Introduction and History

What is the history of ALSC’s Mentoring Program?

In 2012, the ALA Emerging Leader – Team E laid out a foundation for future action in terms of implementing an ALSC mentoring program. The report included results from a survey of ALSC members. 80% of survey respondents said they would be interested in participating in an ALSC mentoring program.

In 2013, the ALSC Membership Committee teamed up with the Managing Children’s Services Committee to examine ways to create an effective mentoring program. This document is the product of those discussions along with recent updates that were made to the program in 2017.

Goals

Why does ALSC need a Mentoring Program?

The objectives of ALSC mentoring program are as follows:

1. Build the skills and confidence of early career children’s librarians and those new to the profession
2. Encourage personal and professional connections
3. Give members the opportunity to acquire peer-taught skills
4. Re-energize and re-invigorate members in their work
5. Create interest and familiarity with ALSC committee service and participation
6. Build familiarity with ALSC’s Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries
7. Foster the development of a new cohort of leaders

What are the goals of the individual matches?

At the beginning of their year, matches will build their own goals together. The goals should be built with the ALSC’s seven program goals (above) in mind. Matches must submit their goals to the ALSC office by December 1.

Leadership

Who makes up the leadership of the ALSC mentoring program?

The ALSC Mentoring Program will be administered by: a) a staff liaison responsible for the day-to-day administration of the program, b) an advisory working group made up of four (4) members of the ALSC Membership Committee and four (4) members of the Managing Children’s Services Committee.

Matches

Who can be a mentee?

Mentee applicants do not need to be ALSC or ALA members. The only requirement is that mentees have some connection to children’s library service. Mentees may be students, early career professionals, individuals returning to the profession, or those who would like to refine their skills, make connections, and learn more about children’s librarianship as a career.

Who can be a mentor?

Mentor applicants must be ALSC members and should have experience working in the field of children’s librarianship or children’s literature.

Why should you be a mentor?

Mentoring is a great opportunity to feel more connected to other members of the organization. It also helps in building leadership skills that benefit organizational service. Mentors share things they’ve learned in their own job to help their mentees avoid pitfalls and mistakes. Mentors also help mentees become more involved in ALSC since they are likely to have more experience within the organization.

How are mentors and mentees matched?

Mentors and mentees who apply to the program are matched by the ALSC Staff liaison due to the sensitivity of the information contained in the applications (ex: preferences on geographical proximity of the match, race/ethnic background preferences of the match, and gender preferences of the match). Matches are not told in which ways they have been matched, it is up to the pair to get to know one another on their own. All information remains confidential.

What sort of things do matches do?

The ALSC Mentoring Program provides suggested activities such as resume reviews or mock interviews, creation of a portfolio, exchanging ideas on how to partner with other community leaders, creating early literacy packets, learning more about ALSC initiatives (Dia, Everyday Advocacy.)

A mid-point tracker form is also distributed to each match in order to help them evaluate their progress. The form is then submitted to the ALSC office.
How do matches communicate?

Matches can choose how and when they communicate. The ALSC Mentoring Program is a virtual one, so most communication will be done over the phone, by email, video conferencing or online chat. While there is no requirement for in-person contact; if matches are geographically close, they can choose to meet in person. Opportunities to meet at conferences may offer additional options for matches.

Additionally, matches receive regular communication from the ALSC office and members of the working group on upcoming activities, tips, and resources that may be of interest. Working group members also check-in on goal progress.

What happens if a mentee/mentor is unhappy with their match?

If either party is unsatisfied by 30 days into the program that individual may request a re-match. The ALSC Mentoring Program working group and staff liaison will do as much as it can to accommodate this request. It may not be possible to re-match in which case the individuals will need to reapply for the following mentoring period.

At some points throughout the year either party may become unavailable or drop from the program. This is not unusual, things happen! Depending on the time of year and availability, the ALSC office may offer re-match.

Time Commitment

How much time commitment does the program require?

The ALSC Mentoring Program suggests that matches be in contact at least twice a month. This could be via email, phone, Skype, online chat, etc.

What does the timeline of the mentoring program look like?

The ALSC Mentoring Program is a one-year program. See the Suggested Timeline on the next page for details.

Training

What training will be available for matches?

At this time, the ALSC office has print resources available to be read and will be looking at video resources to add.

Evaluation

How will the program be evaluated?

At the end of each mentoring period, mentors and mentees each will complete a survey. In it, each participant will discuss the positives and negatives of the program. It is the responsibility of the advisory task force to review these surveys and write a final report based on survey results. This will be done on an annual basis.

Application

In 2017, sections were added to both mentor and mentee applications to help facilitate better matches. These questions included gender, geographical, and race/ethnic match preferences. We believe these questions have helped with building stronger and more lasting connections.

Suggested Timeline

What would be the approximate timeline of the program?

The program more or less follows the school year. Please see the suggested timeline below.

June/July: Applications accepted for mentoring program

September: ALSC Staff liaison reviews applications and notifications are sent to accepted participants

October - November: Matches develop best communication practices and submit goals

December - August: Matches work on fulfilling goals

August: Wrap-up Survey will be sent to all participants (mentors and mentees), This will conclude the program.
Suggested Activities

Can you expand on what sort of activities matches can do?

The most important part of the program will be to ensure that matches are familiar with ALSC Core Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries and the ways that they can bring them to their libraries. There are also some suggested activities below:

- In advance of your meeting, each come up with 3-5 questions for the other to answer. Make sure to forward to the other person a few days before your meeting to give that person time to come up with appropriate answers.
- Discuss the qualities that make an effective manager/director. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of managers you’ve both encountered in your previous jobs.
- Participate in an ALSC Community Forum (http://www.ala.org/alsc/community-forums) each come up with a question to ask the ALSC President and ALSC Board of Directors. If the mentee is not an ALSC member*, the ALSC office may provide a link to the forum so they can access. *Mentee must currently be enrolled in the mentoring program.
- Do a resume/CV review. Share/critique job experiences and skills.
- Perform a mock interview. Take turns asking each other difficult interview questions (i.e. “Where do you see yourself in 5 years?”). Afterwards give written feedback.
- Create a shared document/spreadsheet of program ideas. Encourage others to enter their own ideas/suggestions.
- Discuss your experiences with mock Newbery/Caldecott elections. What has worked for you? What hasn’t?
- Create a wish-list for your library. What sort of technology would you like to have? What resources would you buy?
- Read and discuss an article from Children & Libraries magazine. What did you like? What didn’t you like?
- Co-author an ALSC Blog guest post. Submit your idea for a blog post to Mary Voors at alsccblog@gmail.com.
- Read an article about mentoring (see resources on next page). Discuss how it applies to your match.
- Discuss your experiences with El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children’s Day/Book Day) programs. Have you hosted an event? What has worked?
- Explore the Every Child Ready to Read Ning site (http://everychildreadytoread.ning.com/). Discuss what resources would work for you and how you might be able to add to the site.

Resources

Can you direct me to other resources?

Print Resources:


Online Resources:

Tips or a Successful Mentoring Relationship:

https://www.thresholds.co.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/Tips%20for%20a%20successful%20mentoring%20relationship.pdf

Significant Value Found in Mentoring Programs for Novice Tenure-Track Academic Librarians (2016):

https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/eblip/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/27925/21066

Collaborating for Success: A Case Study on Mentoring, Partnering, and Teaching (2016):

https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/eblip/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/27925/21066

4 Things All Mentors and Mentees Should Know:

https://leanin.org/tips/mentorship