

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Atlanta
January 20 – 24, 2017**

Topic: Board Member Exit Interviews

Background: At the 2009 ALA 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. Candice is presenting the responses below. The Board may want to discuss the results with an eye towards identifying any possible areas of concern or opportunity.

Action Required: Discussion

4 out of 8 outgoing board members participated in the survey.

Q1. Why did you agree to serve on this board?

- I wanted to have an impact on the professional development of library staff and the services they provide.
- I think it's important as a YALSA member leader to help the association take steps that will allow for moving forward in the ways required by the Futures Report.
- To gain non profit board experience as well as support the future of library services to teens
- I wanted to serve YALSA in more of a leadership role and give back to an organization that I have found very rewarding as a member.

Q2. Did you receive adequate orientation? Was your role well explained?

- Yes - I understood my role and the fit within YALSA, ALA, and my day job.
- Yes
- yes
- Orientation was okay, but I don't know if it's possible to really understand it until you're own board.

**YALSA Board of Directors – Midwinter 2017
Board Member Exit Interviews**

Q3. What was most rewarding about your service?(4 responses)

- I was excited by the number of chances to shift thinking related to teen services, and to make libraries new places and service providers for teens. I also liked how the work challenged me to look beyond what I was familiar with to do new activities.

- Having opportunities to think strategically about the association, teens, and how to work towards giving library staff what they need in order to develop teens first services at libraries.
- being part of a large group
- Getting to better know other board members and feeling like I was making a difference in the organization. Helping members have their voices heard. Interacting with members.

Q4. What did you like least?

- I felt that too much time was spent dealing with board members who were not able to give up their personal views and preferences to focus on the larger issues and national impact for the work that needed to be done.
- The lack of direction that came from the Presidents at times along with a sense of many Board members that the roles of leadership were not well defined. The Executive Director often had to take on a stronger role which muddied the waters and made it hard for Board members to understand how to work successfully within the association.
- sometimes it was a bit cliquish sometimes there was a bit too much drama
- Working with YALSA Staff and learning the divisive nature they have created in YALSA with cliques and a very "mean girls" attitude. The unprofessional behavior of YALSA Staff and several board members (current and past during my time) was very disheartening. Seeing first hand how YALSA Staff and others treated members of color and undermined the president. Realizing that there was a hidden agenda that YALSA Staff was trying to push through the organization, with or without member buyin. Realizing that certain YALSA leaders have a very dim few of teen librarians (and teens) and are very far removed from what those of us in the field actually do every day on the job. Realizing that YALSA Staff had alienated a lot of formerly active members (including those in leadership positions). Finding out that the board had actually worked with YALSA Staff on behavior in the past. Discovering how difficult it was as a single board member to make a difference. Feeling afraid to actually speak during board meetings due to the tendency of YALSA Staff and others to attack or belittle anyone who disagreed with them.

**YALSA Board of Directors – Midwinter 2017
Board Member Exit Interviews**

Q5. Did you feel you were needed, appreciated, and able to use your skills?

- Yes (75%)
- Other (25%)

Q6. Was it easy to integrate into the board?

- Yes (75%)
- Other (25%)

Q7. What advice would you offer new board members?

- I would encourage the board to focus on the big picture issues and to think how YALSA can have the greatest impact in the delivery of teen services. Your day job and your personal feeling on teen services should not be major influences on your board work.
- Don't take things personally. Be ready to think big picture and not focus on your own library and the teens and community that you are most aware of. Be ready to make tough decisions and to think about what teens require not simply what you think members think is best for teens.
- really spend a lot of time thinking and learning about what board members do -- most YALSA board members (including myself) had limited experience with boards and it was hard to remember what our role really was and now to appropriately gauge and respond to feedback
- Run away... There are better ways to use your time than by trying to accomplish anything while YALSA Staff and a former YALSA board member control YALSA.

Q8. How would you improve the way the board functions?(4 responses)

- I would remove nearly all of the minutiae from the board agenda and focus on impacts and the strategic work of the association.
- The Executive Committee and three presidents have to take a strong leadership role. It's important that the three presidents work to create a framework of sustainability from year to year. The Board needs to have regular leadership from the President and other Executive Committee members and know that the leadership - Executive Committee - is working to make sure that the work of the Association moves forward. Board members need to recognize what their role actually is and take emotion and personality out of the work.
- during my time on the board the strategic planning process was hard - now that it's in place (congratulations!) it seems like there is a better roadmap
- Hire new YALSA Staff that actually understands their role in a volunteer-run organization and can work on rebuilding the damage done to YALSA. Reduce or eliminate some former YALSA member's impact on YALSA from this point forward

**YALSA Board of Directors – Midwinter 2017
Board Member Exit Interviews**

Q9. What should be the board's priority right now?

- The board must focus on sustainable funding for the organization, both through member fees and endowed funds.
- Moving the organizational plan forward.
- Changing the org to be oriented to futures report. Exciting, important work that I'm just guessing most Board members haven't been involved in before.
- Getting rid of YALSA Staff, hiring new YALSA Staff that actually understands their role in a volunteer-run organization and can work on rebuilding the damage done to YALSA, working on member engagement and recruitment to rebuild YALSA after current YALSA staff is gone, Reducing or eliminating a former YALSA Board member's impact on YALSA moving forward. Creating an environment of inclusiveness.

Q10. Would you be interested in remaining active with the association or the board? In what way?

- Yes, I would. I currently have two commitments to the board, and will remain active through virtual committee work.
- Yes, already working on other projects.
- Maybe. Not sure what that could/would look like.
- Not as long as the current YALSA Staff still control things. If/when they are gone, yes.