

**Fall Executive Committee Meeting
October 21-22, 2011, Chicago**

Topic: Board Member Exit Interview Findings

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 as effectively and efficiently as possible. It was agreed that the Past President would conduct the exit interviews. Kim is presenting her findings below. The Executive Committee may want to discuss the results with an eye toward identifying any possible areas of concern or opportunity.

Action Required: Discussion

Overview

In order to help outgoing Board members have positive closure with the Board YALSA typically holds exit interviews with outgoing members. As one of my past presidential duties I followed the typical procedure of scheduling after-conference interview appointments with outgoing Board members to thank them for their contributions, talk about their Board experiences and to gain insight into what worked and didn't work during their time of service to the Board.

Board members interviewed included the most recent Past President, the outgoing Board Secretary, the outgoing Board Fiscal Officer and a Board member who served an abbreviated term to fill in for a resigning member. Continuing Board members were not included in this interview process.

Each interview consisted of the same series of questions that focused on the Board member's experience while serving their term. In an effort to judge how Board members perceived their experiences interviewees were asked about likes and dislikes of Board service effectiveness; changes throughout their services and to describe their best achievement; Improvements that could be made. As a look toward the future make up of the Board, outgoing members were asked about expectations and concerns for new Board members, and to share advice for those to come.

Expectations of Board Service

Everyone interviewed expressed enjoyment of their time on the Board. One member valued the planning process involved in Board work and the chance to work things thru with other people while addressing the many issues the Board dealt with. Another thought that the size of the board made it small enough to be effective and have each person carry their own load but not so big

that there is lots of infighting. Two other members found that their board term provided a good experience and a chance to get to learn about YALSA while networking working with and getting to know other leaders in the teen library world.

A couple of people interviewed thought that the Board was most effective when it came time to dealing with hard decisions like the process it went through with BFYA. One experienced Board member felt that “when there was time to talk about things we were more successful,” but that we were also as successful when quick decisions needed to be made. “People don’t seem to participate as much because the feel rushed.”

One member thought it would help improve Board effectiveness if the board could be guided so that they understood how distracting side conversations could be to the entire group, not just those sitting nearby talkers. This member also thought that more information and education should be given to sitting board members so that they did a better job of accurately and quickly filling out motion forms. Another member felt that the Board had spent quite a bit of time to improve the effectiveness of the Board in the past few years and that plans are in place to continue on this path. Another thing that would help is to let interested members know what they are getting into with board service. Involvement has changed so much over the years that we need to make sure the message gets out so that people are ready for the commitment. Some past board members wouldn’t do it if they had known what all was involved.

Benefits of Board Service

All outgoing Board members felt like their contributions were appreciated and that their opinions were respected and valued; even when the board was asked to come to a decision about a divisive topic. Some felt that it was hard to look forward and see the benefit of the work at the time, but the end results were well worth the effort. One member thought that looking back; perhaps she had become too vested in the Board service and she could see where maybe that wasn’t such a good thing to do. All members agreed that the experience helped them to better understand the ins and outs of the division and the role it plays in the big picture of ALA.

Building Better Board Members

All outgoing board members interviewed had suggestions for building better board members and thus improving board service. One member suggested that we improve communication on the board. Some discussions are dominated by very vocal members, while some members don’t speak up. Encouraging the most vocal to step back and the non verbal people to speak up, might even out to the conversations. Another member really sees strong growth of the board and thinks it is a much more professional group than it was five or six years ago. She thought it would be a good idea to encourage some of the younger members who have shown a lot of potential to continue their board service and give thought to running for officer positions.

Another member hopes the board continues to focus on membership and members by asking itself if we are really meeting the needs of our members and are our members getting their

money's worth and what they really need from the division. The last board member thinks that we should make sure that we communicate to prospective board members the level of time commitment needed. This board member also thinks that the purpose of board services is not about how to be a good librarian, but about how to make YALSA better for its members. They need to think the big picture possibilities and we need to make sure that new boardies know what that entails. She hopes that newer members continue to think of governance, big picture thinking, and gets better at being flexible, nimble and maker quicker decisions.

Additional Resources

Benefits of Board Service -

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/Boardandcommittees/Boardbenefits.cfm>

Board Member Exit Interviews Can Be Enlightening

<http://www.boardsource.org/Knowledge.asp?ID=1.1128>

--respectfully submitted, Kim Patton