

Everyday Advocacy Matters

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From the Editor

It's All Advocacy

Can we all pause for a minute and give it up for the ALSC Advocacy and Legislation Committee?

Just as I'm sitting down to write this column about how we often advocate without even realizing it, I check out the committee's latest ALSC blog post—Did You Know This Is Advocacy—to find co-chair Matt McLain has done exactly that. (Thanks, Matt!)

In his post, Matt touches upon the new ALSC Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries. The addition of an Advocacy and Outreach competencies set affirms that advocacy is fundamental to our roles in improving outcomes for the kids and families we serve. Advocacy isn't something extra you need to do, and it's not optional, either. It's the heart of Youth Services, and we all have a part to play.

Those awesome things you're already doing, like early learning programs, community partnerships, and everyday conversations with parents and caregivers? It's all advocacy. You're just not calling it that.

Throughout 2016, watch for the Advocacy and Legislation Committee's "Did You Know This is Advocacy" series on the ALSC blog. Here's an excerpt from the first post to let you know what's in store:

We'll be discussing different ways librarians engage in advocacy and connecting your day-to-day activities with advocacy, and by extension, the new Competencies. Some of the areas we will be discussing include: Hunger, at-risk kids, diversity, libraries as safe spaces, early literacy, schools, family literacy, community engagement, partnerships, outreach, and barriers to access.

This issue of *Everyday Advocacy Matters* is filled with new ways to think about your advocacy work, from defining "advocacy" to flexing new muscles. Let us know how we can support your Everyday Advocacy efforts through revised and expanded resources. We'll do our best to meet your needs and guide you every step of the way.

Remember, it's all advocacy. Show 'em what you've got!

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Everyday Advocacy Spotlight

Everyday Advocacy 101: Engage with Your Community

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 **Engage with Your Community** tenet with this excerpt from the [Advocacy within the Library subsection](#):

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.

Check out the other subsections of **Engage with Your Community** using the links below:

- [Identify Key Stakeholders](#)
- [Build Relationships with Stakeholders](#)
- [Get a Meeting with Your Policymakers](#)
- [Cultivate the Press](#)
- [Respond to Complaints and Skepticism](#)

What Does Everyday Advocacy Mean to You?

Still a little fuzzy on what advocacy's all about? Looking for a way to explain advocacy to colleagues, families, or even yourself?

Here's how four groups of youth services librarians at the [Library System of Lancaster County](#) (Pa.) defined it during their on-site Everyday Advocacy training this past November:

“Advocacy is a conversation that uses compelling language to encourage action and link the 'Now' to the 'Not Yet'.”

“Advocacy is advertising the value and impact of libraries on youth and families.”

“Advocacy is demonstrating the library’s value and purpose in the public’s daily lives.”

“[Advocacy is] sharing our passion about the value and importance of our libraries by telling our libraries’ stories.”

Share your definition of “advocacy” with us via e-mail at everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com.

From the ALSC Advocacy Committees

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

Advocacy and Legislation

Robyn Lupa, Co-Chairperson

Matthew J. McLain, Co-Chairperson

[With Information Comes Advocacy](#)

Early Childhood Programs and Services

Brooke E. Newberry, Chairperson

[Sensory Storytime on the Road](#)

Intellectual Freedom

Chelsea Schmitz Couillard-Smith, Co-Chairperson

Laura M. Jenkins, Co-Chairperson

[Fired Up about the Freedom to Read](#)

Library Service to Special Population Children and Their Caregivers

Lesley Mason, Chairperson

[Library Service to Refugees and Immigrants](#)

Public Awareness

Amy Koester, Chairperson

[Five Things You May Have Missed from #alamw16](#)

School-Age Programs and Services

Amber Lea Creger, Chairperson

[Youth Media Awards Tween Round-Up](#)

Valuation and Advocacy Research Task Force

Robert Bittner, Co-Chairperson

Hanna Lee, Co-Chairperson

[ALSC Helps YOU with Advocacy #alamw16](#)

News You Can Use

REFORMA Children in Crisis Project

Everyday Advocacy is a grassroots effort that starts with all the great things you're already doing in your own library community to improve outcomes for the kids and families you serve. If you're ready to take the next step, consider including the [REFORMA Children in Crisis Project](#) in your advocacy efforts.

Created in 2014, the Children in Crisis Project aims to get books into the hands of refugee children living in U.S. detention centers and shelters to support their socio-emotional and informational needs. Many of these children are Spanish-speakers from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and REFORMA is committed to providing them with books in their language of origin.

How might you promote awareness of this project in your own community? Let us know by e-mailing everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com with your ideas.

Speaking out about every child's right to access quality storytime materials and his/her local public library is Everyday Advocacy in action!

ALA Advocacy Implementation Plan of 2015

Have you heard? ALA has an [Advocacy Implementation Plan](#) designed to complement and advance ALA's [strategic directions](#) for libraries and the library profession.

At the 2016 Midwinter Meeting in Boston, ALA Council passed a [resolution](#) supporting the 2015 Advocacy Implementation Plan. Now it's up to ALA divisions, round tables, and chapters as well as affiliates, libraries, and individuals to think about their roles in adopting the plan and collaborating on ways to implement it at local, state, and national levels.

Spend some time reviewing the plan and think about your Everyday Advocacy role in supporting its implementation. Share the plan with colleagues and start a few great conversations on how you (yes, you!) can be a part of moving ALA forward on behalf of the kids and families you serve.

Advocacy at the 2016 ALSC National Institute

Heading to Charlotte for the 2016 ALSC National Institute this fall? The outstanding [program line-up](#) includes a not-to-be-missed session called Stories Speak Louder than Numbers: Making the Case for Youth Services.

Here's a description of this session that's a perfect fit for Everyday Advocates of all experience levels:

Libraries need funding from a variety of sources, but getting access to these various sources can be quite a challenge at times. This program will provide resources and practical guidance for telling the stories that will help you get the funding you need. You will have the opportunity to hear speakers with a history of advocating for and obtaining funding, and you will be given time to engage in discussion with fellow librarians to brainstorm strategies for your own libraries.

[Register](#) and [book housing](#) today to get in on all the awesomeness the Institute has to offer!

Get Involved with National Library Legislative Day (NLLD)

On May 2 and 3, 2016, Everyday Advocates from around the country will gather in Washington, D.C., to talk libraries and library-related issues with national legislators. The good news? There's more than one way to get in on this high-impact, high-energy event that makes a difference for youth and families!

Join us in Washington, D.C. Registration for this year's event is now open! Ask your supervisor, library administrator, or principal about attending [National Library Legislative Day](#) (NLLD) in person. 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.

Take part virtually. Can't make the trip to Washington, D.C.? You can still be a part of the action! [Virtual Library Legislative Day](#) takes place May 2-6, 2016, and we'll provide you with all the details you need to participate from your library or home. Watch for more resources coming your way this spring.

Get Inspired!

Libraries Transform™ Campaign

Have you seen the banners, posters, and postcards from [ALA's Libraries Transform™ campaign](#)? Bright and colorful with poignant messaging, these materials are perfect for bringing Everyday Advocacy into your library and your library community.

Check out the [Libraries Transform™ toolkit](#) for library professionals to get inspiration, key messages, graphics, and ten ways to get involved with the initiative. This is a great opportunity to collect stories from kids and families about how your library has impacted their lives.

Let us know how you're integrating the Libraries Transform™ campaign into your Everyday Advocacy efforts by submitting the [Share Your Advocacy Story webform](#). We want to hear how you're making a difference so we can share your experiences with other ALSC members!

Celebrate the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Back in December, President Obama signed the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) into law. This legislation is nothing short of historic: For the first time, there's a law on the books that includes specific language about school libraries.

This victory marks a perfect time to thank your members of Congress for their support of school library programs and school librarians. A brief follow-up phone call or e-mail is all it takes. Better yet, send a handwritten note expressing your gratitude. Never underestimate the impact a small gesture like this can have in building relationships with policymakers. (Find contact information for your members of Congress via the [ALA Legislative Action Center](#).)

If you're not sure how your members of Congress voted on ESSA, you can still reach out to them. Use the opportunity to talk up the importance of effective school library programs and how they help prepare students for success both in school and in life.

Cultivating relationships with policymakers and keeping the momentum going is Everyday Advocacy in action!

Send Us Your Advocacy Questions and Feedback!

As the Everyday Advocacy initiative enters its third year, we want to hear from ALSC members about how we can make our resources even better.

What are your advocacy questions? What would you like to know more about as you take the next steps on your advocacy journey?

E-mail us at everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com with your questions and feedback about what might help you hone your skill set. We'll do our best to meet your needs through expanded and revised website content.

Helping us take the next steps in building great member resources is Everyday Advocacy in action!

Awesome Elevator Speeches

Ready to write an [elevator speech](#) using value-based language? Looking for some inspiration? Here are three examples from participants in the inaugural [Everyday Advocacy Challenge](#):

"I help my staff work in a positive environment at the library so that they can use their strengths to provide excellent customer service for our patrons."

"I help provide individuals in our community the opportunity to build common ground with each other through programming at the library so that each person begins to believe that our similarities are greater than our differences."

"I help students learn how to negotiate the glut of information that is available today in a safe, effective, ethical way."

Find more resources for writing elevator speeches, including a helpful [infographic](#), on the Everyday Advocacy website.

Calendar

- **February 17**—[Digital Learning Day](#)
- **March 6-12**—[Teen Tech Week](#)
- **March 16**—[Freedom of Information Day](#)

Resources

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

From the ALSC Blog—[13 Ways to Champion Literacy: Babies Need Words Every Day—The Blog Tour!](#)