30 Ways in 30 Days

A Month of Entry Points for Living and Loving Advocacy

Jenna Nemec-Loise

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Thirty days. They're a pretty good measuring stick for whether or not something works for us, right? At least that's what all those infomercials would have us believe.

I mean, think about it: Everywhere you look there's a thirty-day risk-free trial or money-back guarantee. If you're not completely satisfied, simply return your purchase for a full refund (less shipping and handling). There's no commitment, and you can cancel at any time.

Except the companies making these offers hope you won't cancel. No, they're hoping that long before your thirty days are up you'll fall in love with their product and wonder how you ever lived without it.

That's their hook, and now I'm going to use it, too.

Try Everyday Advocacy risk-free for thirty days. I promise you'll broaden your understanding of what it means to learn, share, and make a difference in your library community. You'll see real results—strengthened relationships with colleagues and community partners; improved communication about the value and importance of strong youth services; and increased self-confidence in taking your next steps with ease.

Here are thirty ways to incorporate Everyday Advocacy seamlessly into your work. Try one each day. If you're not living and loving advocacy by the end of your risk-free trial, just call or write me. (We'll find another way to get you hooked.)

1. Write "You are an Everyday Advocate!" on a sticky note and place it somewhere you'll see it often, like a computer monitor, planner, or bulletin board.

2. Talk up the Everyday Advocacy website[1] with a colleague, supervisor, or administrator. Better yet, have a sit-down and explore it together.

3. Take fifteen minutes to chat with your supervisor about your advocacy role within the library. Be sure to ask questions, clarify expectations, and define parameters.

4. Use value-based language (VBL) to write an elevator speech[2] about a program or service you offer youth and families. Try out your elevator speech with a colleague.

5. Talk with a parent or caregiver about the critical role libraries play in early learning, student achievement, and adolescent development.

6. Designate an advocacy wall in a communal staff space at your library. Encourage coworkers to contribute their success stories on sticky notes or on a white board.

7. Start a database of library stories that demonstrate the value of youth

services in your community. (Trust me—you will come to treasure this resource.)

8. Share a meaningful interaction you had with a child, parent, or adult caregiver at your library's next all-staff meeting. (See #7.)

9. Send a note of appreciation to your library's Board of Directors or Friends group. Be specific about how their efforts help you make the library awesome for kids and families.

10. Learn more about your library's annual budget process and how you can assert the importance of strong line items that support youth services.

11. Plan to attend the next meeting of a school board or local school council in your library community. Listen and learn.

12. Reach out to a local teacher or principal and ask about getting on the agenda for an upcoming faculty meeting. Be prepared to talk about the ways you and your library support twenty-first-century learning.

13. Visit the alderman's office to introduce yourself and your role at the library. Drop off fliers for upcoming programs and ask for a list of upcoming ward nights, when constituents can meet with their aldermen to discuss neighborhood issues.

14. Invite a local policymaker to your library to see firsthand how you create a better future for children through libraries. (Opportunities to attend children's programs and meet constituents are both huge draws.)

15. Participate in the next Take Action Tuesday challenge. Watch ALSC-L and Twitter for the details.

16. Sign up for the next Everyday Advocacy Challenge (EAC).[3] Challenges are offered quarterly in September, December, March, and June.

17. Submit the Share Your Advocacy Story[4] webform.

18. Contribute a feature, success story, or news item for an upcoming issue of the *Everyday Advocacy Matters*[5] e-newsletter.

19. Use social media and #TakeActionALSC to share an advocacy story with colleagues, family, and friends.

20. Read the most recent ALSC Blog[6] post from the Advocacy and Legislation Committee. (Heck, why not read 'em all?)

21. Fill out the ALSC Committee Volunteer Form[7] and mark your preference for an appointment in Priority Group I: Child Advocacy.

22. Subscribe to District Dispatch,[8] the official blog of the ALA Washington Office.

23. Check out the ALA Legislative Action Center[9] and learn how you can take action for libraries by contacting your elected officials.

24. Mark your calendar for Virtual Library Legislative Day 2017, which takes place May 1–2. Plan to participate from your very own library community.

25. Explore the resources available through Advocacy University,[10] a clearinghouse of top-notch tools and resources from ALA.

26. Visit the I Love Libraries website.[11] Be inspired.

27. Connect with an Everyday Advocate whom you admire. Ask what inspires and motivates him/her.

28. Email everyday-advocacy@hotmail.com and request a Creating a Better Future button to use in your advocacy efforts. (Supplies are limited, so act now!)

29. Introduce yourself to someone by saying, "Hi, my name is _____, and I'm an Everyday Advocate for children and libraries." Feel empowered.

30. Spread the Everyday Advocacy love. (See? Your satisfaction was 100 percent guaranteed.) &

References

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6. *ALSC Blog*, www.alsc.ala.org/blog.
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8. "District Dispatch: The ALA Washington Office," www.districtdispatch.org.
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10. "Advocacy University," American Library Association, www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-university.
11. "I Love Libraries," American Library Association, www.ilovelibraries.org.

The Evolution of Preschool Storytime Research

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Annette Y. Goldsmith

Betsy Diamant-Cohen *is Executive Director of Mother Goose on the Loose, Baltimore, Maryland.* ***Annette Y. Goldsmith*** *fills in this issue for Tess Prendergast while Tess concentrates on her doctoral studies. Goldsmith is a lecturer at the University of Washington Information School, where she teaches courses on storytelling, materials for youth, and libraries as learning labs in a digital age.*

Since most children's librarians regularly present preschool storytimes, here's a look at some of the research on the topic and how it has developed over time.

In 1992, Virginia A. Walter published *Outcome Measures for Public Library Service to Children*, providing "standardized procedures for collecting, interpreting, and using quantitative data to measure the outputs of library services for children and teens."[1]

In 1997, Frances Smardo Dowd published an article in *Public Libraries* that called for more research on the impact that preschool storytimes have on children's early literacy skills. Suggesting the use of a pre-test and post-test, Dowd also discussed scoring instruments and data analysis.[2]

A 2003 *Library Trends* article by Virginia Walter described still-existing gaps in research about public library services for children and young adults and challenged readers with questions needing answers.[3]

Since then, the call for research has been responded to in a variety of ways. Below is a selection of some books and articles of interest.

Finding Ways to Conduct Research

Since many common methods used in public library research (interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and focus groups) were not suitable for research with young children, Lynne McKechnie devised new procedures for studying the library behavior of children without strong oral and written language skills. By observing natural actions and recording the naturally occurring talk of thirty preschool girls in the public library, McKechnie introduced ethnographic observation as a unique way to reflect the perspective of preschool children in the public library. A later study did the same with babies and toddlers.[4] [5]

In 2006, Eliza T. Dresang, Melissa Gross, and Leslie Edmonds Holt published the book *Dynamic Youth Services through Outcome-Based Planning and Evaluation*, providing ways to collect, evaluate, and use data to adjust planning of children's programs and services. Step-by-step procedures illuminate methods for finding what public library visitors want and interpreting those findings to create new programs or improve existing ones.[6]

Integrating Research into Storytime via Developmental Tips

In 2003, Ellen Fader wrote about using developmental tips to share research findings with parents during preschool storytimes. "How Storytimes for Preschool Children Can Incorporate Current Research" gives examples of techniques for translating research findings into easily understandable tips and behavior that librarians can model for parents.[7]

Which Storytime Configuration is Best for Active Engagement?

Did you ever wonder if it was better for storytime children to sit in a cluster or in a circle? "Student Engagement in Classroom Read Alouds: Considering Seating and Timing" is a study of approximately one hundred preschool students and their five teachers, in which Katie Paciga and her colleagues found that cluster seating resulted in more attentive students. "Students sitting *close* (less than 5 feet from the teacher) exhibited higher levels of nonverbal and verbal engagement than students seated *far* (more than 5 feet away)." Because more students (50 percent) were physically close in the cluster seating than in the circle seating (30 percent), a higher number of children sitting in the circle formation were less engaged.[8]

NOTE: This does not apply to baby and toddler programs, where the children are sitting WITH their parents or caregivers!

Does Reading Aloud Cause Physical Changes in the Brain?

Does reading aloud to children really make a difference in their brains? This longitudinal study with nineteen three- to five-year-olds used blood oxygen level-dependent functional magnetic resonance imaging and whole-brain regression analyses to study the relationship between a child's home reading environment and brain activity while listening to stories being read aloud. John S. Hutton et al. concluded that preschool children who hear stories read aloud to them at home have more positive neural activation, stimulating areas of the brain responsible for supporting mental imagery and narrative comprehension.[9]

How Do Children's Reactions Differ When Digitized Books Are Used in Storytime?

The International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) gives free access to hundreds of full-text, children's picturebooks from around the world (http://en.childrenslibrary.org). Research conducted by Lauren Collen with thirty-two four-year-olds in two groups compared their behavior and reactions to two books that were read in storytimes in their traditional form and in digital form via ICDL. Videotapes that recorded the dialogue and behavior of the children during the storytimes were later transcribed and coded. Collen encouraged combining the best features of digital communication with the best features of paper and print books, concluding that "digital picture book storytimes can enhance story understanding, especially that which depends on 'reading' the illustrations in a picturebook during group storytime."[10]

The Latest Storytime Research

Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully (VIEWS2) is the first public library-based research study that validates what we already know: storytimes can provide many opportunities to help children develop early literacy skills. In the recently published *Supercharged Storytimes*, Kathleen Campana, J. Elizabeth Mills, and Saroj Nadkarni Ghoting describe the storytime planning and delivery approach developed through VIEWS2, which emphasizes intentionality, interactivity, and community. This research project was led by the late Dr. Eliza T. Dresang at the iSchool at the University of Washington and now her team is continuing this

Find Out More

If you enjoy learning what research has to say about storytime, there are plenty more articles and books. Here are a recommended few.

1. Elaine Czarnecki, Dorothy Stoltz, and Connie Wilson, "Every Child Was Ready To Learn! A Training Package For Home Childcare Providers That Produced Proven Results in Early Literacy Outreach," *Public Libraries* 47, no. 3 (May/June 2008): 45–51. This article describes the Emergent Literacy Training Assessment Project (ELTAP) in Carroll County, MD, one of the first experimental research projects undertaken by public libraries focusing on early literacy for preschoolers.

2. Marie H. Slaby, "Children's Public Library Use and Kindergarten Literacy Readiness in the State of Maryland" (MLS thesis, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland College Park, 2014), http://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/15473, accessed May 27, 2016. In her 2014 thesis, Marie H. Slaby examines the connection between public library services to young children and their caregivers in Maryland and children's Kindergarten readiness, based on literacy assessments.

3. Sandra Lennox, "Interactive Read-Alouds—An Avenue For Enhancing Children's Language For Thinking and Understanding: A Review of Recent Research," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 41, no. 5 (2013): 381–89. For a more detailed review of recent research, check out Sandra Lennox's *Early Childhood Education Journal* article.

important work.[11] *To read more about the study, which won the 2015 Washington Library Association President's Award, visit: http://views2.ischool.uw.edu/welcome-librarians-educators.*

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8. Kathleen A. Paciga et al., "Student Engagement in Classroom Read-Alouds: Considering Seating and Timing," *Illinois Reading Council Journal* 43, no. 3 (2015): 7–14.
9. John S. Hutton et al., "Home Reading Environment and Brain Activation in Preschool Children Listening to Stories," *Pediatrics* 136, no. 3 (2015): 466–78.
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11. Kathleen Campana, J. Elizabeth Mills, and Saroj Nadkarni Ghoting, *Supercharged Storytimes: An Early Literacy Planning and Assessment Guide* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2016).

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