

Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries

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The Community Library Network fully supports the Association for Library Services to Children Competencies, which states, “ALSC believes that all children, no matter their circumstances or attributes, need and deserve the very best opportunities, and envisions a future where public libraries are recognized as vital to all children and the communities that support them. That passion energizes ALSC members to be innovators in the field of children’s library services, particularly in areas of access, advocacy, outreach, inclusion, and diversity.” The competencies included below are part of a more complete list at <http://www.ala.org/alsc/edcareeers/alsccorecomps>.

American Library Association, 2015.

I. Commitment to Client Group

1. Demonstrates respect for diversity and inclusion of cultural values, and continually develops cultural awareness and understanding of self and others.
2. Recognizes the effects of societal factors, new knowledge and tools, income inequality, health and food insecurity, etc., on the needs of children.
3. Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning, literacy development and brain development, and their implications for library service.
4. Understands current educational practices, especially those related to literacy and inquiry.
5. Cultivates an environment for enjoyable and convenient use of library resources, specifically removing barriers to access presented by socioeconomic circumstances, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, 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 children of all cultures and abilities 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 children 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. Respects the patron’s right to browse regardless of age, and provides nonjudgmental answers to her or his questions.
5. Demonstrates knowledge of information services available in the community and broader society, and makes appropriate referrals for the library’s diverse constituencies.

III. Programming Skills

1. Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of programs for children, with consideration of developmental stages and the needs, interests, and goals of all children, their caregivers, and educators in the community.
2. Integrates appropriate technology in program design and delivery.
3. Integrates literacy-development techniques in program design and delivery, engaging and empowering caregivers in a culturally competent way.
4. Establishes programs and services for parents, individuals and agencies providing childcare, educators, and other professionals in the community who work with children.
5. Delivers programs outside or inside the library to meet users where they are, addressing community and educational needs, including those of unserved and underserved populations.

IV. Knowledge, Curation, and Management of Materials

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.

1. Advocates for and purchases materials by and about underrepresented communities, addressing the need for more representation of marginalized groups, recognizing children's need to see and learn about people like and unlike themselves in the materials they access.
2. Keeps current by consulting a wide variety of print and digital review sources 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.
3. Keeps up-to-date on teen and adult digital and print reference sources that may serve the needs of children and their caregivers.

V. Outreach and Advocacy

1. 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 discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism.
2. Ensures that all children have full access to library materials, resources, and services as prescribed by the ALA's Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations.
3. 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, culture, privilege, language, gender, ability, and other diversities.

4. Successfully communicates library policies and procedures to patrons of all ages, promoting library use and eliminating communication barriers based on linguistic and other diversities.
5. Communicates effectively when addressing or presenting to large or small 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. Sets long- and short-range goals, objectives, strategic plans, and priorities.
2. Documents and evaluates services and needs assessments through appropriate research methods.
3. Demonstrates critical-thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and mediation skills and techniques.
4. Develops and supports organizational values dedicated to fostering culturally competent services.
5. Works to eliminate discrimination, exclusion, and ethnocentrism in the workplace.

VII. Professionalism and Professional Development

1. Stays informed of current trends, emerging technologies, issues, and research in librarianship, child development, education, and allied fields.
2. Practices self-evaluation and pursues professional development and continuing education opportunities on an ongoing basis.
3. Develops an understanding of her or his own personal and cultural values, beliefs, and sociocultural identities, including racial, class, and gender identities, as a first step in appreciating the importance of culturally diverse identities in the workplace and wider community.
4. Preserves patron confidentiality.
5. Participates in local, state, and national professional organizations to strengthen skills, interact with fellow professionals, promote professional association scholarships, and contribute to the library profession.
6. Advocates for, participates in, and provides educational and training programs that help advance cultural competency within the profession.

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