

## ALSC Policy for Service on Award Committees

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) affirms its confidence in the integrity of members who are invited to serve on award committees and in the integrity of the officers responsible for selecting candidates. Because of the nature of the work of such committees, those who serve on them must be especially sensitive to conflicts of interest and the appearance of impropriety. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the eligibility and responsibility of candidates asked to serve on such committees.

Prior to commencing service, prospective committee members will be asked to sign off on the following policy, and will be asked to complete a checklist that will alert them to potential issues (see [Appendix A: Checklist for Prospective ALSC Award Committee Members](#)).

### Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal or private interests may lead an independent observer reasonably to question whether the individual's professional actions or decisions are influenced by considerations of significant personal or private interest, financial or otherwise.

It is the policy of ALSC, its Board of Directors, and its committees to ensure that members in all of its activities avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest resulting from their activities as members of committees of the Association. In particular, no person should obtain or appear to obtain special advantages for themselves, their relatives, their employer, or their close associates as a result of their service on a committee.

Each person who is appointed to serve on an award committee is expected to consider carefully whether any of their personal or professional interests, obligations, activities, or associations could reasonably lead to even the appearance of a conflict of interest. When in doubt, it is best to err on the side of caution and discuss any potential conflicts with the ALSC Executive Director prior to accepting the appointment. Situations that arise after a committee member has begun to serve should be directed to the ALSC President, Committee Chair, Priority Group Consultant (PGC), and Executive Director. The final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

### Confidentiality

The principle of confidentiality drives the work of all award committee members in order to maintain the integrity of the award process. Committee members need to maintain a high degree of confidentiality regarding the committee's discussions, both oral and written, in-person and virtual. All committee members need to feel free to speak frankly in closed sessions, knowing that their comments will not be repeated outside their venue, and that they reserve the right to speak on their own behalf outside of those closed sessions. As with conflicts of interest, committee members should avoid situations in which there is even the appearance of a breach of confidentiality.

Committee members are urged to obtain a variety of critical opinions about eligible titles throughout the year. However, it is important to remember that in any discussion, committee members may express only their own opinions, and may not quote the opinions of other committee members or indicate in any way which titles are under consideration. It is understood that all eligible titles are being considered up until the selection of the winner is made.

Committee members are allowed, and even encouraged, to participate in local book discussions, especially with children. However, they must be vigilant in maintaining confidentiality of any committee proceedings while also ensuring separation from the selection of, discussion of, and voting on materials eligible for the award on which they serve. In addition, while committee members are encouraged to participate in book discussions, members are NOT to participate in mock elections. See [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions about Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees](#) for clarification on mock elections.

## Guidelines for Award Committee Members

It is a privilege to serve on an award committee and with that privilege comes specific responsibilities. Those who accept an appointment to the book award committees should adhere to the following guidelines. See [Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions about Policy for Service on Award and Evaluation Committees](#) if clarification is needed on any of the following points.

- 1) Members who have written or illustrated a book that may be eligible for consideration during the period of service on the award committee should not accept an appointment to an award committee.
- 2) Members may not be employed by a children's trade-book publisher, author, or illustrator. Members who have served as an advisor or consultant to an author or illustrator of a children's book, or as an advisor to a children's trade-book publisher, beyond the scope of assigned library duties, such as providing reference service, should not accept appointment if that book may be eligible for consideration during the period of eligibility as defined by the terms of the award. This includes writing teachers' guides or readers' group guides at the request of a children's trade-book publisher whether or not these materials may be eligible.
- 3) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they have a close family relationship (parent, spouse/partner, child) or a personal relationship with the author or illustrator of any book that may be eligible which could reasonably be seen by an independent observer to cause a conflict of interest.
- 4) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they have a close family relationship (parent, spouse/partner, child) with a person employed by a U.S. trade publisher.
- 5) Members should not accept appointment to an award committee if they, or a close family member, directly own equity (stock ownership, stock options, convertible note(s), or other ownership interest) that represents more than a 5% stake in a U.S. trade publisher.
- 6) Members should not engage in any print or electronic communication outside of the committee regarding eligible titles during their term of service, although they may verbally express their personal opinions regarding eligible titles at any time. Prohibited communication includes, but is not limited to, professional and general journals, magazines, and newspapers; electronic discussion lists; blogs; and social-networking services (Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Members who write signed reviews in a professional or personal capacity must avoid publishing reviews of eligible materials during their term of service. Following the term of service, members are welcome to express their personal

opinions about any eligible titles in any manner or forum; however at no time may they ever use titles or other recognizable details to identify the status of a title as having been or not been under consideration, suggested, and/or nominated for the award, nor may they ever reveal any elements of committee discussion.

- 7) Members may not serve concurrently on an ALSC Award or media evaluation committee and the ALSC Board, another ALA unit's board or award or media evaluation committee, or ALA Council.
- 8) From time to time, ALSC may take other action or establish such other guidelines as may be necessary in the Association's sole discretion to protect the integrity of the award process. Questions from prospective committee members and candidates should be directed to the Executive Director; situations that arise after a committee member has begun to serve should be directed to the ALSC President, Committee Chair, PGC, and Executive Director. The final decision rests with the Executive Committee.

## Meeting Attendance and Access to Materials

Persons elected or appointed to an award committee should:

- 1) Be able to attend all required discussion and decision meetings, in person and virtual, scheduled for the year of service, including pre-scheduled virtual meetings for a week in July following the Annual conference, virtual meetings in the two weeks prior to the LibLearnX Conference, and the in-person final selection meeting at LibLearnX, and be able to follow procedures established by the committee.
- 2) Have ready access to the major part of the current output of children's books under consideration in outlets such as their local library or bookstore and through interlibrary loan. It is recognized that there will be an occasional book under consideration that a committee member is unable to obtain. In such an instance, arrangements for review copies may be made as prescribed in the committee's guidelines, which can be found in the [Relationship with Publishers - Guidelines for Committee Members](#) section.

Although these requirements may limit membership on a committee, wise selection requires complete participation of all members of the committee.

## Frequency of Service on Award or Notable Book Committees

No individual may serve on the Batchelder Award, Caldecott Medal, Geisel Award, Newbery Medal, Sibert Medal, Children's Literature Legacy ("Legacy") Award, or Notable Children's Books Committee more often than once every four years. The four-year period shall begin from the last year of the term of service regardless of length of term. This guideline will not apply to the appointment for Chair. This guideline will not apply to other ALSC committees. Additionally, in the event that an emergency, mid-year replacement must be made, the four-year rule may be suspended, providing the appointing officer the necessary flexibility and a greater pool of experienced candidates.

**Violation of any of the above guidelines may result in dismissal from the award committee and may preclude service from future award committees.**

*Policy adopted February 2007 and revised May 2009, June 2011, January 2014, February 2018, August 2018, and March 2023.*

## Checklist for Prospective ALSC Award Committee Members

Please respond to the following questions. A “yes” answer does not necessarily preclude service on an award committee. These questions are intended to alert prospective committee members to situations that may or may not pose a problem; the answers will enable the Executive Committee to assess individual situations.

Have you already agreed to serve on another ALA unit’s board, award or media evaluation committee, or ALA Council?  Yes  No

Are you under contract for a children’s trade book that will be published during the period of your award committee service?  Yes  No

Have you been employed or served as an advisor or a consultant for a children’s trade-book publisher, author, or illustrator in the past three years?  Yes  No

Do you have a close relative (i.e. parent, spouse/partner, child) who is the author or illustrator of a book that may be eligible during the year of your committee service?  Yes  No

Do you have a close relative (i.e. parent, spouse/partner, child) who is currently employed by a U.S. trade publisher?  Yes  No

Do you, or does a close relative, directly own equity (stock, stock options, convertible notes, or any other ownership interest) that represents more than a 5% stake in a U.S. trade publishing company?  Yes  No

Do you have a personal relationship with the author or illustrator of any book that may be eligible that could reasonably be seen by an independent observer to cause a conflict of interest?  Yes  No

Do you anticipate having difficulty attending all required meetings in the manner they are offered (in person or virtually)?  Yes  No

Do you anticipate having difficulty accessing newly published children's books?  Yes  No

Have you served as a member of the Batchelder Award, Caldecott Medal, Geisel Award, Newbery Medal, Sibert Medal, Legacy Award, or Notable Children’s Books Committee in the past four years?  Yes  No

*If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, please contact the Executive Director in the ALSC Office to discuss your specific situation before you accept an appointment. Failure to disclose such activities may lead to immediate dismissal from the committee.*

I verify that I have read and understand bullet point #6 under ALSC’s [Guidelines for Award Committees](#). I understand that effective the start of my term (July 1 or immediately upon appointment after that date), I will not write a signed review of eligible titles or post about eligible titles on social-media accounts. I understand that once the committee’s selections have been announced at the LibLearnX meeting of my award year, I may then write or post about any book titles on electronic or print platforms.

Please indicate here the social media service(s) you use and your user name or other identifying information:

\_\_\_\_\_

If you review in print and/or online, please provide the name of the review outlet and whether the reviews are signed or unsigned:

\_\_\_\_\_  Signed  Unsigned \_\_\_\_\_  Signed  Unsigned

\_\_\_\_\_  Signed  Unsigned \_\_\_\_\_  Signed  Unsigned

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist updated: February 2007, revised May 2009, June 2011, January 2014, May 2015, April 2018, March 2023.