

YALSA Board of Directors
Annual Conference 2021, Virtual
June 26, 2021

Topic: **Administrative Assistants Serving on YALSA Book Award Committees**

Background: The five book award committees administered solely by YALSA give an option for appointing an administrative assistant if the chair desires. Some of the committees are moving toward filling this position as a matter of course. In the past, this has been an informal process that involves the chair reaching out to a colleague. The Policies and Procedures for the five book awards currently states, “Committee members, including administrative assistants and chairs, who have completed one full term on any of YALSA’s...award committees may not be appointed to the same or another YALSA award committee for two years from the conclusion of their term.” To further expand our pool of volunteers, it is proposed that this requirement be removed from book award policies and procedures for administrative assistants. Kim Dare, Kate Denier, Traci Glass, and Stacey Shapiro have presented the information below for the Board’s consideration.

Action Required: **Action**

Overview:

When the decision is made to include an administrative assistant on an award committee, it is with the understanding that this person will support the chair, helping to alleviate some of the communication with publishers and the extensive record-keeping of eligible titles. It is not a position that requires evaluation of books, nor is it a position that allows the holder to have a vote or a voice in the ultimate decisions that are made. It is, however, an excellent opportunity for YALSA members who have not served in this capacity to get involved and to make an informed decision about what is involved as a voting member of an award committee. As administrative assistants are asked to serve, we would like to recommend that they are not bound by the two-year ineligibility period. This change will match the administrative assistant eligibility requirements for selection and blogging lists.

Recommendations:

1. The Policies and Procedures for the five book awards will be updated to remove administrative assistants from the two-year period that committee members are subject to, which make them ineligible to serve on another book award committee until that time has passed. Wording will be revised to, “Committee members, including chairs, who have completed one full term on any of YALSA’s five award committees may not be appointed to the same or another YALSA award committee for two years from the conclusion of their term.”
2. Consider YALSA members for these posts with an eye toward the professional development that they will get from the experience. While they are not involved in the discussions, they are privy to them. Serving in this role can better prepare members for actually participating on a committee and can increase YALSA’s pool of qualified candidates.

Alignment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Goals:

Discounting member volunteers who volunteer to be an administrative assistant on a book award committee by disallowing them to use the knowledge they have gained from that experience is exclusionary and can be seen as antithetical to YALSA’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. As administrative assistants do not have discussion or voting rights and work primarily to support the Chair, they are acting in a truly altruistic capacity, and thus should not be held to the same term procedures as regular voting members. This change provides an antidote to these white supremacy culture characteristics:

- Only one right way. This change will allow for the acceptance that there are many ways to get to the same goal and by doing things differently we might improve our approach to recruiting and retaining new member volunteers for these committees.
- Quantity over quality: Rather than measuring a member’s worth as a volunteer through the amount of time or number of times they have volunteered, this change will allow us to see that the quality of their work is what is important to having diverse and inclusive book award lists.
- Either/or thinking: Instead of forcing volunteers to think of book award committee volunteer opportunities as either now or later, this change will allow them to recognize that it can be both now and later.

Financial Implications:

Staff time will be required to include this change within YALSA resources and to add it to the policies and procedures sections on the award committee websites.

Measuring Impact:

The intent of this change is to grow YALSA’s pool of qualified and willing member volunteers, better prepare members for future service on an award or selection committee, and better match the policies and procedures that are in place for the selection and blogging lists.

Proposed Action:

- The YALSA Board directs the YALSA President to make the appropriate changes to the YALSA website and supporting documents. The YALSA Board also directs the YALSA President to communicate this change directly to YALSA membership.
- The YALSA Board directs the YALSA President and YALSA Executive Director to explore how best to bring this change to the Odyssey and Pura Belpre Awards. Since both the Odyssey and Pura Belpre Awards are co-administered by ALSC, the YALSA Board directs the YALSA President and YALSA Executive Director to reach out to their counterparts in ALSC to discuss the implementation of this change to include all YALSA Book Awards.

Resources:

- [YALSA EDI Plan](#) and specifically the following:
 - Audit existing YALSA activities to create a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming organizational environment.
 - Recruit, retain, and develop a more diverse membership and cadre of volunteers at all levels in the organization.
 - Continue to provide guidance for committee appointments and volunteer opportunities to include and increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- YALSA Book Awards Policies and Procedures
 - [Alex Award](#)
 - [Margaret A. Edwards Award](#)
 - [William C. Morris Award](#)
 - [Nonfiction for Young Adults Award](#)
 - [Michael L. Printz Award](#)

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Item #4**