We Are ALSC Chat – Notes from February 22, 2022
Hosted by the Library Services to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee

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The Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers committee wants to help bridge the gap between ALSC members and our toolkits, to empower them to get started with underserved communities. Suggested topics include getting started with diversity audits and prioritizing diversity in your collections, conducting community research, and conducting outreach to vulnerable populations.

Who are the Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee?
Our committee is made up of six librarians with different professional backgrounds. Our focus is on supporting the work of librarians and other library-adjacent professionals in connecting with traditionally underserved communities and their caregivers. Our toolkits began in 2020 as a way to connect ALSC members with helpful resources like recommended read alouds, materials for programming, and successful program examples. So far, we have released five sections: Autism and Sensory Processing Disorders, Homelessness and Financial Insecurity, Spanish-Speaking Populations, Access to Technology, and Children with Print Disabilities.

This year, our focus is on creating a toolkit in support of New Americans, which will include Professional and Community Resources (currently available), recommended read-alouds (April), and programming and outreach examples (June). Our other resources include our Overwhelmed By blog series and articles published in Children and Libraries.

How do I get started with diversity audits?
- Diversity audits are about more than just books. The roots lie within literature.
- It’s a fantastic place to start in making sure your collection is diverse and inclusive.
- For resources, check out the Overwhelmed by: Diversity Audits blog post.
- Counts what percentage of your collection fits with your community groups (example: native and indigenous peoples).
- Templates and resources available from the Connecticut State Library

What if my collection development is centralized?
- Give suggestions to publishers.
- Hit the data to make a case that your collection is more inclusive.
- Start with a piece of your collection to show the decision makers that this can be done.
- Find your allies and partners to help you audit, then go to admin and see what the status of the collection looks like right now.
- Audit your carts to see what books you have purchased. A robust weeding and purchasing schedule can help your collection audit itself.
- Think about what titles are faced out and visible for your community.
- Remember that this is a process that will take time.

How do I get started with community asset mapping?
- Keep track of potential partners in a short and sweet list that includes contact information.
- Example partnerships:
  - School principals
  - Enthusiastic teachers who are great allies
  - Churches
  - Statewide service organizations

How can I get started with relationship building?
- Relationships take time - you will need to develop a relationship that is more than just asking for something.
- Build and nurture a relationship that can eventually become a partnership.
- What do you have to offer them? Think about ways to show that you want to partner with them all the time, not just when you need something.
- Tips for overlooked communities:
  - Think about going to non-traditional places to do research (example: Facebook groups)
  - You have to leave your library to find these groups.
  - When you go out into the community, have your information (library card/business card) ready and offer something first rather than waiting for them to contact you.
- Relationship building can be as small as whatever you do at the library.
  - Example: Storytime. This can be a place where you start a conversation. Storytimes can lead to things like sensory storytime or opening the library earlier. Think broader for the next step from what you are currently doing.

What about evaluating our own organizations?
- Evaluating our own organizations is important.
- Think about the values of your organization and the values of the community and see where they align.
- Do you have collections or programs that speak to their needs?

How can I get started with outreach to underserved communities?
- Outreach is a way to make organic connections with people.
- Reach out to the community first and find out their needs.
- What is keeping them from coming to the library? Individual negative experiences can make it seem like all libraries are that way, even though that isn’t an accurate evaluation.
- Find a partner or colleague if you can.
- Go out to the community and meet them where they are.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of the community to get more ideas of what to do next.
What other recommendations and reminders do you have?

- Niche Academy courses with Julie Ann Winkelstein
- Share resources from the 3Ts Program (example: in restroom)
- Even if the specific community is small, make a poster translated for them.
- Prime Time programs - make them invite only so participants feel open to sharing really hard topics
- Think about the small tweaks you can make - it takes a lot of different things and approaches and it is not a one and done situation.

What’s next for the committee?
We have two upcoming opportunities to connect with us. Join us for the upcoming webinar Centering Community, Building Equity: A Social Justice Approach to Outreach with Families and Children in Underserved Communities, presented in partnership with Project VOICE. The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, May 17 at 12pm ET. We will also be presenting the session Overwhelmed by Underserved Communities as part of the ALSC Institute this fall.