

Everyday Advocacy Matters

October 2017, Vol. 5, no. 1

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From the Editor

Listening to Understand vs. Listening to Respond

Most of us have probably heard the term "active listening." More than likely, it means different things to different people. For some, it means direct eye contact, positive body language, and a willingness to give the speaker your undivided attention. For others, it can mean rephrasing what you hear the speaker saying and offering responses like, "I understand" or "I hear you."

But how often do we really "hear" others? To what extent are we really listening to fully understand someone else's reality more than we're listening to make a response?

Think about the last time you had a showdown with someone. It could be an argument you had with a partner, a difficult interaction with a library patron, or a conflict with a coworker. Things might have gotten heated, and you were probably triggered. As the other person was speaking (or yelling, as the case may have been), were you trying your utmost to understand his/her perspective—and in doing so, setting aside your own—or were you ticking off a mental list of all the things you were going to say when it was your turn?

If you did the former, you're to be commended: You were listening to understand. But if you're like most people, you did the latter, because as thinking, feeling humans, we're programmed for listening to respond.

When you listen to understand, you quietly let go of your biases, preconceived notions, and the urge to respond to someone right away. You clear your mind and tell yourself, "I really want to hear this person's reality, and I'm willing to take myself out of the equation in order to do that." You're actively engaging with the speaker's words instead of your inner monologue.

When you listen to respond, you make yourself the center of the interaction. Usually you're thinking more about what you'll say when it's your turn than the speaker's words, even if your reply isn't a defensive one—even if you really want to say something supportive and helpful. You may hear the person's words, but you're not really listening.

If you take nothing else away from this issue of Everyday Advocacy Matters, I hope it's this:

There's a difference between listening to understand and listening to respond. As library professionals, it's imperative that we cultivate our ability to do the former and resist the urge to do the latter, especially when it comes to promoting the purpose and value of strong and meaningful Youth Services librarianship.

This fall, challenge yourself to practice the art of listening to understand. Your inner Everyday Advocate—and the youth and families you serve—will thank you.

[Jenna Nemec-Loise](#), Member Content Editor
ALSC Everyday Advocacy Website & Electronic Newsletter

Everyday Advocacy Spotlight

Everyday Advocacy 101: Advocacy within the Library

If you're new to Everyday Advocacy or just want a refresher, you're in luck! Each issue of Everyday Advocacy Matters helps you dig into the initiative's five tenets—Be Informed, Engage with Your Community, Speak Out, Get Inspired, and Share Your Advocacy Story—by directing you back to the great content on the [Everyday Advocacy website](#).

This issue invites you to dip your toes into writing elevator speeches with this excerpt from the [Engage with Your Community section](#):

While advocacy outside your library is certainly important, don't forget about sharing the message inside your library! Your staff and volunteers are already passionate about the services your library offers. Train them to share your library's advocacy message with the people they encounter every day.

Strive for a positive library atmosphere. Your library's environment creates a message of its own. What do your patrons see when they visit your library? What's the message they receive? Friendly, knowledgeable staff, user-centered policies, passionate and friendly volunteers, and a "Yes, I can!" attitude create a memorable impression. When your users think of the library, these elements will create value in their minds.

Recruit your volunteers, Friends of the Library, and Foundation to speak on your behalf. The next time you need help sharing your message, invite these groups of advocates to join you. Having a paid staff member share a message is one thing, but unpaid advocates can take your message to the next level.

Remove barriers for your patrons wherever possible. You may think that ten-cent fine must be paid before your patron uses the Internet, but there are myriad reasons why your patron may not agree. Is it worth having him or her walk away with a negative impression of the library?

Advocate on behalf of your patrons with other staff. Help them understand the importance of creating a friendly environment and making the library as easy to visit as possible. (Not everyone has the same forgiving nature most youth librarians have!)

Be a good colleague. Your fellow staff members are advocates, too, so help them whenever you can. You'll get valuable experience outside of the children's department and perhaps a sense of how other departments work. If you're a good partner within your library, there's a good chance your colleagues will respond in kind.

From the ALSC Advocacy Committees

Check out these recent [ALSC blog](#) posts for the latest from Priority Group I:

Advocacy and Legislation Committee

Africa S. Hands, Co-Chairperson

Kendra Lu Jones, Co-Chairperson

[Why is Net Neutrality so important to kids, libraries, consumers?](#)

Early Childhood Programs and Services

Stephanie C. Prato, Chair

[Swag for Kids](#)

Intellectual Freedom
Therese G. Bigelow, Co-Chair
Bruce Stewart Farrar, Co-Chair
[Too Much Free Speech?](#)

Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers
Eva Thaler-Sroussi, Chair
[The ALSC/Candlewick Press "Light the Way: Outreach to the Underserved" Grant is Now Open!](#)

Public Awareness
Christy Estrovitz, Chairperson
[Strengthening Communities Through Libraries: STEAM Programming Toolkit and Minigrants](#)

School-Age Programs and Services
Cristina E. Mitra, Chair
[Including the Shy Ones: Passing Programming and Interactive Displays](#)

News You Can Use

New AASL National Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries

Drumroll, please! At [Beyond the Horizon](#), AASL's 18th National Conference and Exhibition, our school library colleagues will launch brand-new national standards for learners, school librarians, and school libraries. Sounds like a perfect opportunity to advocate for the critical roles of our school library counterparts, doesn't it?

Once the new standards are released, take some time to get familiar with them and identify areas of commonality between school and public library work. Use that common ground as a starting point for fostering a new learning partnership or as a way to strengthen an existing partnership with a school library colleague. As you work together, you'll learn more about how you can champion the important work of school libraries and school librarians.

In the meantime, why not check out AASL's current [Learning Standards & Program Guidelines](#)? Waiting is hard, but getting the background on the previous standards is easy!

YALSA Seeks Your Feedback: Revised Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff

Just as AASL is planning for the launch of new national school library standards, our YALSA colleagues are gearing up for a competencies revision. Last updated in January 2010, [Competencies for Librarians Serving Youth: Young Adults Deserve the Best](#) is taking on a new shape as Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff.

A [draft of this revision](#) is available online and open for your comments through Wednesday, October 18. Check out the revised competencies and [submit your feedback via online form](#) today! As YALSA states on this form, "Your input will help ensure the final version fits the needs of libraries and teens."

Everyday Advocates, don't miss this opportunity to tell YALSA what you think. You may not realize it, but doing so is an awesome way to advocate for the purpose and value of strong and meaningful Teen Services librarianship. The children ALSC members serve through libraries today are the teens YALSA members serve through libraries tomorrow. What could be more important than that?

National Library Legislative Day 2018

From May 7-8, 2018, Everyday Advocates from around the country will gather in Washington, DC, to talk libraries and library-related issues with national legislators. Start making plans now to join in on this high-impact, high-energy event that makes a difference for youth and families.

Ask your supervisor, library administrator, or principal about attending [National Library Legislative Day](#)(NLLD) in 2018. Make your case to be there by stating how federal legislation needs your support through the stories you can tell about your school or public library and the community you serve.

Don't wait! Budgets for 2018 are being prepared and finalized now. Be sure your NLLD attendance gets included! Registration for NLLD 18 opens on December 1.

Get Inspired!

Savvy Success Story: Advocating for More Diversity in Children's Books / Andrea Jamison, [Lincoln Elementary School District 156](#)

Advocacy is very important to me, and I use every avenue available to me to speak out for more diversity in children's books. Whether it's sending out tweets, speaking about the importance of diversity at conferences, blogging, or meeting with book publishers, I try to make one message very clear: All children benefit from books that expose them to diverse characters and/or teach inclusion. My philosophy, which is borrowed from a former Chicago Public School principal, is that "everyone may not be able to do the same thing but we all can do something."

My proudest moments have been realized this year when I was able to speak at the ALA Ignite session. The response to my session was overwhelming and provided increased opportunities for me to speak in other cities. I am also proud about assuming a role on the [Illinois School Library Media Association's](#) leadership team, where I coordinate their advocacy initiatives. My goal is to continue spreading the message that libraries do matter and our work helps to leverage services from some of the most economically disadvantaged within our communities.

Autumn Advocacy Ideas

If you're looking to change things up a bit this fall, try out one of these ideas that puts an Everyday Advocacy twist on seasonal celebrations:

Character parade (October). Instead of a standard Halloween party, host a fall parade of children's book characters! Ask families to dress as their favorites, making sure each child and adult has a copy of "his" or "her" title to complete the ensemble. Wrangle a colleague to take photos and collect signed release forms so you can literally create a picture of your library for stakeholders.

Gratitude wall (November). In honor of Thanksgiving, designate a Gratitude Wall in your children's area. Pass out sticky notes and colored pencils so kids and adults can write down all the reasons they're thankful for the library and post them on the wall. As 2018 budgets are being finalized, this simple project is a powerful way to advocate the role of libraries in building strong communities.

Teen Read Week 2017: Unleash Your Story

Wait, isn't [Teen Read Week](#) (TRW) a YALSA thing? You bet it is! It's also a great time to connect with your colleagues serving teens to find out how they're inspiring young adults to become readers and lifelong library users.

In honor of this year's celebration, Unleash Your Story, why not check out a few ideas to adapt in your work with the younger set? (Maybe there's even a joint programming opportunity in your future.)

Everyday Advocacy is all about getting out there and trying new things, so catch the TRW 17 spirit from October 8-14.

Calendar

[Teen Read Week](#)

October 8-14

[National Friends of Libraries Week](#)

October 15-21

[International Games Week](#)

October 29 - November 4

[Picture Book Month](#)

November

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