

McChesney Named Recipient of Distinguished Service Award



Elizabeth (Liz) McChesney is the 2021 recipient of ALSC's Distinguished Service Award, which honors an individual who has made significant contributions to library service to children and to ALSC.

McChesney is the Outreach and Partnership Consultant for Laundry Literacy Coalition and the previous director of Children's Services and Family Engagement at Chicago Public Libraries. She serves as Senior Advisor to the Urban Libraries Council and as the Library Advisor to the National Summer Learning Association.

She has worked with ALSC and the National Summer Learning Association to promote libraries during National Summer Learning Day. McChesney was a member of the first ALSC Task Force on implementing Summer and Out of School Time Learning and, since 2018, leads ALSC's Task Force on Summer/Out of School Time Learning. In this role she is currently leading ALSC's playbook development for summer learning, which will be disseminated nationally in early 2021.

McChesney, according to nominator Laura Jenkins, "is a leader, an inspiration, and a mentor to hundreds of children's librarians and others within the sphere where libraries and children intersect. But the truly outstanding quality that makes Liz stand out from other inspiring leaders is that, while she may be in front, she is never alone. Liz has mastered working cooperatively with others—individuals and institutions—so that not only children but also partners reap the benefit of her creativity and dedication."

Known for pioneering inclusive methodologies, McChesney spearheaded multiple practices and programs for children and families throughout Chicago Public Library that included materials in alternative formats, training for staff, early childhood programming for visually impaired, hearing impaired, and autistic children, and STEM programming for school-age children on the Autism Spectrum. McChesney led the work of a city-wide app for children and families on the spectrum as they visited libraries, the first to be added by a public library in the nation.

Additionally, McChesney has contributed monumentally to the work of transforming summer reading programs to incorporate twenty-first-century learning skills. Driven by her motto, "All learning counts," she was able to greatly increase summer reading participation, including to underserved populations, through incorporating art, making, and STEM learning.

McChesney has authored two books through ALA Editions, *Summer Matters: Making All Learning Count* (2017) and *Pairing STEAM with Stories* (2020). She has been recognized through the National Summer Learning Association's Excellence Award (the first time a library has won this award), the *Library Journal* Movers & Shakers Award, and the John Cotton Dana Award for Marketing Excellence.

As noted by ALSC Past-President Andrew Medlar, "I'm proud to have been Elizabeth's colleague for over two decades and to have witnessed first-hand how her vision, skill, wisdom, determination, and leadership have bettered the careers of hundreds of librarians and the lives of millions of children. She never stops dreaming, planning, and working to ensure all children have access to learning at their neighborhood library, and she is truly an industry trailblazer in creativity and collaboration. And throughout all of the incredible accomplishments and immense impact of her career so far, Elizabeth has never lost the heart of a children's librarian or her deep passion for bringing kids and books together. It is a joy to see her nurture learning, drive outcomes for all children—but especially those in need—and nurture and support the field of librarians." &