

**Fall Executive Committee Meeting
November 7-8, 2015, Portland**

Topic: Board Member Exit Interviews

Background: At the 2009 Annual Conference the Executive Committee expressed a desire to conduct exit interviews with out-going Board members as a means of obtaining feedback about individuals' experience with serving on the Board. The ultimate goal is to improve the overall experience for Board members so that the Board can function effectively and efficiently as possible. It was agreed that the Past President would conduct the exit interviews. Chris is presenting his responses below. The Executive Committee may want to discuss the results with an eye towards identifying any possible areas of concern or opportunity.

Action Required: Discussion

7 of 9 outgoing board members participated in the survey.

Q1. Why did you agree to serve on the YALSA Board?

1. I agreed to serve because I believe in the value and importance of YALSA's work and because I wanted to give back to the association. I've gained so much from my YALSA involvement. Finally, I thought this would be an opportunity to work closely with a group of smart, dedicated people.
2. To give back to an organization that has been important in my professional career. To gain experience serving on a non profit board.
3. Because I believe in the mission of YALSA.
4. It was a great leadership experience, and helped me to better understand how YALSA works.
5. I wanted to learn more about YALSA and the board's work, and also to be able to make an impact on teens services.
6. To learn more about the organization, learn from awesome people, contribute in a meaningful way.
7. I wanted to give back.

Q2. Did you receive adequate orientation to prepare you for the work of the board? Was your role well explained? If not, please explain.

1. I think the orientation was fine. Of course, there's always room for improvement and refinement, but I don't see the orientation as being the cause of the challenges that arose later.
2. Yes and no. I was very new to working as a Board member -- and how much that differs from doing the actual work. I think more is needed in the orientation and onboarding around the role that Boards play -- I know I probably should have better understood this prior, but I think a lot of new board members are like me -- they're moving from a worker bee teen librarian position (sometimes management but not always) into an elected official role. Without more experience at higher levels of their organization (or more explanation/mentoring from senior leaders in their own organization), it's harder to understand dynamics and appropriate roles.

3. Yes.
4. Yes, I thought it was very thorough.
5. Yes, I received adequate information in advance of my role and was able to read through and ask questions as necessary.
6. We receive tons of information, that is definitely not lacking. I think the challenge is in receiving information in digestible chunks and feeling empowered to ask questions, figure out the best ways to contribute as a newbie.
7. Yes

Q3. What was the most rewarding part of board service?

1. Helping support the publication of the Futures report! More generally, working with member volunteers (especially my chairs) to move their work forward and getting to work with some awesome fellow Boardies.
2. Big picture thinking, strategic planning, high level conversations about education and teen services
3. I really enjoyed being able to engage with members from all over.
4. Being privy to the behind the scenes work of the board and seeing just how much work is done and the impact on teen services in library. I also gained great experience to put on my resume and got to know and work with some awesome folks. I also liked being able to weigh in on various processes.
5. Addressing challenging issues, moving YALSA forward.
6. Getting to know everyone.

Q4. What was the least rewarding part of board service?

1. It was difficult to see members struggle because we as the Board had given them poorly defined or ultimately irrelevant tasks to complete. It was also difficult to see members disengage because they felt that they were not being heard. And it was difficult to see work get stalled because fellow board members were not responsive.
2. Liaising to committees
3. I wish the board calls could somehow be more intimate, perhaps via video calling, but I know how complicated that could be to put into action.
4. Repetitive issues/discussions
5. I thought that the time requirements at conference were a little much. YALSA board members are involved in many things and need time to do those as well.

Q5. Overall, did you feel you were needed, appreciated and able to use your skills as a board member?

- Yes – 5 responses
- No – 2 responses

Q6. Was it easy to integrate into the board? What steps did you take towards integration?

1. Hard to answer. On a personal level, I knew some Board members before I joined, and I made an effort to get to know other members after I joined. However, integrating into the work was a different challenge. Much of my time seemed to be spent on work that did not have a lot of value.

2. I met with small groups or individual members outside of meetings. I connected with others via e-mail. Our standing committee was a great source of that. It did feel like there were some camps of board members -- this group, that -- which maybe can't be avoided. I tried to stay right in the middle.
3. Fairly. I wasn't afraid to speak up and voice my opinion. I think that's what helped me the most.
4. Not especially easy at first. Everyone was very nice, but those who had been on the board for a longer period of time were obviously more well acquainted and there was some time where I felt out of place. I tried to make sure I attended social events and YALSA events at conference and that helped.
5. This bit is tough because during board our meeting are specifically business. While we did have board get together they were minimal. However for the minimal periods other board members tried to be as inclusive as possible and were mindful of me being a newbie.
6. Not really. As a front-line librarian, I had a hard time migrating between daily responsibilities and bigger picture thinking. Doing my homework and understanding how to make a meaningful learning plan for myself helped. Carving out time and capacity.
7. I think that anyone who is smart will basically be as prepared as possible by reading all documents ahead of time and then spending time at meetings listening for a few times to become acclimated.

Q7. What advice would you give to new board members?

1. One of my regrets is not speaking up earlier when I began to observe unproductive dynamics on the Board. I would advise new board members not to let those early opportunities to speak up pass them by.
2. Speak up in meetings; bring your concerns to president or others; don't just complain offline
3. The board is made up of diverse members. It needs those individual voices to make informed decisions. New board members should not be afraid to speak up.
4. Stepping out of your shell can be hard, but the sooner you bond with other board members the easier it will be to be a more productive member of the team. If you have someone in your corner you can talk to it helps.
5. Read the information given about your role, become familiar with what's expected of you, and have it available to consult throughout your time on the board. Don't be afraid to ask questions and add input when necessary, even when the majority may seem to be leaning toward something else. Be respectful of others and always offer solutions when you bring across a potential problem/concern.
6. Use your mentor! Ask questions. Know that you have strengths to contribute to the group, but take the time to understand what they are.
7. Stay on top of it.

Q8. How would you improve the function or operation of the board?

1. While the Board benefits from having some experienced members, I don't think it is good for members to stay on for many years without a break. Turnover is good: it leads to new perspectives and voices and promotes diversity. I think that's important to keep in mind when appointing ex-officio members and filling vacancies. Also, take care to develop the one-on-one relationships on the board. You can't develop the team when there is tension between individuals.
2. It doesn't always feel safe to talk with the larger group -- there are some unhealthy dynamics and cliques that executive committee needs to commit to changing if they want an inclusive board that

functions well together. I'd like to see the negative language re: ALA turn around -- we don't have to fake like everything is fine, but maybe thinking about what is actually in our control, what we can influence, and what's out of our control.

3. Varies from president to president. It does need pretty constant attention on the phone and online...It's been the most successful when communication comes directly and often from the President. And the Executive Director
4. I think the board works well overall. I was glad to see Candice did a team building exercise after the new board members were instated. The more comfortable people are with each other the better they work together.
5. It might be great to have subcommittees (standing board) set up meetings while also at conference to hash through work that needs to be done among themselves. This will help to set up a working frame for the next couple months and also allows groups to get to know each other a bit.
6. Improve staff capacity, elect leaders who have a realistic understanding of the commitment, engage board members more and delegate responsibility.
7. Eliminate cliques by promoting an atmosphere of inclusion. I do not mean acknowledging cultural diversity. I mean making sure that messengers are not shot and that comments are positively received.

Q9. What should the board prioritize for their work in the coming year?

1. Aligning YALSA's work with the Futures report. Slow going but really important.
2. Supporting the President
3. I think that refocusing on the Futures report is a priority.
4. Obviously sorting out the strategic plan and getting that new message out to the membership and potential members.
5. STRATEGIC PLANNING!
6. Straightening out the strategic plan.

Q10. How would you like to be involved with the work of YALSA or the YALSA board going forward?

1. I plan to take a break from active participation in YALSA. I will reassess after some time.
2. I can be a supporter, advocate, someone to run things by to see if they resonate for my library system, etc.
3. Serving on council, representing locally
4. I'll still be volunteering for committee and taskforce work.
5. I hope to run to become a board member in the coming years. For now, I hope to help in any way that I can to forward library teen services.
6. Excited to see where the new strategic plan will take YALSA and how I can support it.
7. I may need a break.

Q11. If you have other comments or suggestions from your board experience, please share them below:

1. If YALSA continues to be an organization that attracts its leaders from the ranks of former teen librarians, I wonder how the Board might play a role in helping to reconnect teen librarians and library leaders.

2. YALSA rocks! You are such great people and it was nice to work with so many people from various places who are advocates for teens!
3. I'm a better library worker because of my work with YALSA, I'm very appreciative for having had the experience.
4. You need another option on question #5 like "Sometimes" or "Yes and No."