

YALSA Board of Directors
Midwinter Meeting, Virtual
January 22-26, 2021

Topic: Teen Civic Engagement Committee

Background: For many years, YALSA has put a high priority on advocacy for teens and libraries. At Midwinter 2019 the YALSA Board approved the creation of the 22x20 Taskforce to work with other national organizations to support the 22 million teen voters that would be eligible to cast a vote in the 2020 presidential election. At the Annual Meeting 2020 the board identified a need to inventory and update advocacy resources for YALSA members, specifically in the area of helping members build teen civic engagement skills. The 22x20 Taskforce presents this proposal to sustain civic engagement efforts to support teens and members.

Action Required: Action

Proposal:

Establish an annual committee or taskforce to create resources, training, and events that support members in centering diverse teen voices and elevating the issues that are important to them.

Rationale:

YALSA has long named advocacy and civic engagement as core tenants to our organization and putting teens first. However, YALSA has not consistently dedicated resources to supporting members in this goal. A dedicated committee or taskforce would create new resources and learning opportunities, update past resources and keep this topic top-of-mind for staff serving teens in libraries. We know that civic engagement isn't something that only happens around election time, and isn't limited to political action. YALSA should broaden its advocacy efforts to include more types of civic engagement and year-round activities. Additionally:

- The 2017 member survey results show that members need specific areas of support related to advocacy efforts.
- Results of the 2021 Community Listening Taskforce

Questions to Explore

- How can YALSA resources be optimally updated, organized and accessible to diverse audiences?
- What resources exist from outside of YALSA that align with YALSA and YALSA members' advocacy needs, and that could be leveraged instead of creating our own from scratch?
- How can YALSA partner with other ALA divisions to increase impact? For instance Every Child Ready to read is an ALA project that focuses on the basic building blocks.

What if YALSA, ALSC and PLA worked together to develop a series of training sessions, toolkits and funded programs that would demonstrate a spectrum of civic engagement programming. It is known that civic engagement is a skill that needs to be taught over time and that there are multiple components to engagement. These skills can be introduced prior to voting age.

Financial Impact

Staff resources will be used to establish the taskforce and promote developed resources. Member time will be used to curate and create resources and opportunities.

Measuring Impact

Evaluation methods will be established by the taskforce depending on the developed resources and opportunities. For example, short term impact can be measured using web analytics and attendance and virtual events. Measurements and reports should be shared year to year to ensure seamless transition of committee work to new members.

Proposed Action

The board moves to direct the President to appoint a committee by March 2021 who will create, update and advertise resources and events that support YALSA members in centering diverse teen voices and elevating the issues that are important to them.

Additional Resources

- 2017 member survey results:
www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/MemberSurveyResults17.pdf
- 22x20 National Campaign:
http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/Item%20%2311_22x20%20National%20Campaign.pdf

YALSA Advocacy Resources: Community Listening Task Force:

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/YALSA%20Advocacy%20Resources%20Community%20Listening%20Task%20Force%20Board%20Doc.pdf>

Final Report 22x20

Committee Jury or Task Force Function Statement *

Establish a Taskforce to create resources for members to leverage as YALSA's in-kind contribution to the 22x20 coalition. With a focus on media literacy, this campaign aspires to equip teens with the skills needed and provide them with the resources and space to understand,

evaluate, and respond to political messages. *By engaging teens early, before voting age, the campaign readies teen voices to participate in the democratic process and civic duties.*

What were the accomplishments of your group's work in the last year? *

The Taskforce quickly realized that this is a large topic; however, most libraries and library staff were going to focus on the “voting” aspect. This was the purpose behind our first project - creating the “Get in the Game” poster. This poster would provide a way for library staff to promote voting with the flexibility needed by each community. Navigating the voting/election process is difficult because it is not uniform; the team attempted to generalize the steps into marketing materials that could highlight the important pieces of information/”steps” needed to participate in the voting process.

Next, the Taskforce discussed “what’s the best way to communicate information” - It’s important to find a way to share resources, having discussion, etc. that would capture the largest audiences. Blog posts give the taskforce an opportunity to share information with members. The committee created a schedule for creating and posting to the YALSA blog. Efforts to put out new posts on a timely schedule were hampered by both the pandemic (turning committee member jobs upside down and changing the pertinent information included in posts) and communication issues with YALSA blog manager which led to misunderstanding of when content was approved for publishing. Blog posts are still an effective way to reach membership, and create long lasting content that can be accessed in the future. The YALSA blog should still be considered a valuable way for this committee to reach members. **The Taskforce recommends a recurring Civic Engagement series to highlight all aspects of civic engagement programming.**

At the same time, we investigated what information is available on Programming HQ. Dawn was invited to a meeting to share information about HQ and the process involved, etc. We learned that Programming HQ is essentially a one person operation and has almost no content regarding teen civic engagement and getting contributions is a struggle. The team created a list of individuals to contact to share civic engagement program information for HQ. We reviewed past presentations at symposium, ALA and featured programs in YALS. **The Taskforce recommends that future presenters and featured programs in YALS are automatically prompted to submit an entry to the Programming HQ.**

The Taskforce was able to share resources from CIRCLE and YALSA via several conference presentations. We felt we needed to go to membership to share resources and to increase the awareness of YALSA’s resources and gain insight into the needs of teen servicing staff. The taskforce applied for conference presentations throughout the nation so we could get perspectives from various audiences. In general the conferences were smashing successes; we recruited assistance from one of the partner organizations of the 22x20 campaign - CIRCLE. Abby Kiesa presented to the team the various updates on the campaign and resources the CIRCLE provided.

These are some conference highlights:

PLA Nashville -Promoting Civic Engagement for Teens

This presentation provided a brief introduction to YALSA resources, CIRCLE data that provides the justification/background needed for youth advocacy. Finally, we provided some examples of successful programs. The presentation was well received by attendees and CIRCLE was invited to participate in other ALA events. One of the final questions asked by several audience members was advocacy work for teens in juvenile centers. This session was highlighted in PLA's epublication, "Ten essential programs..

YALSA Symposium - Memphis Civic Engagement Preconference

The team joined Candice Mack in the teen civic engagement presentation. The presentation features several examples from California programs and 22x20 provided some resources and data that library staff may need in getting teens civically involved.

NELA 2019 - Starting from the Ground Up: How to Promote Civic Engagement and Informed Teen Voters

This presentation covered teen voter registration and voting resources for the New England states represented by NELA. Additional resources for librarians who wanted to talk about politics within the bounds of their positions, how/where to post voting information, and how to promote ballot initiatives and issues to teens were shared.

CLA 2019 - Political Engagement Now for the Voters of Tomorrow

This presentation covered some statistical data provided by CIRCLE, voting resources at the local, state and national level, teen programming and partnership ideas to promote civic engagement.

The election cycle was unprecedented and disrupted on a daily basis. Election education/awareness includes discussions about "why" there are debates, delegates, national conventions, etc. Providing programming and event planning advice brought about unique challenges, with COVID-19 there was constant uncertainty about debate schedules, convention dates, and how to provide this all virtually to contend with library closures and uncertain library service models. We quickly realized that blogging out resources was our best way forward and we also realized staff needed support during these difficult times; we fast-tracked a final webinar for staff self-care in response. **The Taskforce recommends that each election cycle is granted a unique planning group to push new and innovative civic engagement programs and opportunities.**

What news or information related to your group do you plan to share with YALSA members at the end of your term and how will you share it?

We have a webinar scheduled for the end of term that will provide support for librarians serving the public during this difficult and divided time. This is an important aspect of teen civic engagement, especially in a polarized society.

If your work is continuing, what feedback would you like to pass on to the next group?

Taskforce tenure ends on December 31, 2020; however, our recommendations can be found throughout our final report..

Do you know of any YALSA "stars" who we can encourage to be future YALSA leaders?

Additional Concerns or Comments:

This Taskforce had the opportunity to focus on teen civic engagement from a direct and practical lense. We have learned several lessons:

- **Programming information** - resources need to be easier to find.
The taskforce had limited success finding sample programs that were easy to find on the YALSA website. Programming HQ had almost no programs listed. The taskforce reviewed YALS editions and presentations to gather a list of programs to showcase. Staff looking to get started, programming ideas, etc. would have a difficult time locating the information.
- **The idea of Teen Civic Engagement project.**
Every child ready to read is an ALA project that focuses on the basic building blocks. We propose that YALSA, ALSC and PLA work together to develop a series of training sessions, toolkits and funded programs that would demonstrate a spectrum of civic engagement programming. It is known that civic engagement is a skill that needs to be taught over time and that there are multiple components to engagement. These skills can be introduced prior to voting age.
- **The Taskforce recommends that in the future that taskforces have defined purpose or outcomes that will guide the work/time of the members. Additionally, we strongly recommend that any partnership, even as in-kind support, have an MOU or other documents clearly defining roles and expectations.**The Taskforce also encountered some difficulties due to organizational factors; our partner for the campaign is no longer in operation. The Taskforce was originally created to support the 22x20 campaign, which was started by LAMP. There were some very big complications in the early days. The previous YALSA director resigned and didn't leave guidance for the taskforce and the LAMP went through some internal issues and eventually dismantled. Yvette, chair, reached out to the other partner organization for updates and information about campaign activities. Abby Kiesa, CIRCLE, was thrilled, enthusiastic and willing to help; however, we weren't sure of the expected outcomes. This will ensure communication and understanding of expectations for everyone involved.