

# Everyday Advocacy Matters

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## From the Editor

### The Silent Side to Advocacy

Yes, you're reading this correctly: There's a silent side to advocacy, and it's golden.

Now let's not get crazy here. I'm not suggesting you sit back and let someone else speak for you. Everyday Advocacy absolutely means raising your voice in support of library programs and services that improve outcomes for the youth and families you serve.

I know it sounds like a contradiction, but silence—your silence—has its place in advocacy, too.

As a GSLIS instructor of a course on access, advocacy, and policy in Youth Services, I talk with my students about the difference between listening to respond and listening to understand. While the two aren't mutually exclusive, they're definitely not the same thing.

Think about it. When you're listening to respond to someone, your mind is anything but silent. It fills up quickly with all the things you plan to say while the other person is still making his or her points. If you're already having a dialogue in your head, are you really, truly hearing your counterpart?

Listening to understand means more than just letting someone else speak. It involves letting go of preconceived notions and the urge to respond right away, especially in difficult or heated situations. There's empathy rather than judgment, authenticity instead of artifice. It's in those silent moments that Everyday Advocacy blooms.

When you practice listening to understand with children, families, colleagues, and other library stakeholders, you allow them to play a critical role in your advocacy efforts. You let them teach you how to be their best and brightest Everyday Advocate so you can speak out for them when the time is right.

As an ALSC member, I'm immensely proud of our division's willingness to listen to understand, and nowhere has this been more apparent than in recent communication about the 2016 ALSC National Institute. We are fortunate indeed to have colleagues, member leaders, and division staff who have welcomed our perspectives, invited our concerns, and heard our hopes. We honor one another with our Everyday Advocacy, and for that I'm ever grateful.

Let this issue of *Everyday Advocacy Matters* inspire you to strengthen the dynamics of your own relationship-building and community engagement efforts. The next time you have the chance to listen to a child, a parent, or a coworker, relish your own silence. It's where the magic happens.

**Jenna Nemec-Loise, Member Content Editor**

ALSC Everyday Advocacy Website & Electronic Newsletter

[Send an email to Jenna](#)

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# Everyday Advocacy Spotlight

## Reflections on “Making Advocacy Awesome”

**Renee Christiansen, Youth Services Manager**  
[Library System of Lancaster County \(Pa.\)](#)

Everyday Advocacy’s Member Content Editor, Jenna Nemec-Loise, made my day when she said she’d be happy to come to Lancaster County (Pa.) to present a “Making Advocacy Awesome” workshop during a youth librarian retreat last November. I know advocacy is essential, and my colleagues and I wanted to learn more about it. Who better than Jenna to teach us about the why and how-to? We were ready for a day of learning that was sure to be enlightening and relevant.

Our day started with learning about the myths of advocacy. Ever think it’s someone else’s job? Ever say to yourself, “It’s all about asking for money?” Sound familiar? Did you answer yes? We did. Karen Payonk, Youth Services Director, Lititz Public Library, had this to say: “Advocacy was always something I tried to shy away from because I was not sure if I was doing it correctly. I wish it was something I would have learned in my college days.” I think most of us sensed how we were actively practicing these myths, especially, “No one is going to listen to me.”

As the day moved on, we learned what advocacy is. The perception exists that the role of Youth Services is lesser than others. That is so far from the truth. A message that resonated with me is to keep in mind that we are perfectly qualified. Ask yourself, “Who is more knowledgeable about what we do?” Advocacy promotes the purpose of what we do and why we do it. Advocacy is being able to communicate and cultivate our relationships with stakeholders inside and outside the library, and it’s something we can do every day.

We need messaging—elevator speeches—that speak to many, are meaningful and understandable. Therefore, our next task was to think about what we do and what we currently tell people about our jobs when asked. We often reply with statements such as “I do story times” or “I have a homework club.” But what does that really mean? Instead, what we need to do is tell a story that appeals to one’s emotions. Make the listener be amazed at what we do! Advocacy is about being persuasive and believable.

We practiced rephrasing our work and wrote some elevator speeches. I’ll tell you it doesn’t come naturally, and it was somewhat challenging. Writing them was a good exercise for us, and then actually saying them out loud was even better. (By the way, this is an on-going process that has become more comfortable for us.)

Use the [Creating an Elevator Speech infographic](#) created ALSC Public Awareness Committee to write one. You’ll be ready the next time your supervisor or a community stakeholder asks what you do. It’s how you say it that matters. You’ll get their attention with words that articulate the reason why you do something, ultimately changing a person’s perspective.

Increase your skill set by engaging and practicing advocacy efforts and elevator speeches—make people be excited and knowledgeable about what you do, and why you do it.

## Everyday Advocacy 101: Speak Out

If you’re new to Everyday Advocacy or just want a refresher, you’re in luck!

The next several issues of Everyday Advocacy Matters will help 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 the Speak Out tenet with this excerpt from the [Craft Your Message subsection](#):

Advocating for the most compelling issue or worthy cause is a losing battle if nobody hears what you are championing or knows why they should join you! Getting your message out is essential, so prepare yourself for success with these tips:

Choose one core message. In these days of information overload, it's important to choose one core message that's widely appealing and simple to understand.

Keep it consistent. Your message should be consistent with your library's brand (if you are running an independent campaign) and consistent across the media in which you are communicating.

Pay attention. Who's saying what about you and your efforts? Crafting your message also includes monitoring media coverage of your library and responding as necessary.

Identify the best outlet(s). In these days of multiple communication avenues, be sure to choose the media outlet most relevant to your message. Always cross-post!

Check out the other subsections of Speak Out using the links below:

- [Advocacy Button Tip Sheet](#)
- [Write an Elevator Speech](#)
- [Use Electronic Media](#)
- [Use Print Media](#)
- [One-on-One Meetings](#)
- [Organized Advocacy Events](#)

## From the ALSC Advocacy Committees and Task Forces

Check out these recent ALSC blog posts for the latest from Priority Group I:

### **Advocacy and Legislation**

Robyn Lupa, Co-Chairperson

Matthew J. McLain, Co-Chairperson

[Did You Know This Is Advocacy](#)

### **Early Childhood Programs and Services**

Brooke E. Newberry, Chairperson

[Parachutes!](#)

### **Intellectual Freedom**

Chelsea Schmitz Couillard-Smith, Co-Chairperson

Laura M. Jenkins, Co-Chairperson

[Challenged Caldecotts & This One Summer](#)

### **Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers**

Lesley Mason, Chairperson

[Begin Your Sensory Storytime Today!](#)

## **Public Awareness**

Amy Koester, Chairperson

[Ten Ways to Publicize Notable Children's Books](#)

## **School-Age Programs and Services**

Robbin Ellis Friedman, Chairperson

[Digital Reading Platforms & School-Age Children](#)

# **News You Can Use**

## **Vote in the 2016 ALA Election**

Want to know how you can make a big Everyday Advocacy splash this spring? Vote in the [2016 ALA election](#) if you haven't already!

Your voice and vote matter, so join your ALSC colleagues in deciding who'll lead both our division and ALA into the next year of awesome for children, families, and libraries.

Check out the 2016 ALSC Election page as well as the need-to-know information about the [ALA election](#) as a whole. Polls close on Friday, April 22, at 11:59 p.m. CDT, so don't wait. Cast your votes today!

## **Día Turns 20 Capitol Hill Event**

ALSC is heading to Washington, DC, to kick off the 20th anniversary celebration of Día!

Pat Mora, children's book author and founder of El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day), will join ALSC president Andrew Medlar on Capitol Hill to bring national attention to the importance of connecting children and their families with books that embrace all languages and cultures.

The Día Turns 20 Capitol Hill event takes place on Wednesday, April 27. Stay tuned to find out how you can celebrate the 20th anniversary of Día from your hometown on April 30!

Visit [dia.ala.org](http://dia.ala.org) or follow #díaturns20 on social media for more information.

## **Virtual Library Legislative Day**

[National Library Legislative Day](#) (NLLD) takes place this year on May 2-3. This is a great time to get involved in advocacy both within your community and beyond it!

Even if you can't physically travel to Washington, D.C., you can still participate from your own library community. And how, exactly, can you do that? Through [Virtual Library Legislative Day](#) (VLLD) activities during the week of May 2-6!

Here's how the Advocacy and Legislation Committee plans to ensure your successful participation in VLLD 16—even if you've never done it before:

- Draft a letter template for you to personalize and send to your U.S. representatives and senators;
- Create talking points you can use when calling your U.S. representatives and senators;
- Craft ready-to-post social media messages (e.g. sample tweets, Facebook posts, etc.)

- Collect and organize contact information for U.S. representatives and senators, including e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and social media handles; and
- Make it all accessible and easy to use!

Watch ALSC-L, the ALSC blog, and social media outlets as the Advocacy and Legislation Committee makes these great VLLD resources available for your efforts.

Remember, the [Everyday Advocacy website](#) is filled with tips, tools, and techniques to support your advocacy efforts every step of the way. Use these wonderful resources to become a stronger advocate on NLLD, VLLD, and beyond!

## Take the Everyday Advocacy Challenge

Looking for a great way to activate your inner Everyday Advocate and motivate your colleagues to do the same? Then volunteer to be a part of our next Everyday Advocacy Challenge (EAC) cohort!

We're looking for 10-15 participants to take our seasonal 4-week challenges, offered quarterly in the months of March, June, September, and December. Here's the scoop on what we'll be asking of you:

- **Commit** to completing four consecutive Take Action Tuesday challenges crafted by you and your cohort participants.
- **Collaborate** with your EAC cohort over the four-week period, sharing successes and troubleshooting issues via ALA Connect.
- **Write** a post for the ALSC blog about your EAC experience.
- **Contribute** a reflection for an upcoming issue of the Everyday Advocacy Matters e-newsletter.

Interested? Awesome! Submit the [EAC webform](#), and we'll be in touch with all the details. The deadline for the June challenge is May 15, so apply today!

## Get Inspired!

Beginning with this issue of Everyday Advocacy Matters, "Get Inspired!" will feature success stories and reflections from participants in our quarterly Everyday Advocacy Challenges. We hope these stories from our Spring 2016 cohort inspire you as much as they've inspired us!

### Within the Library and Beyond

Skye Corey, Librarian, [Meridian \(Idaho\) Library District](#)

Completing the ALSC Everyday Advocacy Challenge was a true gift. Not only did I get the chance to network with other passionate school and public librarians through ALA Connect, but I also had the chance to articulate the heart of what we do for those within the profession and those outside of the profession. I was able to connect with a YMCA site coordinator, a Boys and Girls Club site coordinator, and a school librarian and forge stronger bonds between these organizations and the library through the clear communication of shared values.

What I was most excited about, however, was the opportunity to share the Everyday Advocacy Challenge with the entire Youth Services Department. With a gracious mailing of extra Everyday Advocacy buttons and the wonderful support of my boss, who allowed me to present on the Everyday Advocacy Challenge at the Youth Services Department meeting, I was able to share the importance of why we do what we do and, hopefully, inspire others to forge their own value statements so that whether they're in the library or out in the community, they can be equipped, intelligent, and enthusiastic everyday advocates.

As for next steps in my advocacy journey, I'm excited to start working with other Youth Services librarians across Idaho's Treasure Valley, mapping out a localized professional development network (perhaps one that maps onto ALSC's Core Competencies.)

The future is wide-open and exciting, and I can't wait to stand alongside others as we work to create a better future for children through libraries!

### **Cultivating Advocates**

Rose Hopkins-LaRocco, Librarian, [Brookfield \(Illinois\) Public Library](#)

I feel that my biggest accomplishment in advocacy so far has been advocating to my friends and family. So many of them had no idea how much the library offers, and they have since become champions of all things library-related.

Many of them were so surprised about the cool things I get to do: "Yes, I do get to go to a comic convention, and yes, we did just have a sloth visit the library." My father, who hadn't set foot in a library since he was a small child attending storytimes at the Chicago Public Library, came to the Brookfield Public Library (which happens to be the one at which I work) for an Excel class. Once in the library, he was amazed that we had a 3-D printer, a R.E.A.D. to the Cat program, and services that extend beyond books. He and my mother even attended the Mammals & More! program that featured the sloth (presented by Flying Fox Conservation Fund, who were amazing, for those of you in the Chicago area).

The really great thing is that now my family and friends have become advocates, too. My father wrote a letter to the local paper in response to someone who had written decrying the library's efforts to build a new, larger library building. My father advocated the library's many perks in his letter, and we hope that it will be published.

We can be advocates in even the smallest moments. My friends are always amazed at how many storytime or early literacy classes the library offers. Then they mention those options to their friends with children, and those people mention it to their friends, and it goes on and on. So remember, even the little moments count.

### **Championing School Libraries and Collaboration**

Stacey Rattner, Librarian, [Castleton \(N.Y.\) Elementary School](#)

I had many successes during the Spring 2016 EAC. I informed my principal. I advocated to my superintendent the value in hiring another certified school librarian in the district. I spoke up at a school board meeting about the benefits of having a full-time certified school librarian in each building and finally, I met and collaborated with my local public librarian on the Summer Reading program.

And although I feel good about sharing my voice within my district, I feel most excited about our upcoming collaborations with the local public library. I will lead five middle grade book groups (in preparation for my fall Mock Newbery project) over the summer, which will be on their calendar, and together we are trying to do something together to kick off the whole program at my author visit assembly in May. Stay tuned! I have a feeling it's going to be great!

Thank you for the push to advocate for myself, the library and especially for those who will benefit the most—my students.

### **Learning, Sharing, and Making a Difference**

Claudia Wayland, Supervisor, [Allen \(Texas\) Public Library](#)

The most valuable part of the Everyday Advocacy Challenge was reading about the experiences of the other participants. Having library employees from different geographical locations and working in different

library settings helped me better understand the importance of advocacy and stay motivated to be a champion of my library.

I've worked in my current position for about seven months now, and I am starting to feel settled in. Advocacy is a skill that I felt I needed to improve, so I signed up for this spring's EAC cohort. Some of the challenges, like preparing an elevator speech and establishing or reestablishing an open line of communication with the local school librarians, were valuable reminders of job-related activities that may get pushed to the backburner. I would like more advocacy challenges to keep me thinking outward! The four weeks went by so fast.

## Calendar

April -- [School Library Month](#)  
April -- [D.E.A.R Month](#)  
April 10-16 -- [National Library Week](#)  
April 12 -- [National Library Workers Day](#)  
April 13 -- [National Bookmobile Day](#)  
April 23-30 -- [Money Smart Week](#)<sup>®</sup>  
April 30 -- [El día de los niños/El día de los libros](#)  
May 1-7 -- [Choose Privacy Week](#)  
May 2-3 -- [National Library Legislative Day](#)  
May 2-6 -- [Virtual Library Legislative Day](#)  
May 21 -- [National Readathon Day](#)  
June - [GLBT Book Month](#)

## Resources

**Take Action:** Link to the [Take Action Tuesday blog](#) for the most recent Take Action Tuesday challenge

**From the ALSC Blog:** [A Talk with Pat Scales](#)

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