

Everyday Advocacy Matters

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From the Editor

Rethinking New Year's Resolutions



Look out, 2014! You're no match for my awesome New Year's resolutions.

This is the year I lose the weight, get to the gym, and pick up groceries instead of take-out.

This is the year I finish my flannel board manual proposal, become a teen book reviewer, and create a full range of school-age STEAM programming at my branch.

Yes! I can do it all—can't I?

Well, if I had a superpower, magic wand, or clone, maybe I could tackle this ambitious list. But as much as I'd like to chalk up all these successes in 2014, I know I'm better off choosing one or two realistic, achievable goals instead. (I'll aim for talking to the produce guy instead of the pizza guy and doing one STEAM program a month.)

Sound familiar? Of course it does! We're children's librarians, and we're constantly trying to be everything to everyone all the time. It's only natural that our perennial excitement and motivation would result in lofty lists of things we want to accomplish in the New Year.

As you consider your own 2014 resolutions, I hope you'll include Everyday Advocacy activities among them. Designed with busy ALSC members in mind, each suggestion fits the realistic and achievable bill.

Here's a taste of the ways you can invest your time this year to deliver the maximum impact for children, families, and libraries:

- Strong Start for America's Children Act. Tweet the U.S. Senators involved in this legislation and ask them to include libraries as eligible entities for funding.
- National Library Legislative Day. Learn more about the ways you can take part in person or virtually this May. NLLD registration opens in late January.
- Take Action Tuesday! Beginning in February, we'll provide you with a simple action-oriented suggestion each week for getting and staying involved in local, state, or national advocacy efforts.
- Advocacy Workshop at the 2014 ALSC National Institute. Learn how you're already an Everyday Advocate from the real experts—your ALSC colleagues—while engaging in hands-on activities and practical applications of advocacy basics.

Remember, the Everyday Advocacy website is filled with tips, tools, and techniques to support your advocacy efforts every step of the way.

Resolve to be an Everyday Advocate in 2014. Seriously, this is your year!

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Everyday Advocacy Spotlight

Countdown to Kindergarten: Advocating for School Readiness

R. Lynn Baker, Youth Services Specialist
Paul Sawyier Public Library (Frankfort, KY)

The state of Kentucky was one of 17 states involved in the School Readiness Indicators Initiative, which worked with representatives over the span of three years to develop state-level indicators of school readiness. The indicators have been used on the state and local level to inform school readiness policy with the goal of helping to better prepare children, families, schools, and communities for a child's entrance into school for the first time. As early literacy community service leaders, Kentucky public libraries are establishing themselves as essential to the state's school readiness initiative through the creation of the Kentucky Public Library School Readiness Task Force. The following article provides information behind my involvement with the Task Force.

As the Youth Services Specialist at Paul Sawyer Public Library in Frankfort, KY, and a former preschool and kindergarten teacher, I have seen the impact of Kentucky public library efforts to help prepare children and families for kindergarten. In the spring of 2013, I proposed a school readiness program for our library, which we now call Countdown to Kindergarten. This program provided a platform for our already occurring early literacy efforts and the opportunity to advocate for public library services among the spectrum of school readiness services within our community.

While developing our Countdown program, I met with community kindergarten, preschool, and daycare teachers, which helped us build the program around the skills teachers believed were most important for children preparing to enter kindergarten. This collaboration has helped us gain important teacher support and promotion of the program: We have offered information about the Countdown program at kindergarten registration events at individual schools as well as through preschool and daycare materials.

Countdown to Kindergarten was also built around the Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood definition of school readiness and has integrated each of the state readiness domains into the curriculum. The six early literacy skills and five practices of Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® are interwoven into the principles of the program as well as state and national early childhood and common core standards.

A Countdown calendar is provided to each child and parent participating in the program. The calendar includes monthly activities for parents/caregivers to do with children at home to help build important kindergarten readiness skills, along with a readiness checklist, and suggested books to read from the library's 50 Books to Read before Kindergarten list. Individual school registration information appears on the back of each calendar, including information about the documents needed for kindergarten registration.

Countdown to Kindergarten is divided into two phases. The fall program is especially for parents of preschool children who will be entering kindergarten the following fall. The second phase of the program is a six-week session for children and families to attend together. The parent-and-child-together sessions foster early literacy skills by modeling practices through enjoyable hands-on activities that families can easily replicate at home.

The intention of this two-fold approach is to establish relationships with participating families over the course of the preschool child's last year before beginning kindergarten while also linking families with their community and schools. This collaborative model provides the library with the best opportunity to make the biggest impact on preparing children, families, schools, and communities for the first day of kindergarten.

I was invited to present Countdown to Kindergarten at the Kentucky Library Association/Kentucky Association of School Librarians Joint Conference in September 2013. At the conference, I presented an outline of the program and how it was developed. Several public librarians who attended the session asked if I would be willing to collaborate and possibly share the Countdown calendar I created for our library's program.

After the conference, I contacted Heather Dieffenbach, Children's and Youth Services Consultant at the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, about (1) the possibility of public libraries within our state working together to develop standards for school readiness programming and (2) an initiative to promote public library early literacy programming among school readiness services. Heather was very supportive of the idea and worked to organize the development of a task force.

The Kentucky Public Library School Readiness Task Force was announced, and within a couple of weeks, over fifty state public library representatives from every region within the state had agreed to be a part of the effort! Within the month, representatives from the Kentucky Department of Education, the University of Kentucky, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, and additional representatives from the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives agreed to be a part of the initiative.

The Task Force met for the first time on November 22, 2013, and was addressed by Kentucky State Library Commissioner, Wayne Onkst, who spoke about the importance of public library collaboration with other community service providers to best promote early literacy and public library involvement in school readiness initiatives across the state.

As the first step, the Kentucky Public Library School Readiness Task Force has developed individual committees to focus on furthering goals in the areas of research and advocacy, resource development and staff training, public awareness and outreach, and grants and funding. A steering committee will guide the overall mission of the Task Force as the team moves forward toward promoting Kentucky's public libraries as early literacy experts among the spectrum of school readiness services.

By working together, Kentucky's public libraries can help to better prepare children, families, schools, communities, and the entire state—maybe even the nation—for success in school.

Awesome Advocate Profile: Rick Samuelson



**Rick Samuelson, Youth Services Librarian
Washington County Cooperative Library Services (Portland, Ore. area)**

What does Everyday Advocacy mean to you?

By my way of thinking, advocacy is the simple act of giving a voice to those who have no voice. Children's librarians have a rich and storied history of advocating for children and their caregivers. Our convictions are firmly built on a belief that all children deserve access to quality literacy experiences and all caregivers deserve practical tools to help them support their children.

Everyday Advocacy is a realization that we can give voice to the voiceless through our everyday actions. As long as you have the conviction and the passion, you can and will find countless opportunities for effecting positive change. The next time you share an early literacy message during a storytime, take a second to reflect on how you just advocated for children and their right to grow up in a supportive and enriching environment.

What's been your proudest advocacy moment?

A few years back I was invited to speak on family literacy with a group of parents involved in the justice system. These parents had recently served time and were required to attend a series of parenting workshops as part of their parole. Immediately upon walking into the room, I knew things weren't going to be easy. The mood was reminiscent of an unruly middle school classroom. At best, the audience was bored. At worst, they were smart-mouthed and surly.

When I present, I tend to spend most of the time modeling literacy-building activities that caregivers can easily replicate. I jump around a lot and share countless nursery rhymes. I read books, sing songs and tell funny stories. In general, I project a model of behavior designed to get folks feeling like they can turn their everyday interactions with their children into opportunities for literacy growth. I want them to understand that supporting their children's future success doesn't have to be hard. In fact, it can be quite fun and natural. But I digress...

Now as the presentation progressed, I happened to notice a change slowly taking place in one audience member. When we started, one kid (barely out of his teens) was clearly bored out of his mind. He was rolling his eyes and sharing whispered comments with his neighbor. However, by the end of the presentation he was quietly focused and engaged. I would love to know what was going through his mind. I imagine it was shocking for him to see a man jumping around and singing children's songs (off-key, I might add). I sincerely believe he discovered something important that day, something about his potential role in the life of his child. If a grown man is able to get excited about children's stories in a classroom full of adults, why couldn't he get excited sharing one-on-one with his kid?

It's no secret—there's a decided lack of positive male role models in the lives of young children. Every time I can prove that men are able to effectively work with young children, I feel that I have successfully advocated for the presence of men in early childhood education. I am extremely proud to advocate by example. I am a man who chooses to work with infants and toddlers!

What advice or wisdom can you share with other Everyday Advocates?

1. If you choose to work in the field of children's services, make sure you put children at the forefront!
2. Be present and ready to share your dedication to children wherever and with whomever you can.
3. Do the work required and discover the needs of children and families in your community, not just the ones who actively use your library.

4. Make your library (and your role as a public servant) valuable to all children in your community.
5. Find out if there is a literacy or early learning committee in your community and become involved. If you can't find one, start one! People love to come together in support of children's literacy.
6. In short, live this motto: **It's all about the kids!**

Awesome Advocate Profile: Mary Fellows

**Mary Fellows, Manager, Youth and Family Services
Upper Hudson Library System (Albany, N.Y.)**

What does Everyday Advocacy mean to you?

As I look at it, Everyday Advocacy means that we keep our eyes on the prize—and the prize is that the needs of children and youth are factored into every decision made in our library, our community, our nation, and our world.

On a practical level, Everyday Advocacy means:

1. Being conscious that we are always “on” as role models for coworkers, administrators, community members, partners, and decision-makers about how to treat and advocate for children;
2. Speaking up when it's hard;
3. Making sure we're at the table, even when we must gently—or firmly—elbow our way in;
4. Being alert to opportunities;
5. Being reasonable, collaborative, and humorous so that we're perceived as strong advocates, not fanatics;
6. Taking risks for what we believe in; and
7. Watching, listening and learning how those around us live out advocate roles.

What's been your proudest advocacy moment?

There's one initiative right now that I'm very proud of even getting on the agenda at a high-level discussion of statewide library policy. I have great hopes for it—and I don't want to say much more right now because of its sensitivity.

Beyond that example, I'm proud when any of my librarians call to tell me about a situation in their library when the voice for youth services needed to be strong, and they spoke up and influenced the decision. I know then that I'm doing my job of modeling and teaching skillful advocacy. We need powerful advocates for youth services at all levels!

What advice or wisdom can you share with other Everyday Advocates?

You are more powerful than you think. People exercising power is how things get done. Awareness of your own power, how to build it, and how to use it appropriately and effectively to influence decisions is an essential competency for all of us.

Learn to recognize and seize key make-a-difference moments.

Commit yourself to being a positive person. Complaining is addictive and may feel like it elicits empathy, but it saps our energy and the energy of those around us. We can choose a different way to build relationships. Find something that helps you keep your focus positive. I have a sign on my bulletin board that helps keep me focused on making positive contributions in my conversation. People are more receptive to visions of a bright future, even when it requires something from them, than to depictions of gloom and doom. The more (realistically) positive we are in communicating, the stronger our advocacy.

From the ALSC Advocacy Committees

If you'll be in Philadelphia, stop by the ALSC All-Committee Meeting on Sunday morning to hear the latest from the association's eight child advocacy committees. Why not get involved by filling out a volunteer form while you're there? Check out ALSC Committees: A Guide to Participation for more details on getting started.

Here's an update from two of the ALSC committees in Priority Group I:

Every Child Ready to Read Oversight Committee

Kathleen S. Reif, Chairperson

In partnership with ALSC, the Public Library Association (PLA) has received a three-year National Leadership Project Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The \$499,741 grant will be used to examine how early literacy programming offered by public libraries using the ECRR2 model affects parent behavior and engagement during their children's most formative years.

Objectives of this project are to further establish and advance the valuable role of public libraries as partners in early literacy and community learning and to provide critically needed research on the impact of parent/caregiver intervention on young children's reading success. Susan Neuman, EdD, will once again lead the research.

Library Services to Special Populations and Their Caregivers

Africa Hands, Chairperson

This is an exciting time for the Library Services to Special Populations and Their Caregivers Committee as we begin to review applications for the ALSC/Candlewick Press "Light the Way: Outreach to the Underserved" Grant. Reviewing applications is a wonderful way to learn about the accessibility and literacy challenges facing children and their caregivers throughout the U.S. It's also an opportunity to learn about and support the creative programming happening in our libraries to meet their needs and help them feel at home in the library.

In addition to the grant, committee members remain busy writing about library services to special populations for the ALSC blog. This year, we've written about welcoming LGBTQ families into the library, providing fun financial literacy education during storytime, and how to get started as a new librarian serving special needs populations. Committee members have also highlighted resources to celebrate National Adoption Month and suggested ways the library can get involved with Hunger Action Month. Contributing to the ALSC blog is the committee's way of building awareness around these and many other important issues facing today's library patrons. We see it as a way of advocating for those who aren't always top of mind when it comes to services. We hope our posts inform and inspire the work of fellow librarians, and we look forward to continuing this work. Stay tuned for more blog posts and activities from the committee.

News You Can Use

Strong Start for America's Children Act (S1697)

On November 13, 2013, the U.S. Senate introduced S1697: Strong Start for America's Children Act. This bill aims to expand early learning programs, but if passed as is, libraries would not be eligible to receive funds.

Public libraries are important stakeholders in providing early literacy education and play a key role in helping children become ready to read and ready for school. Libraries have an even greater impact on early literacy by teaching parents and caregivers so they can be their children's first and best teachers. Including libraries as eligible entities in all early education initiatives will ensure results and a return on our country's investment.

Tweet the U.S. Senators involved in this legislation and tell them to include libraries in the Strong Start for America's Children Act (#S1697)!

Advocacy Sessions at Midwinter

Mark your calendar—you won't want to miss these exciting advocacy opportunities in Philadelphia!

Washington Office Update. On Saturday, January 25, get the inside scoop on the National Security Agency (NSA) leak from Spencer Ackerman, National Security Editor for the Guardian newspaper. Hear a panel of respondents detail implications of the NSA leak for libraries, library users, and open government. Ask your own questions and discuss the latest legislation, policy, and regulatory issues while learning about effective advocacy techniques and tools, such as advocacy videos and social media.

News You Can Use. On Monday, January 27, join ALSC members and IMLS staff for their joint session on the recent ALSC Early Learning Partnerships Survey and IMLS Growing Young Minds report. Learn how you can use this targeted information to advocate for the critical role of libraries in your community.

How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities

New from the Pew Research Center in December 2013, *How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities* is a veritable gold mine for your advocacy efforts! The report summary states, “Americans strongly value the role of public libraries in their communities, both for providing access to materials and resources and for promoting literacy and improving the overall quality of life.”

Check out the recent ALSC blog post from the Advocacy & Legislation Committee for an overview of this report and its key findings.

Get to Know the NEW Children’s Librarian

Looking for a great way to spread the word about all the great things you do to serve children and families in your community? Then you’ll definitely want to share Karen N. Nemeth and Cen Campbell’s recent Teaching Young Children article, *Get to Know the NEW Children’s Librarian*, with local preschools, community groups, business owners, and legislators.

Use the article’s ready-made talking points to get the conversation started with a new partner or to reinforce your message to local lawmakers and funders. There’s never been a better time to advocate for awesome you!

Get Inspired

Savvy Success Story: International Park(ing) Day at Oakland (Calif.) Public Library

Sharon McKellar and Helen Bloch
Oakland Public Library

On International Park(ing) Day in September 2013, the Oakland Public Library took over three parking spaces outside of our Main Library’s children’s room on a busy city street and created a library parklet. With donations from local shops, we were able to have sod, tables, chairs, plants—and even some plastic flamingos, coffee, and snacks!

We did two story times, held a Friends of the Public Library mini book sale, and had some children’s books as giveaways. With lots of foot traffic going by all day, the parklet was a great success and really helped raise the profile of the library.

Find photos of our event on Flickr and the International Park(ing) Day website.

February Is Love Your Library Month



Don’t let Cupid steal the show! Throughout February, invite children, families, and community stakeholders to create special Valentines expressing their love for your library. Hearts are sure to melt when you share these tokens with library administrators or local policymakers.

DIY @ your library®: Teen Tech Week 2014

Wait, isn't this a YALSA thing? You bet it is! From March 9-15, connect with your colleagues serving teens to find out how they're advocating for the critical role of libraries as technology educators. Check out the YALSA Teen Tech Week Ning to learn more about this year's theme, DIY @ your library®, and find new ideas to adapt in your work with the younger set. (Joint programming ideas, anyone?)

Make Advocacy Awesome in Oakland!



Planning to be in Oakland for the 2014 ALSC National Institute? Don't miss Making Advocacy Awesome: A Workshop for the Everyday Advocate—You!

If you hear "advocacy" and think "scary," then mark your calendar for this. Learn how you're already an Everyday Advocate from the real experts—your ALSC colleagues—while engaging in hands-on activities and practical applications of advocacy basics. Come with your questions and leave with ready-to-implement ideas for making advocacy awesome in your library community!

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