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ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY
SERVICE TO CHILDREN

Libraries are vital to all children, caregivers, and the communities that support them. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), believes that all children and their caregivers need and deserve the very best opportunities, which is why ALSC members are leaders in the field of children's library service, particularly in areas of access, advocacy, outreach, inclusion, diversity, family literacy, and lifelong learning.

To achieve this excellence, ALSC recommends the following competencies to all children's librarians and other library staff whose primary duties include delivering library service to and advocating library service for children ages 0 to 14 and their caregivers. ALSC strongly recommends a master's degree in Library and Information Science from an ALA-accredited graduate school as the appropriate professional degree for the librarian serving children in the library, and because children deserve the highest-quality service, ALSC expects the same standards to guide service provided by paraprofessional staff; these staff should be supported in their professional development required to provide this work and be compensated in parity.

Through specialized coursework in undergraduate and graduate study, on-the-job training, and continuing education opportunities, librarians and paraprofessionals serving children and their caregivers should achieve and maintain the following skills, orientations, and understandings to ensure children receive the highest quality of library service as defined in the ALA's Library Bill of Rights, ALA's Code of Ethics, and in the ALA and Association of American Publishers' joint Freedom to Read Statement. Library service to children and their caregivers, as envisioned by ALSC, is best accomplished when all competencies are developed and achieved by all staff.

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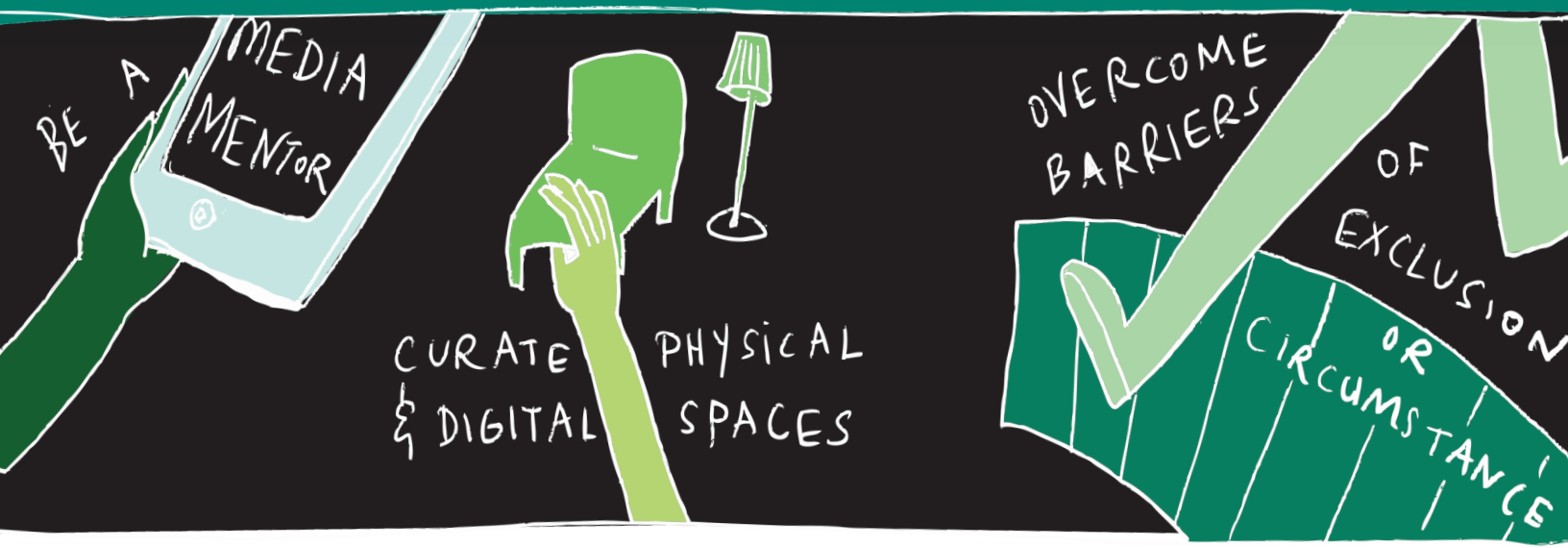
I. Commitment to Client Group

1. Demonstrates respect for diversity and inclusion of cultural values, and continually develops cultural awareness and works to address implicit bias in order to provide inclusive and equitable service to diverse populations.
2. Recognizes systems of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion in the community and its institutions, including the library, and interrupts and/or counteracts them by way of culturally aware services.
3. Recognizes the effects of societal factors, new knowledge and tools, income inequality, health, and food insecurity, etc., on the needs of children and their caregivers.
4. Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning, literacy development and brain development, and their implications for library service.
5. Understands current educational practices, especially those related to literacy and inquiry.
6. Assesses and responds on a regular and systematic basis to the needs and preferences of children, their caregivers, educators, and other adults who use the resources of the children's department, including those unserved and underserved by the library.
7. Cultivates an environment for enjoyable and convenient use of library resources, specifically removing barriers to access presented by socioeconomic circumstances, race, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, religion, immigration status, and commercialism, and other diversities.

II. Reference and User Services



1. Creates and maintains a physical and digital library environment that provides the best possible access to materials and resources for all children and their caregivers.
2. Instructs and supports children in the physical and digital use of library tools and resources, information gathering, and research skills, and empowers all children, families, and their caregivers to choose materials and services on their own.
3. Conducts reference and readers' advisory interviews to assist children and their caregivers with the identification and selection of materials and services, regardless of format and according to their interests and abilities.
4. Identifies the digital media needs of children and their caregivers through formal and informal customer-service interactions and applies strategies to support those needs.
5. Models customer service with children, families, and their caregivers that is culturally respectful and developmentally appropriate, and works to overcome systems of oppression, discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism.
6. Respects the patron's right to browse regardless of age and provides nonjudgmental answers to patron questions.
7. Demonstrates knowledge of information services available in the community and broader society and makes appropriate referrals for all library constituencies.
8. Models and encourages use of culturally and ability diverse materials and services through bibliographies, booktalks, displays, electronic documents, social media, and other tools.

III. Programming Skills

1. Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of diverse programs for children, with consideration of equity, diversity, and inclusion; principles of child development; and the needs, interests, and goals of all children, their caregivers, and educators in the community.
2. Acknowledges the importance of physical space to engage and foster learning and establishes appropriate environments for programs that respond to developmental needs and abilities of children and families.
3. Acknowledges the importance of the caregiver-child bond to early learning and establishes appropriate and effective environments for programs that respond to the social and emotional needs of children and create opportunities for families to engage in programming together.
4. Integrates technology in program design and delivery appropriate for children and families.
5. Integrates literacy-development techniques in program design and delivery, engaging and empowering caregivers in a culturally aware way.
6. Designs programs that foster a variety of literacies and learning methods including but not limited to pre-literacy, early literacy, family literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, computational thinking, STEM, and maker-centered learning.
7. Identifies, engages, and supports colleagues, coworkers, and community members from diverse backgrounds to contribute ideas and skills for programs and presentations.
8. Establishes programs and services for caregivers, childcare providers, educators, and other community professionals who work with children, families, and caregivers.
9. Delivers programs outside and inside the library, as well as digitally, to meet users where they are, addressing community and educational needs, including those of unserved and underserved populations.

IV. Collection Knowledge and Management

1. Demonstrates knowledge, management, use, and appreciation of children's literature, multimodal materials, digital media, and other materials that contribute to a diverse, current, and relevant children's collection.
2. Maintains a diverse collection that is inclusive of the needs of all children and their caregivers in the community and recognizes children's needs to see and learn about people like and unlike themselves in the materials they access.
3. Advocates for and purchases materials by and about underrepresented communities, addressing the need for more representation of marginalized groups.
4. Maintains collections in different languages and formats, as appropriate, to remove linguistic barriers to access.
5. Understands and applies criteria for evaluating the content, artistic merit, and cultural authenticity of children's materials in all genres and formats.
6. Keeps current by consulting a wide variety of print and digital review sources (including blogs and online scholarship) and publishers' promotions (including those of independent presses), by attending professional meetings, by considering patron suggestions and popular demand, and by reading, viewing, and listening.
7. Keeps up to date on teen and adult digital and print reference sources that may serve the needs of children, families, and caregivers.
8. Understands and implements the library's comprehensive collection development policy, and develops, assesses, and revises the policy as necessary. Works to ensure that collection policy is consistent with the library's mission, the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, and other relevant standards.
9. Responds to community challenges to materials according to the library's materials-review policy, collection development policy, the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations, and other relevant standards.
10. Demonstrates a knowledge of cataloging, classification, indexing procedures, and practices to support access to children's materials.

V. Outreach and Advocacy

1. Defines and communicates the role and scope of library service for children and their families to administrators, other library staff, and members of the larger community.
2. Utilizes effective public-relations techniques to promote an awareness of and support for meeting children's library and information needs through all media.
3. Advocates on behalf of children and their families for the highest-quality library services.
4. Advocates for eliminating barriers to library service for children based on socioeconomic circumstances, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, and other diversities, and for overcoming systems of oppression, discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism.
5. Ensures that all children and their families have full access to library materials, resources, and services as prescribed by the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations.
6. Communicates and collaborates in partnership with other agencies, institutions, and organizations serving children in the community to achieve common goals and overcome barriers created by socioeconomic circumstances, race, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, religion, immigration status, commercialism, and other diversities.
7. Successfully communicates library policies and procedures to patrons of all ages, promoting library use and eliminating communication barriers based on cultural, racial, linguistic, and other diversities.
8. Communicates effectively when addressing groups of children and/or adults, writes proficiently and adjusts content, style, and delivery format to accommodate diverse functions and audiences, and possesses technology skills and cultural competencies that enhance communication.

VI. Administrative and Management Skills

1. Actively participates in all aspects of the library's planning process to represent and support service to children, their families and caregivers, and educators.
2. Sets long- and short-range goals, objectives, strategic plans, and priorities.
3. Analyzes the costs of library services to children and their families in order to develop, justify, administer, manage, and evaluate a budget.
4. Identifies and evaluates outside sources of funding and writes effective grant applications.
5. Documents and evaluates services and needs assessments through appropriate research methods.
6. Follows federal, state, and local legislation in the development and enactment of library policies and procedures.
7. Demonstrates cultural awareness, critical-thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, mediating, and cultural competency skills.
8. Delegates responsibility appropriately, supervises staff constructively, and cultivates collaboration effectively.
9. Participates in writing job descriptions, recruiting, interviewing, training, evaluating, and encouraging continuing education for staff who work with children, their caregivers and families, and educators.
10. Develops and supports organizational values dedicated to fostering culturally aware services.
11. Advocates for recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts to increase diversity in the workplace.

VII. Professionalism and Professional Development

1. Acknowledges the legacy of children's librarianship, its place in the context of librarianship as a whole, and past contributions to the profession.
2. Stays informed of current trends, emerging technologies, issues, and research in librarianship, child development, early and family literacy, education, and allied fields.
3. Practices self-evaluation and pursues professional development and continuing education opportunities on an ongoing basis.
4. Develops an understanding of personal and cultural values, beliefs, and sociocultural identities, including racial, class, and gender identities, in appreciating the importance of culturally diverse identities in the workplace and wider community.
5. Develops an understanding of the effects of racism, ethnocentrism, classism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, and other systems of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion within the profession, and of techniques for disrupting them and promoting cultural awareness.
6. Knows and practices the ALA's Code of Ethics.
7. Preserves patron confidentiality.
8. Mentors library-school students, paraprofessionals, and new librarians.
9. Participates in local, state, and national professional organizations to strengthen skills, interacts with fellow professionals, promotes professional association scholarships, and contributes to the library profession.
10. Advocates for, participates in, and provides educational and training programs that help advance cultural awareness within the profession.
11. Establishes professional relationships with school librarians in their service areas.

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