and museums a timely and valuable asset to early learning efforts,
* Identifies 10 key ways these trusted community institutions support young children’s learning,
* Recommends actions that policymakers, schools, funders, parents, museum and library professionals can take to weave libraries and museums into communities’ early learning solutions.
* Showcases examples of museums and libraries from across the country who are Success Spotlights.

With a presence in nearly every American community, museums and libraries are powerful but overlooked resources to expand early learning opportunities for all children but especially for our most vulnerable.

BUT THIS IS CHANGING – the role of libraries and museums in early learning has been recognized at the highest levels of government. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has lent his support to this report saying.

"We have to do everything we can to give all our children opportunities to get off to a strong start, and community institutions play a critical role. For parents and families, libraries and museums are a go-to resource that supports them as their child's first teacher,” said Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education. “Public and school libraries as well as all kinds of museums, science centers and zoos are trusted, welcoming places where children can make discoveries, deepen interests, and connect their natural curiosity to the wider world -- developing the skills they need for a lifetime of learning."

You can use this report to talk to policy makers about the role of libraries in the early learning landscape of your community.

Get the report at [www.imls.gov/earlylearning](http://www.imls.gov/earlylearning)