Background: In 2013 a Teen Read Week Evaluation Taskforce was established to Analyze existing survey and other data as well as work with staff, the Board, current and past Teen Read Week Committees, and other YALSA groups as appropriate in order to evaluate the overall impact of Teen Read Week in order to determine: 1) Whether or not it succeeds in fulfilling its stated goals, 2) The degree to which it meets member needs, 3) To what extent the TRW program benefits the organization, and 4) What opportunities, if any, exist to improve the program. Natalie Couch, the taskforce chair, has provided a summary and recommendations below.

Action Required: Discussion

Responses to Committee Charge Tasks

Task Force Members:
- Natalie Couch (chair)
- Kristin Jones
- Shelley Mastalerz
- Deborah Parrott

Task Force Board Liaison
- Sandra Hughes Hassell/Jennifer Korn

Task Force Staff Liaison
- Beth Yoke

Analyze existing survey and other data as well as work with staff, the Board, current and past Teen Read Week Committees, and other YALSA groups as appropriate in order to evaluate the overall impact of Teen Read Week in order to determine:

#1: Whether or not it succeeds in fulfilling its stated goals:
- Teen Read Week’s (TRW) main purpose is “to encourage teens to be regular readers and library users.” The 2013 TRW Evaluation Task Force committee distributed a virtual survey in order to measure how effective participants felt Teen Read Week really is. After examining the 2013 survey results, the TRW Evaluation Task Force committee has determined that TRW has fulfilled its stated goals in 2013.
  - Of those that responded, 53% of survey participants indicated that they had more teens access library materials and services during this event (48.8% of participants
agreed that more teens accessed the library during TRW than other weeks of the year, and 4.2% strongly agreed).

- Although 47% disagreed (41% disagreed and 5.6% strongly disagreed), the majority of Teen Read Week participants saw some type of increase in library usage. Even though this is a slim majority, the committee still views this as a success, especially since 2012 has a more even split between participants who saw an increase in use and those who did not (49% saw an increase in 2012 and 48% did not).

- The committee also determined that Teen Read Week pushes the library community to get together, expand on current library offerings, and focus consciously on advocacy efforts all at the same time.

#2: The degree to which it meets member needs:
After analyzing Teen Read Week surveys from 2006-2013, the committee determined that Teen Read Week meets the expectations and purpose set forth by participants.

- **Participation:** The top three reasons for participation, as indicated in both the 2012 and 2013 TRW survey, are: “(1) to encourage more teens to read for fun, (2) to encourage more teens to use the library, and (3) to raise awareness in my community about what the library offers teens.”
  - In 2013, almost every participant (95.5%) indicated that they used TRW to foster reading for enjoyment in teens.
  - When looking at the “success stories” asked for in the survey, many participants saw an increase in circulation due to TRW book displays and activities that promoted reading designed for TRW.
  - As previously indicated, the survey results show that over 50% of participants saw an increase of patron traffic, which means that at least half of all surveyed participants achieved at least one or two of their stated goals in participating in TRW.
  - However, the last reason selected by participants was “to raise awareness in my community about what the library offers teens,” but when looking at the results for the question “which advocacy-related activities did you incorporate into your TRW efforts,” 52.5% selected none. Although TRW does highlight teen literature and programming, which raises awareness, perhaps the promotion of advocating TRW to community members would help to spread more awareness.

- **Website:** Survey results from 2013 show that 95% of participants signed up on the TRW website, which indicates that most saw the conceived value of the resources on the site. This is also supported by the fact that the number one resource used by participants in 2013 (79.7%) was the TRW website, which is significantly higher than 2012’s survey results, which showed that only about 48% of participants found the website to be one of the top three most useful TRW resources from YALSA. So, YALSA’s support of TRW through the production of the website is useful. Although the TRW website’s use increased from 2012 to 2013, surveyed participants have had several gripes about the site and suggestions for improvement. These will be covered in the last section of the report that addresses areas of improvement.

- **Communication:** As for YALSA’s promotion and communication about TRW, both seem to be successful. According to the 2013 survey, the largest percentage of TRW
participants (44%) selected email advertising as the way in which they heard about the existence of TRW. Email blasts are also growing in popularity as a useful TRW resource. There was a 14% increase in perceived value of email blasts from 2012 to 2013, which in 2013 made email blasts the fourth highest TRW resources according to surveyed participants. So, keeping up the production of the website as well as email (communication that is sent directly to the participant) are two forms of communication YALSA should keep supporting.

- Other areas of perceived value that grew in popularity from 2012 to 2013 with participants are the free webinar (up 16% from 2012) and the Teen Read Week & Teen Tech Week: Tips & Resources for YALSA’s Initiatives book (up 15% from 2012). The most popular resources though (beyond the previously mentioned ones) are still the downloadable logo (61% in 2012 and 72% in 2013 found it useful), postings on YALSA blog or discussion lists (31% in 2012 and 39% in 2013), and products (27% in 2012 and 28% in 2013).

#3: To what extent does the TRW program benefit the organization:
The taskforce is of the opinion that Teen Read Week benefits the organization in that it creates publicity for teen reading and in turn creates publicity for YALSA.

- **Advocacy**: Teen Read Week is still being successfully used to advocate for teen library services within many library organizations (in 2013, 33% of survey participants collected data and/or stories about the library’s TRW efforts to share with supervisors, library board members, or other stakeholders) and within the community in general, but few respondents shared their TRW efforts with elected officials or policy makers.

- **Social Media**: The promotion of TRW on social media appears to be increasing. TRW postings on individual media sites vary but overall statistics indicate an increase. On Pinterest, there were 66% boards in 2013, whereas there were only 23 boards in 2012, indicating a 34% increase. There were 141 more members registered on the Ning website in 2013 than in 2012; this is a 6% increase.

- **Awareness of YALSA**: As publicity for TRW increases, it can be expected that more teen librarians and professionals discover the benefits of YALSA membership. Of the 2013 survey responses, 45% were already members. This number has actually dropped significantly from the first survey in 2006, which indicated that 81% of respondents were members of YALSA. Individual comments expressed gratitude toward YALSA for the program and activities. For example, one comment was: “I appreciate all that YALSA does to make libraries accessible to teens and to inspire those of us who work with teens. Thank you!”

- **Revenue**: In terms of product revenues, numbers are down compared to last year, but after reviewing all the information since the recession in 2008, the committee generally felt like the sales downturn might be due to economic fluctuations. The committee thinks that if the fall in TRW revenues are a result of financial limitations there would not necessarily be a way for YALSA to increase sales revenues.

#4: What opportunities, if any, exist to improve the program:
As stated above, the committee agrees that Teen Read Week does fulfill its stated goal, but there are areas that participants and the committee saw could be expand or improved upon in terms of promotion and supplemental content.
• **Programming resources:** The number one comment on the 2013 TRW survey was about low-cost/no-cost programming ideas and planning/marketing resources. This request has also been frequently echoed in the 2007-2012 surveys, but it is evident that this request is a growing trend.

• **Free resources:** In the 2013 survey, question #9, the largest percentage of respondents (36%) indicated that they only spent between $1 and $50 on Teen Read Week. The second largest percentage (21%) indicated that they spent no money on TRW, and at least 19 library staff or youth advocates spent personal money to fund their programs and/or spaces (for a total of 62.7% of respondents indicating that they have $50 or less available). Even in past surveys, the majority of respondents have indicated that they have $50 or less to spend on programming, and the trend over the years has shown that programming funds are only shrinking: in 2007, 46.5% of respondents spent $50 or less, and in 2012 this percentage rose to 58%. Even in survey categories that did not specifically ask about spending, respondents commented extensively on the need for low-cost/no-cost resources. TRW sales may also be an indication for this need. Since 2009 product sales have steadily dropped each year with a steep plummet in 2011 and a near recovery in 2012, only for sales to continue dropping in 2013. Each year the drop is about $13-20,000 less than the previous year (with the exception of the 2012 rise to 2010 rates). While the economic recession and state of library funding is most likely to blame for low sales and decreasing program funds, YALSA still needs to address the financial concerns of libraries in order to keep TRW participants inspired, dedicated, and driven to deliver services and materials that get teens reading and using their library/media centers.

  o The committee recommends that the TRW site focus on the topic of free or inexpensive resources for TRW in a dedicated forum on Ning, suggest that programming ideas include estimated expenses for materials/services, and/or for YALSA to utilize social media to foster more collaboration among participants and thus inevitably provide more cost effective programming ideas. Furthermore, the latter suggestion is something that surveyed participants requested for non-financial reasons as well. Many respondents in the 2013 and 2012 surveys said they would like to see a better collaboration of ideas and more activity and programming ideas on the Ning site.

• **Pinterest:** Based on the committee’s social media research, TRW activity on Pinterest has been increasing rapidly over the last couple of years. There are at least three times as many Pinterest boards dedicated exclusively to Teen Read Week in 2013 than there were in 2012. In general, participation in this outlet is popular and increasing among youth services professionals. A social environment that has a feed and has more visual appeal may also be more beneficial for users than Ning discussion boards alone, because users would be more likely to see new information as it is posted without needing to consciously think about referring to the forums or the TRW wiki page. The emergence of the 2013 TRW Pinterest board was a great step to provide more cost-effect programming ideas in a visual format. The committee suggests allowing more pinners to be able to contribute to the board or recommend (send) pins to collaborators.

• **Website:** the committee recommends that the TRW site make a couple main changes to improve its service to users. Almost all site registrants in 2013 found the TRW website one of the top three most useful resources from YALSA (79.7%), and one person commented specifically about how they enjoyed the free webinar that came with
registration. However, participants did have some suggestions for improvement. Obviously there are a significant number of TRW participants who have amazing programming ideas who are willing to share them with their peers. However, these stories are not getting shared on the TRW Ning site.

- YALSA needs to find a way to inspire more collaboration on the ning forums. This may be a matter of better communicating the benefits of sharing resources with one another, of better directing participants to the forums, and/or alerting registered users (without bombarding them constantly) to new discussion threads or responses on the forums. Online services like social media and YALSA’s blogs have the advantage of feeds and catchy visuals to grab a user’s attention and direct them immediately to the information he/she might want. The website needs to respond in kind to communicate the information that participants are seeking, namely more programming ideas and cost-effect ones.

- **Timing:** Another major request from surveyed participants year after year is the need to provide TRW resources sooner. As early as the 2006 survey, there is a continuous and general consensus among many participants that public libraries need to plan programming anywhere from three to six months in advance, yet there is no heavy TRW activity on the site until about three months before the event, which is just shy of the planning mark. While the TRW site advertises that content will be made available starting six months in advance, participants seem to be searching for more programming ideas and collaboration immediately at the start of the dissemination of information and resources on the site. The evaluation task force recommends that YALSA already have TRW activities, specifically programming ideas, underway at least six months in advance if not more.

- **Other:** In 2013, surveyed participants also asked for customizable bookmarks, more promotion and involvement of Teens’ Top Ten voting, and teen contests on a nationwide scale (in 2013, 78% of survey respondents indicated that this is one of the new resources/activities they would like to see next year and in 2012, 71% did). Online teen activities, such as interactive games and contests, have been something participants have suggested in every survey collected since 2006. The introduction of teen contests would also provide a way for libraries and youth centers to participate in TRW in a way that does not require them to spend money or extensive time planning. This may be particularly enticing for school library media specialists who have often responded that they were only able to provide passive TRW opportunities for their teens.

- **Length:** Lastly, survey participants have requested yearly that YALSA change Teen Read Week into a month-long celebration. YALSA does indicate on the TRW Ning site that a week is just a suggested timeframe and that many organizations celebrate TRW all October. Many users even indicated that they stretch activities for the entire month, but clearly there are still some participants who are either unaware that it TRW is encouraged to become a month-long event or find some benefit in YALSA advertising it as a month-long event. The committee finds benefit in the option of a week or a month for each individual organization and therefore does not suggest YALSA change the intended timeframe. The committee does, however, recommend that YALSA be more vocal about the option of celebrating TRW for longer than a week as numerous participants find the name Teen Read Week to be constrictive.

--respectfully submitted, Natalie Couch
## Additional Resources

### Teen Read Week Data

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* obtaining sponsors was outsourced to YALSA’s ad rep