

Teaming Up for Success

The ALSC Mentoring Program

MARYBETH KOZIKOWSKI WITH RACHEL SHARPE

Librarians are the most generous people I've ever worked with. Perhaps I noticed it because this is my second career; I was forty-three when I landed my first part-time librarian position. Painfully aware of all I had yet to learn, I was grateful for the guidance and encouragement I received from more experienced librarians. Fast forward to 2014: when I heard about ALSC's Mentoring Program, I saw my chance to "pay it forward" and learn a few things for myself, too.

Rachel Sharpe had her MLS for two years and was working part-time as a paraprofessional in the Henrico County Public Library System in Virginia when she applied to be a mentee. She said, "I was looking for a way to become more involved with library organizations, and I figured that joining the Mentoring Program would be a simple way to become a more active ALSC member as well as a chance for me to learn from a more experienced librarian."

Go for the Goals

We chose email as our main method of communication and our first task was to develop Rachel's goals for our partnership. They're the foundation of the ALSC mentoring relationship, keeping teams focused and working toward a specific outcome. We talked a lot about Rachel's goal to learn about and prepare for becoming more involved with professional organizations.

I have been actively involved in my own county library association—Children's Librarians Association of Suffolk County—and know that learning from librarians more experienced than I through meetings and volunteering helped build my self-confidence. Rachel has since joined her state library association and

signed up for her state's New Members Round Table and Youth Services Committee.

Another of Rachel's goals was to identify and develop skills that will assist her in landing a professional librarian job. My advice was to ask, "What do *you* like? "What are *you* good at that perhaps not a lot of librarians are? Follow your strength."

Rachel, a self-described techie, answered, "I'm in charge of our iPad and creating and maintaining our app collection. . . . I created a brochure/starter kit about using tablets with kids, started a new video series for kids, and made an orientation video for my library's Digital Media Lab."

Rachel's special skills paid off. In October 2015 she was hired as a full-time librarian at the brand new Libbie Mill Library opening in her county, working with teens and the Digital Media Lab.



Marybeth Kozikowski is a children's librarian at Sachem Public Library in Holbrook, New York. She is a member of the Quicklists Consulting Committee and a

mentor in the ALSC Mentoring Program. **Rachel Sharpe** is a Teen Librarian in the Henrico County (VA) Public Library System. She participated in the fall 2014 ALSC Mentoring Program as a mentee.

Exchanging Ideas

Rachel asked about early literacy tips to include in storytimes. We talked about our summer reading clubs and what constitutes good patron service. We both thought Kwame Alexander's *The Crossover* was a fine choice for the 2015 Newbery Medal.

Although it wasn't one of our initial goals, Rachel added an exciting accomplishment to her résumé, "With Marybeth's encouragement, I presented a session at my state library conference for the first time. While I was nervous, I've learned a lot about presentation skills, especially thanks to all of the resources she's passed along."

Why Become a Mentor/Mentee

I'm learning how public library systems across the country are structured and managed and how they meet similar challenges. Presenters show off some of the 2016 Youth Media Award winners at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston. (L to R): Candice Mack, YALSA President; Andrew Medlar, ALSC

President; Sari Feldman, ALA President; Dr. Pauletta Brown Bracy, chair, Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee; and Beatriz Guevara, REFORMA President in different ways. I love new librarians' enthusiasm and the innovative ideas they bring to the profession. I can't wait to try Rachel's program in which kids use LEGOs and tablets to make stop animation films.

Rachel added, "I'd definitely encourage anyone interested in becoming a mentee to sign up. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet someone outside of your library and bring a different perspective."

The simple act of thinking about one's goals is the first step toward reaching them and they're even more attainable with help from an experienced friend. That's what the ALSC Mentoring Program is all about: both partners sharing ideas and learning from each other in the generous spirit of our profession.

If you're interested in being a mentor or mentee, visit www.ala.org/alsc/mentoring. 



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