



ALSC Community Agreements

These community agreements were developed so that all meetings convened by members of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) are spaces where meaningful and respectful conversations are held. The agreements outline best practices to ensure that everyone has an opportunity for expression, accountability, and growth.

They provide a guide to how topics are discussed, the language used, and how our different experiences, identities, and knowledge are reflected in our thought processes, discussions and decisions. As you participate in discussions, meetings, presentations, etc. please use these guidelines as a starting point and as a group; add additional agreements if necessary.

- **Speak for yourself.** Use "I" and be aware that your perspective is not everyone's perspective or the 'normal' perspective.
- **Embrace multiple perspectives to engage in curiosity-driven dialogue (not debate or argument).** Have compassion for and honor people's varied journeys while respecting their humanity. The goal of dialogue should not be to change anyone's mind, but to *offer and receive* a perspective for consideration and curiosity. Even if your every cell feels in disagreement with someone's perspective, right and wrong binaries rarely build connection and understanding. Do note that racism, bigotry, and all other forms of oppression are not a difference of opinion and will not be tolerated.
- **Be aware** of the privilege, oppressions, and life experiences you carry and how they might impact your discussion process.
- **Listen to and use people's correct pronouns.** Let people know how you would like to be addressed during introductions, and include pronouns if you would like. If pronouns are not shared or if you are unsure of someone's pronouns, refer to the person by their name.
- **Share the air.** Be aware of how much you are talking versus listening. Challenge yourself to invite others into the conversation, and "step up" if you are prone to not participating. We all have something to bring to the discussion.
- **Interrupt attempts to derail.** Oftentimes, discomfort is so great that we immediately attempt to change the conversation to something that feels more comfortable. Before you know it, the conversation is about the weather, when we were talking about equity. Work to stay engaged when you feel uncomfortable and make mistakes (this is when learning happens).

● **Acknowledge intent while addressing impact.** Work to not personalize the responses of others while taking care to be mindful of the impact of our words and our actions on others. Understand that intent does not equal impact and acknowledge the impact of something that was said or done during the conversation (or break) by criticizing ideas and not individuals.

● **Interrupt bias and take feedback.** It is everybody's responsibility to hold one another accountable. If you observe something oppressive being said or done (by yourself or others), mark it. For example, "ouch" and "oops" are words that can be spoken to mark moments when you recognize something oppressive is said ("ouch") or you notice a mistake that you've made ("oops"). If you experience feedback from an "oops" or "ouch" it is your responsibility to keep learning. You can reach out to the Chair, Co-Chair, or discussion leader(s) to address it (after the meeting, via email, in person, etc.). "Ouch" and "oops," when used, remind everyone that deeper dialog, reflection, and learning will happen later.

● **Remember that we all have opportunities to grow.** Feedback is a gift of experience and expertise, and it acknowledges that learning is complex and never-ending. Receive it and consider systems of dominance and power at play in community conversations and interactions. Be aware of the lenses you do and do not have as a result of your identities and experiences.

Sources

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