

Campaign for Grade Level Reading-Institute for Museum and Library Services

Early Learning Task Force Consultative Session

1800 M Street Northwest

Washington, D.C.

December 5, 2012

Meeting Summary

Earlier this month, the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading convened the initial meeting of a joint Early Learning Task Force. The group, which includes more than a dozen senior executives from museums and public library systems, federal health and human service agency representatives, policy advocacy groups, and IMLS and Campaign leadership, will work intensively during the next six months to examine a larger role for libraries and museums in early care and education policy and practice.

This will include renewed focus on ways to strengthen partnerships with museums and libraries within and across the Campaign's Communities Network. The IMLS and the Campaign will issue a report in mid-2013 to highlight ways museums and libraries are currently working in early education and learning at the local, state and national level, identify best practices and make recommendations for accelerated efforts.

The initial meeting of the Task Force offered an early preview of some overarching issues and themes, including the unique but often overlooked capacities of museums and libraries to:

- Authentically engage isolated children and families in early learning;
- Offer opportunities for informal education that help parents teach their children language and literacy skills, engage youth in early mathematics and science instruction, and help spark and sustain student interest in reading, science and math early on;
- Form strong partnerships with Head Start programs, public housing programs, early education and care providers to boost literacy and learning opportunities for children from low-income families;
- Convene and mobilize community coalitions to improve early education, care and literacy.

Discussions also triggered consideration of how to assure greater awareness and understanding by civic leaders, policy makers, school districts, and others of the assets, capacity, content knowledge, and expertise that museums and libraries can bring to early learning efforts in their communities –as program developers, conveners, technical assistance providers, and messengers. The following pages summarize discussion on

innovative strategies libraries and museums are using to promote early learning in their communities, ways they can help fill gaps and expand early learning services, and seize new opportunities to strengthen early learning practice and policy at the local, state and federal level.

Welcome and Overview: Task Force Call to Action and Goals

Susan Hildreth, Director of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

Hildreth stated that the Early Learning Task Force can help make state and federal policy makers more aware of the impact museums and libraries can have on improving early learning, both in their communities and across the country. This will require more intentional engagement of library and museum practitioners, infrastructure, civic officials, and policy makers.

Ralph Smith, Senior Vice President for the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Managing Director the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading:

Smith praised IMLS as an energetic and forceful partner. The Institute has the depth and reach needed to help the Campaign's 124-member Communities Network address barriers to reading proficiency by the end of third grade, especially among children from low-income families. These include lack of school readiness, chronic absence, and summer learning loss. It has become clear, Smith said, that libraries and museums can anchor work to tackle those barriers. Early learning is uniquely within the province of their mission and expertise, he added. And, as trusted local institutions, museums and libraries have the convening and staying power to help communities committed to improving grade level reading proficiency do the hard work of surfacing, connecting, linking and replicating best practice and building local capacity to sustain their efforts.

Marsha Semmel, Director for Strategic Partnerships for IMLS:

There are more than 100,000 libraries operating today in the United States, along with an estimated 18,000 museums, that can be mobilized to achieve system change and collective impact on early learning in their respective communities, Semmel noted. This is an ideal time for robust partnerships, she said, given increased coordination across the philanthropic sector and among multiple federal agencies to promote, improve and expand early learning

services.

Ron Fairchild, President and CEO, The Smarter Learning Group and Senior Consultant to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading:

A major goal of the Task Force is to catalyze and accelerate collaboration between communities and libraries and museums, both within and across the Campaign's network of sites, Fairchild said. He noted that, as a student at Vanderbilt University, he worked on a Wallace Foundation project to refurbish school libraries – an experience that taught him how important libraries are to education and literacy, and that was pivotal in his own career development.

Mimi Howard, Early Learning Specialist and former Director of Early Education Programs at the Education Commission of the States:

Task Force members constitute a “brain trust” of a strategic effort to carve out a larger role for libraries and museums in early care and education policy and practice, said Howard. Part of the effort is to tell the story of what these institutions can and have done to strengthen early learning in ways that yield recommendations and best practices - especially related to engaging parents and caregivers in early learning. In addition, IMLS and the Campaign will cast a wide net to involve practitioners, civic leaders, education specialists, foundations and others to further strengthen the effectiveness of libraries and museums in the early learning field.

Introductions and insights

In their introductions, task force members were asked to briefly share their insights about what they view as the most important early learning issue museums and libraries should address.

Focus on the connections between informal science education and early learning and literacy.

- **Judy Brown,**
Vice President of Education, Miami Science Museum

Libraries and museums should bring their early learning content knowledge and parent engagement expertise to work that governors are doing to set early learning benchmarks in their states.

- **Albert Wat,**
Senior Policy Analyst, National Governor's Association Center for Best Practice

Make sure the frame libraries and museums use to work in early learning is asset-based, especially when it comes to engaging parents. Families need to be empowered and engaged, not "fixed."

- **Kathleen Deerr,** National Coordinator, Family Place Libraries

Remember that 50 percent of those who visit children's museums are adults. We need to surface the best models of parent engagement.

- **Jeri Robinson,** Vice President of Education and Family Learning, Boston Children's Museum

Capitalize on renewed interest in civic engagement as a force for change. Note that the next issue of NCL's *National Civic Review* will focus on civic engagement efforts by public libraries.

- **Gloria Rubio-Cortes,** President, National Civic League

Leverage the research capacity of IMLS to document the impact of library and museum early learning services.

- **Susan Hildreth**

The Reggio Emilia educational philosophy supports the role libraries and museums can play in transforming the ways children and parents can learn together.

- **Julia Bland**, CEO of the Louisiana Children’s Museum and immediate past president of the Association of Children’s Museums

As states struggle with measures to retain children in 3rd grade if they are not reading proficiently, libraries and museums have an opportunity to advocate for comprehensive systems of early childhood education and care.

- **Gerry Cobb**, Director, state services for the BUILD Initiative

Build the evidence base for the connections between children’s science education and reading.

- **Dale McCreedy**, Director, Gender and Family Learning Programs, the Franklin Institute

Engaging parents and children in early learning and literacy is a core purpose of libraries and museums. Our resources must be aligned to that mission.

- **Raymond Santiago**, Director, Miami-Dade Public Library System

There are proven tools and models to help parents and other family members feel welcome at libraries and museums.

- **Kimberly Kiehl**, Executive Director, Smithsonian Enrichment Center

To have impact, libraries and museums must be willing work outside of their own walls, with parents and caregivers, and in communities.

- **Harriet Coalter**, Director, Richmond (VA) Public Library

The Campaign for Grade Level Reading provided a platform for the Long Beach Public Library to demonstrate its commitment to improving early education for low-income children. It also helped the community advocate for the library when budget cuts threatened to shut it down.

Joseph Prevatil, President and CEO of the Archstone Foundation and President-elect of the Long Beach Public Library Foundation

We are able to engage more preschool children in our programs than any other organization in Philadelphia. Our most effective programs engage parents and children and send the message that reading is fun.

- **Betsy Orsburn**, Interim Director of Public Service, Free Library of Philadelphia:

The ability of museums and libraries to provide children and families with rich experiential learning is a major leverage point for deepening our engagement in early learning.

- **Cheryl McCallum**, Director of Education, Houston Children's Museum

Libraries and museums must be rigorous in assessing the impact of their work on school readiness, summer learning and other areas. We also must create cultures that are built around what children and families want, not just our respective areas of expertise.

- **Allison Circle**, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Columbus Metropolitan Library

How can libraries and museums work with the growing number non-profit, federal and philanthropic initiatives who are using a collective impact approach to improve early learning? How can we all learn to use the same language, goals and and success measures? A two-generation approach is critical, because research shows children do better in school when their parents have more education. Libraries and museums have lots of experience creating diverse, welcoming, multi-generational environments that are formed by a universal love of learning.

- **Nina Salazar O'Donnell**, Vice President for Education, United Way Worldwide

Despite expansion of pre-K programs, most children receive preschool education and care in a variety of settings, including with families, friends and neighbors. The library and museum are often the places that bring children and families from different settings together.

- **Shannon Rudisill**, Director of the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Continue moving toward active environments in libraries and museums that help parents engage in their children's learning.

- **Clara Bohrer**, Director, West Bloomfield Township Public Library

The issue is connectedness: How do we show connections between children's health and literacy? How do we work with new partners, including public housing authorities and Head Start programs? How do we help provide professional development for child care providers? Language skills are the basis for all higher learning, so we need to connect this work to early math

and science instruction.

- **Andrew Ackerman**, Executive Director, Children’s Museum of Manhattan

What is the role of libraries and museums in using technology to help give parents guidance on the visual media they and their children are swimming in? Guernsey noted that she and Michael Levine, executive director for the Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop have issued a new report, *Pioneering Literacy in the Digital Wild West: Empowering Parents and Educators* (http://www.joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/GLR_TechnologyGuide_final.pdf) on technology and early literacy that can help set the stage on this issue for the task force.

- **Lisa Guernsey**, Director of the Early Education Initiative for the New America Foundation, and editor of the Early Ed Watch blog

Creativity and persistence can be as important as money. With policy makers, the Commission has worked to convey the value of informal education. One fact that grabs people’s attention: By the time a child is in 4th grade, he or she will have spent 7 percent of their time in a classroom, and 93 percent outside of it.

- **Ann Joslin**, State Librarian, Idaho Commission for Libraries and president of Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

Engaging families in their children’s learning can pose tremendous challenges, especially for parents who had difficult experiences with the education system and are “re-traumatized” when they see their kids struggle in school. Libraries can provide better models to engage isolated families as well as providers, using technology and other methods to reach outside the classroom. Remember that libraries are trusted places for many immigrant families.

- **Miriam Calderon**, Senior Policy Advisor for Early Learning White House Domestic Policy Council

The Campaign can help develop media products and tools that can help libraries and museums engage in work to improve school readiness, combat chronic absence, and prevent summer learning loss in ways that engage parents and extended families.

- **Joy Moore**, Communications Manager, the Campaign for Grade Level Reading

Museums offer children a deeper understanding of what words mean through one-on-one interaction with children and families--even in a crowded

museum, people want to engage with a human in experiential learning. At the same time, it is important to build learning communities internally and externally, using digital media and other tools. All of this work involves a culture change for museums. Although few of us have enough money to do everything that's needed, there is more than enough brainpower to put new ideas into action, especially for isolated children and families.

- **Claudine Brown**, Assistant Secretary for Education and Access, the Smithsonian Institution

Children need access to books and other materials with characters who look and learn like them. Native American children are especially vulnerable to stereotypes perpetuated by children's literature that is not culturally accurate and/or informed by their experience. Libraries also have a role to play in informing the publishing industry about what books are culturally accurate for children and families of different ethnicities and sovereign nations, and which ones aren't.

- **Debbie Reese** (Nambe Pueblo), Founder, American Indians in Children's Literature

We need to sit at policy and decision-making tables to increase awareness among elected officials, school district leaders and others about what libraries do to promote early learning and literacy for all children.

- **Shirley Amore**, City Librarian, Denver Public Library

Libraries can help lead early learning initiatives in their states, in part by assessing, improving and replicating the early learning services they offer. With support from IMLS, public libraries in Washington State are working with community agencies, higher education, funders and a collaborative of 25 urban, suburban and rural libraries to study the effectiveness of story times and other programs. Study findings are helping develop tools to help more libraries improve and expand early learning services, as well as inform statewide efforts, including the state's federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund grant.

- **Eliza Dresang**, Beverly Cleary Professor for Children and Youth, University of Washington

As a partner in the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, the National League of Cities can help libraries communicate their role and work in early learning to other city government officials and agencies, including department heads, city managers, and mayor's education advisors.

- **Tonja Rucker**, Principal Associate for Early Childhood Development, National League of Cities

The Current landscape: Perspectives on early learning policy and practice

Jeff Capizzano, president of the Policy Equity Group – a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm that provides advocacy, research, and communications support to organizations seeking positive social impact – was asked to share his views on how museums and libraries can influence policy and practice at the local, state and federal levels to improve early learning.

Capizzano outlined two major roles for libraries and museums in improving early learning practice and policy:

- (1) **Filling the gaps** among early childhood programs and policies that reach only a limited number of children and/or which are lacking in quality. Capizzano cited 2010 U.S. Census SIPP (Survey of Income and Program Participation) data that show 38 percent of children five years old and younger have no regular arrangement for formal early education and care, compared to 23 percent who are in center-based programs, and 26 percent who are with relatives. And those most likely to be disconnected from quality education and care are the youngest children and children of color, he said. **Dosage can matter as much as quality**. How often do children and families need to attend a quality story time at a local library for it to have an impact on learning? Libraries and museums must find new ways assess impact of their services on early learning.

- (2) **Helping align early learning infrastructure** to improve service coordination, program quality, and child outcomes. Programs such as Title I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Child Care Development Fund, Head Start, and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program **don't constitute a coordinated continuum of services and supports** for children from birth through age 8. Capizzano stressed that the Task Force could support polices that are working toward a more seamless system. These including state Early Learning Advisory Councils, Birth to Five pilot projects, Head Start "re-compete" funding, the federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative, quality rating and improvement systems, and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge fund.

Capizzano showed how Maryland has aligned language and literacy standards across a range of federal and state programs. The IMLS/Campaign Partnership could highlight how libraries and museums can help respective states achieve similar coordination. But he cautioned that such help must be offered in recognition of the realities faced by under-resourced and under-the-gun policy makers and early learning and care agencies.

Dialogue: What's happening in museums and libraries today?

An exchange of innovative approaches to programs and services

Partnering with Head Start programs

Several speakers noted strong partnerships with Head Start programs. For example, Ackerman said the museum has developed early literacy services and anti-obesity curricula, with IMLS and National Institutes of Health support, that is used by Head Start agencies (as well as by families in public housing). These efforts engage not only children and parents but also teachers and food service workers. Robinson said the Boston Children's Museum – with support from an IMLS grant - works with a consortium of 26 Head Start programs to help assure successful transitions to kindergarten by offering children and parents a model classroom and materials at the museum available year round. Many Head Starts and other early education programs work in isolation of each other and don't have relationships with school systems, she said. The museum used its convening power to bring them together.

Partnering with state early learning agencies and initiatives

The Massachusetts Department of Early Care and Education asked the Boston Children's Museum to convene libraries and museums statewide as part of the state's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund grant, said Robinson. They are working on STEM education, informing parents about brain development, helping engage parents as first teachers. "It was an issue of making the connection, and then being the convener," she said. The partnership with the state has demonstrated how libraries and museum parent outreach efforts are unique in their ability to cut across cultural and socio-economic divides.

Bringing in health and social service providers

Family Place Libraries bring speech pathologists, child development specialists, and others to observe children at play and help parents connect to screening and follow up services, said **Deerr**. "Pediatricians do not always know," when there is a development delay or other health issues, because they don't see children at play, she said.

Putting early learning at the core of the library mission

All 500 staff members working at Miami-Dade public libraries 50 branches are trained in the pre-literacy skills children need to be reading ready, Santiago said. The library also helps train early education and care providers. "It is does not depend on our budget," he said. It is a core part of what we

do – it is not extra.” Family Place Libraries have helped train about 800 librarians on brain development, said **Deerr.** “

Starting science education early

The Miami Museum of Science helps teachers at 95 Head Start centers in Miami-Dade County introduce children to hands-on science activities, said Brown. Many of the teachers are uncomfortable with the subject matter, but Brown said early childhood may be the best age to introduce children to science. She recalled when, as an education director for Head Start programs in New York City and San Francisco, many believed children should not be taught to read before age 6. “It was said to be the magic age,” Brown said. “They now say we cannot do science.” The Miami museum has developed a researched based approach called EIEIO -- Excite, Introduce, Explore, Interact, and Outcomes -- where children learn in small groups about plants, animals and insects, as well as basis scientific process skills such as observation and measurement. In the Common Core Standards, “there is a push to teach kids more about their ability to look at text that is non-fiction and draw conclusions from it,” Brown said.

Mobilizing volunteers, educating teachers, parents and caregivers in early learning

Amore said the Denver Public Libraries have mobilized more than 150 volunteers for its Read Aloud program, which serves low-income children in Head Start and other early education centers. Denver libraries also have strengthened early learning efforts with the Every Child Ready to Read (ECCR) toolkit, developed by the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, to help parents and caregivers improve children’s reading readiness, and by helping teachers with effective story telling models. Orsburn noted that parents are not always able to attend story hour every week, so it is important to provide parents with information in short sound bites so that eventually they are able to self-assess their interactions with children.

Reaching out to immigrant families

The Columbus Metropolitan Library is developing a home party approach to reach immigrant families with Ready to Read materials, said Circle. They developed this strategy after learning that some immigrant mothers are more comfortable learning with their peers than one-on-one. Santiago noted that 70 percent of the families served by by the library system in Miami Dade County speak English as a secondary language, so all the early learning materials they distribute are translated into Spanish and other languages.

Engaging afterschool advocates, public television and museum and library boards

Several Task Force members noted need for libraries and museums to broaden collaboration with natural but sometimes overlooked allies such as after school advocates and public television. Library and museum boards of directors usually include influential community leaders, who can help raise awareness of the role of libraries and museums in early education.

Keeping it fun and welcoming

What do kids need to read, and what do they love to do, asked Ackerman. Interactive media, such as the Children Museum of Manhattan's Alfie the Talking Dragon, close the gap between the two because they are effective and entertaining ways to teach language skills. Family Place Libraries put a premium on open-ended play for children from 0-3, because blocks, kitchen sets, puppets and other toys encourage interaction between kids and parents, said Deerr. Coaching and supports are offered by staff one-on-one with parents in ways that help build trust. "Parents do not want real formal instruction," she said. "They want it informal, and they need to like you. If they like you, they will come back." Brown, Bohrer, and others spoke about the power of highly experiential environments and authentic artifacts to bolster learning for children and their parents.

What are the challenges of working in early learning?

What libraries and museums need to keep in mind to make the case

Engaging school districts

Many schools no longer have libraries, and those that do don't fund them well enough to make an impact on early literacy, said Joslin. In addition, some districts also need to review their library policies, including not letting kindergarten and first grade students check out and take home books. Public library systems may need to find entry points into school districts beyond the school library, added Bohrer. One of those may be the spring kindergarten registration period, when libraries can offer summer reading programs to parents and schools to help assure good transitions, said Joslin.

Assessing impact

Museums and libraries may need to move beyond individual measures of dosage and toward **assessing the scope impact of the work of their work on a community-wide "critical mass" basis**, said Ackerman. Getting **student data from school districts** to determine the impact of library and museum early learning services can be very hard to do, Hildreth noted. **Measuring changes in parent behavior** – such as whether they are reading more to their children, are knowledgeable about early literacy – is also difficult, added Calderon. Even Start, the federal program that promotes early childhood education in part through parent education and training, has had difficulty in measuring how changes in parent behavior to promote early literacy impacted their children's learning. One entry point may be movement in many states toward improved kindergarten readiness assessments, said the University of Washington's Dresang. She noted libraries are emerging as strong partners in the state's new kindergarten assessment initiative, which will include efforts to help connect parents to library services.

Changing perspectives

Toys are learning tools the same as books, said Deerr. Children need both, and libraries may need to rethink their learning space – **they can't always be "neat and nice."** Ackerman noted that interactive play with popular animated characters such as Dora and Diego at Manhattan Children's Museum have high language content but **aren't labeled as reading activities.**

Kiehl noted some of language we use may need to change, as well. Using terms like "day care" can inadvertently encourage a focus on literally just getting kids through the day. "Child care" can tend to shift emphasis where it belongs. Even better -- **"When we say they are 'early learning teachers'**

it makes a big difference," she said.

Salazar-O'Donnell added we can learn from San Antonio's work in the federal Promise Neighborhood initiative, where parents are engaged as full partners in the work – conducting home visits, organizing other parents, and getting certification and degrees in early education. "We cannot just be professionals telling parents what to do," she said. **"We have to treat parents as equals."**

Small Group Discussions and Report Out

How libraries and museums can fill existing gaps and expand services and programs offered through other institutions and initiative

Redefine and re-position library and museum roles in early learning

Recognize that there is an opportunity for libraries and museums to define/re-define themselves as places with the content and expertise to improve early learning for all children, mobilize “critical mass” community-wide initiatives, convene diverse partners, and engage parents. Seize opportunities to strengthen parent engagement in child care quality rating and improvement standards, district-level Race to the Top education reforms, and other federal and state local early learning efforts. Mobilize libraries and museums to help close the content and digital divides between low-income and more affluent

“The solution is not always creating a new thing,” said Semmel. “We need to bring together what exists in a new way.”

children and families, using libraries and museum staff as guides and mentors for families. And, make sure parent voices are part of this effort. Tap into their wisdom and experience engage their skills in museum and library early learning services, engage them as advocates.

Set policy change targets, document impact of early learning services and supports

Develop a specific policy agenda; at the state level, identify ways to influence after school programs, professional development for early education teachers, and community-based early education efforts.

Agree on a common set of outcomes related to early learning/parent engagement that enable libraries and museums can document, measure and use to impact policy and practice.

One small group recommended the project team work to give competitive priorities to federal early learning grant applicants who make explicit commitments to partnerships with libraries and museums.

Position library and museum staff as early learning, reading, and literacy coaches and technical assistance providers

Museums and libraries can strengthen the early education capacity and skills of community-based, social service providers, and other intermediary organizations. They can offer professional development/technical assistance to elementary school teachers on ways to improve reading instruction (i.e. phonetic awareness or syllabification) in the early grades.

What are other the key policy levers that museums and libraries should be addressing in their program development?

Seek out new policy making allies, and deepen partnerships with school district and other community stakeholders.

Engage the National Conference of State Legislators, the Council of State School Officers, American Association of School Administrators, and other groups to help educate policy makers about the role of libraries and museums in early learning. Unpack the dynamics of partnerships with school districts, housing authorities, and potential allies: what can libraries and museums learn from current collaborations, and what else do we need to know?

Build on the innate strengths of libraries and museums and their role across the learning continuum. Deepen early learning expertise within our own organizations.

"Finding your passion is what drives people to learn," Ackerman said. "It is hard to measure, but if you ask someone on Capitol Hill what drove their learning, they will say it was informal learning."

Libraries and museums can transcend educational policy and "flavor of the month" education reforms by deepening their relationships and roots with the communities they serve. We have a unique capacity to motivate children's love of learning and help them find their passions, without putting them into the discipline "silos" of the school day. Focus on early learning as key to a 21st century workforce, and library and museum roles across the life long learning continuum, including college readiness and adult learning. Identify our core messages and craft elevator speeches about the role of libraries and museums in early learning and pay attention to capacity building around early learning within libraries and museums; we shouldn't assume a level of expertise and knowledge that isn't there

*What current or emerging **strategic opportunities** can be leveraged to bring museums and libraries to the decision-making table, and **position these organizations in the eyes of civic leaders**, other stakeholders and policy makers as integral contributors to an early learning agenda?*

Getting to policy and decision-making tables

Library and museum representatives must get to and stay at the tables where early learning policy and practice are crafted, at the federal, state, and local level. At the federal level, IMLS has established relationships with the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care in the Department of Health and Human Services and with the newly created Office of Early Learning at the Department of Education. In addition, IMLS has recently joined the Early Childhood Federal Partners group, focused on cross-agency communication and cooperation. At the state and local levels, museums and libraries can play a role on state Early Learning Advisory Committees, in school districts and local workforce boards. Libraries and museums are well positioned to work with and represent parents and diverse community and ethnic groups.

Defining and clarifying what libraries and museums have to offer

Museum and library leaders must step back and define succinctly what libraries and museums can offer to early learning policy makers, programs, educators and practitioners. There is an implicit knowledge of what these assets are – including staying power and strong reputations – but they need to be communicated more broadly with clarity and precision. There is a built in audience for what these institutions have to contribute to improving school readiness, preventing summer learning loss, and combatting chronic absence. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading also offers an opportunity to pilot an increased role for libraries and museums in its efforts.

“In terms of strategies and opportunities, there lot of grousing about school districts, but can we step back and try to figure out what we have that is unique to help them and get that conversation started?” said Hildreth. “That is the opportunity writ large. We have a lot of assets; how can we package them to get our message to them and incent other entities to be partners.”

The challenge is to be clear on the business that libraries and museums are in, and make sure that understanding is shared by everyone in our organizations.

Identifying who else can help

Task force members were asked to list who they think is missing from this conversation—other thought leaders in their areas of work/expertise

who should be contacted. Responses included museum and library service organizations, parents, children, early learning educators and child care providers, higher education, reading and mentoring volunteers, principals, elected officials, teacher unions, the AARP, after school and summer learning leaders, and representatives engaged in statewide child care quality improvement efforts.

Next steps: The Road Ahead

Fairchild, Semmel and Hildreth outlined some important short-term follow up steps for the Task Force:

- Accelerate library and museum partnerships within the Campaign for Grade Level Reading's Communities Network
- Further define how IMLS can help libraries and museums move forward on early literacy, both through tapping leaders in the field and through its own long-term strategic planning
- Continue outreach to federal level policy makers, informing them about the Task Force's mission and goals and looking for ways to scale up this effort.