

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Conference, Chicago
June 28 – July 2, 2013**

Topic: Board Transparency and Accessibility

Background: In order to build and maintain member engagement, and thus build YALSA’s capacity to meet our goals, it is imperative that members feel informed and engaged in the decisions being made by the board. Carrie Kausch has presented some information below for the board’s consideration

Action Required: Discussion

While overall members have indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the organization, past member survey results have included comments about YALSA and/or the board:

- That it can seem “insiderery” and cliquish
- There can be a lack of clear communication
- A need for inclusion of all members in meetings

(Source: [September 2012 member survey results](#) and [2008 member survey results](#))

Informal conversations have also prompted member comments about feeling disconnected from the board work and a low level of awareness of the reasons behind board decisions.

Best practices

One principle of board governance recommended in “The Source: Twelve Principles of Governance That Power Exceptional Boards” (BoardSource 2005), is an “ethos of transparency.” [Additional sources of best practices](#) speak of the need for transparency and openness.

What YALSA’s Board is currently doing

- Makes sure information about the organization (e.g. current activities, strategic plan, financial status) is available to members via the web site and social media
- Provides information about the board (e.g. members, agendas, minutes) to members via the web site and social media
- Clearly states board roles and responsibilities, and provides tools and documents to support effective board member participation in governance
- Uses technology to maintain an active social media presence while also providing social media guidelines to board members
- Provides many opportunities for member input when constructing the strategic plan

Possible methods to increase transparency and accessibility

1. Leverage social media

- a. At Midwinter 2013, it was suggested that the board fellow “live tweet” the board meetings to make members aware of the board agenda and discussions. Questions and retweets indicated some members were engaging in the board meeting via Twitter. YALSA can consider making this part of the board fellow’s permanent role. Tips to support success:
 - Have the board fellow join Twitter at the beginning of his/her term, if not already a member.
 - Promote the plan to live tweet meetings in the month leading up to the board meetings to encourage members to follow the fellow. Places to promote include the blog and YALSA’s official Twitter account.
 - Formatting tweets:
 - Always include @YALSA, and the ALA meeting hashtag, if space allows.
 - During the meeting, tweet about what part of the agenda is being discussed. Examples:
 - “Next up in @YALSA brd mtg: discussion on member engagement #ala2013.”
 - “Discussing the idea of expanding focus of @yalsa #yalit symposium to cover broad range of youth services. Could open up prof dev for libs.”
 - “The @yalsa board wonders if we should change @yalsa's name. Tell us what you think at happy hour tonight! 5:30 @ Tap House Grill.”
 - Tweet things learned or discussed. Examples:
 - I've learned LOTS at #alamw13 abt the amount of \$ ALA gets from @yalsa. I always thought ALA just got their dues & @yalsa kept \$ they get.
 - How might @yalsa get started in educating library admin about the importance of teen services?
 - Have the official YALSA account re-tweet the fellow.
 - Alternative suggestion: have the board fellow tweet via the official YALSA account during meetings.
- 2. Provide a clear method for member comments, questions, suggestions, etc. relating to the work of the board.**
- a. [Best practices suggest that, “Board members actively solicit input from the communities and constituencies they represent.”](#) Not all members can attend board meetings, and some would value the ability to add their voice to board discussions virtually. This would help ensure that the board is taking member views into account before making decisions. Possible methods include:

- i. Inviting comments, questions, or concerns to be shared via the blog post the President puts up prior to board meetings.
- ii. Periodically seeking feedback via the E-News, Virtual Town Halls, member surveys, social media, YALSA booth at conference, informal conversations, etc. leading up to a board discussion about a big issue
- iii. Holding face to face town halls with members to explore a particular issue
- iv. Adding a section to the Quarterly Chair report for chairs to provide suggestions for issues for board consideration
- v. Leveraging the annual Membership Meeting as an opportunity to discuss the work of the board and/or seek feedback from members about an issue the board is considering
- vi. Other?

3. Share more details from meetings.

“Stakeholders expect open access to governing documents and other information, but they also want to understand why decisions were made... This additional information could include research data, options considered, and advantages and disadvantages of proposed alternatives. Our research has revealed a profound shift in the quality and acceptance of decisions when organizations pay attention to discussing choices and consciously communicating the bases for related decisions.” ([ASAE 2003](#))

YALSA could consider making it a priority to share details about discussions and decisions in a post-meeting blog post or E-News highlighting certain board decisions and actions made during a meeting.

- a. Board members who submitted a board document for consideration could write about their agenda item
- b. The board fellow could write about major board decisions and discussions
- c. Provide a write up in *YALS* detailing significant board decisions
- d. Other?

4. Increase opportunities for dialog between the board and members. Board members can:

- a. Consider sharing their Twitter handles on the YALSA site.
- b. Continue to volunteer to staff the membership booth and attend member receptions, such as the YALSA Happy Hour, and make a point of interacting with members
- c. Take part in the Road Trip Reboot in order to connect with members at a more local level
- d. Connect with student members by reaching out to any GSLIS in their area
- e. Continue to welcome new members and to thank member volunteers during National Volunteer Week

- f. Make a concerted effort, as Board Liaisons, to reach out to chairs and talk to them about the work of the board, and to inform them about board actions
- g. Leverage their personal networks to get the word out to members about the work of the board, personally invite people to attend the meetings, etc.
- h. Continue to sit in on those committee meetings that they serve in a liaison capacity
- i. Other?

Also, as president, Shannon Peterson plans to lead "town hall" conversations jointly with the board and membership several times a year.

5. Help members build knowledge about the governance process and how they can participate in it.

- a. Raise awareness among members about the Request for Board Action form
- b. Periodically include pieces in *YALS* with information about the governance process
- c. Include information about how members can get involved in governance at sessions like YALSA 201
- d. Consider creating a free webinar for members that outlines the ways members can engage with the board and be a part of the decision making process
- e. Other?

Other considerations:

- Some members have previously mentioned receiving too much YALSA information. What is the sweet spot between oversharing and unintended secrecy?

Additional Resources

- [September 2012 member survey results](#)
- [2008 member survey results](#)