



OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

OSA PRESENTS...

PARENT LEADERSHIP

Tools for Effective Advocacy and Organizing

Key Points

In this presentation we will cover:

- Understanding the Terms
- Knowing the Issues
- Levels of Advocacy
- Connecting Advocacy to Action,
- Resources

STEP 1

Understanding the Terms



Advocate

DEFINITION

1 one that pleads the cause of another; specifically: one that pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court

2 one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal

3 one that supports or promotes the interests of another

SYNONYMS

- Campaigner
- Defender
- Promoter
- Proponent
- Supporter
- Spokesperson
- Upholder

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Advocacy

DEFINITION

1 the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something

2 the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or proposal

3 the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something

SYNONYMS

- Advancement
- Assistance
- Backing
- Aid
- Defense
- Encouragement
- Justification
- Promotion
- Recommendation
- Justification
- Urging
- Champion
- Campaigning for
- Upholding
- Pleading for

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?



- Advocacy is active promotion of a cause or principle
- Advocacy involves actions that lead to a selected goal
- Advocacy is one of many possible strategies, or ways to approach a problem
- Advocacy can be used as part of a community initiative, nested in with other components
- Advocacy is not direct service
- Advocacy does not necessarily involve confrontation or conflict

Source: [Community Tool Box](#)

Ingredients for Effective Advocacy Include...

the **rightness** of
the cause

the **power** of the
advocates

the **thoroughness**
with which the
advocates researched
the issues, the
opposition, and the
climate of opinion
about the issue in the
community

their **skill** in
using the
advocacy tools
available

the selection of
effective
strategies and
tactics



LOBBYING

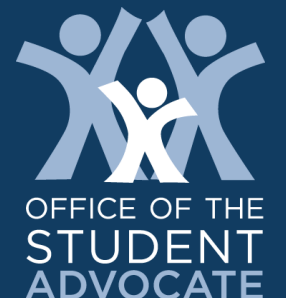
“Lobbying is the practice of trying to persuade legislators to propose, pass, or defeat legislation or to change existing laws.”

“The act of attempting to influence business and government leaders to create legislation or conduct an activity that will help a particular organization.”

Sources:

http://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_index_subjects/Lobbying_vrd.htm

<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/lobbying.html>



STEP 2

Knowing the Issues

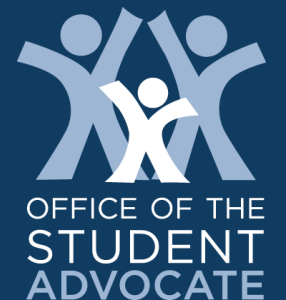


KNOWING THE ISSUES

What are the citywide issues? (i.e special education, safe passage, etc.)

What are the issues that your Ward/neighborhood is dealing with?

What issues is your child's school dealing with?



Why is it important to understand the issue[s]?

To have arguments at your fingertips that can convince your members that the issue is important and keep them fired up

To persuade allies to join your cause by presenting them with facts that they won't be able to ignore or refute



To know why those who are not yet supportive are taking the side they take, and what interests they may have in continuing to take that side

To be ready with facts any time you are challenged by those who are not yet supportive, by the local government (such as City Council), or by other groups

Sources:

[Community Tool Box](#)

[Community Workbook](#)

When researching and analyzing...

Sources:

[Community Tool Box](#)
[Community Workbook](#)

KNOW WHERE
TO GATHER
INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
ISSUE [S]

UNDERSTAND
WHERE
PEOPLE
STAND OF
THE ISSUE[S]

UNDERSTAND
HOW YOUR
COMMUNITY
RESPONDS TO
CHANGE

ALWAYS
DO
YOUR
RESEARCH!!!

STEP 3

Levels of Advocacy



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Level 1: Classroom specific issues

CLASSROOM TEACHER

- Academic support and progress
- Homework help
- Concerns about classroom related issues

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

- IEPs/504 progress
- Accommodations
- Push-in and pull-out services

SPECIAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

- Reevaluation
- Changes to IEP/504
- IEP Meeting
- Concerns about progress or services

DEAN/ BEHAVIOR TECH/COUNSELOR / DEDICATED AIDE

- Behavior concerns
- In-school suspensions
- Out-of-school suspensions

Level 2: Schoolwide issues

PRINCIPAL/ ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

- Disciplinary actions
- Policies/ procedures/ compliance
- Climate and culture
- Teachers, staff and curriculum

PTA/PTO/LSAT

- Organizing parent voice
- Finding like minded-partners
- Fundraising
- Budget prioritization

PSYCHOLOGIST & SOCIAL WORKER

- Behavior Concerns
- Mental Health Services
- Counseling
- Family supports- homelessness, grief, crisis intervention

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERINTENDENT

- Oversees specific clusters of schools
- Can assist with policy infractions, general oversight of schools, appeals.

Level 3: Systemic Issues

WARD BASED ED GROUPS

- Organizing parent voice
- Finding like minded-partners
- Advocacy
- Coalition building

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Elevating concerns publicly
- Advocacy for specific causes
- Broad policy concerns and recommendations

DC COUNCIL

- Systemic policy concerns and changes
- Expressing approval or disapproval of potential and current laws, bills, and acts

DCPS CENTRAL OFFICE

- Complaints and grievances about a school
- Feeder Patterns
- Policy implementation
- Infrastructure projects

STEP 4

Connecting Your Advocacy to Action



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Effective Communication

Fostering a Relationship With Your Child's School

1



It's A Partnership

Consider your relationship with your child's school a partnership. This will allow you to foster a relationship with your child's teacher that will continue throughout the school year.

2



Create a Plan of Action for Communication

Share your expectations for communication with your child's teacher. Remember, have patience. Teachers and school administrators can have a variety of things on their agenda daily. However, they should always respond to your requests for communication.

3



Always Follow Up

Calling multiple times a day is not the best strategy for communication, but following up the next day after making a request to communicate with your child's teacher or administrator would be valuable. Make sure to ask when you can expect your message to be returned.

Getting Started: Set the emotional tone.

KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVE GOING IN.

What do you hope to accomplish with this conversation?
Develop the desired objectives and what are the non-negotiable points; plan for any obstacles to the desired outcome.

LISTEN - DON'T ASSUME YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE SITUATION.

We do not know all sides of the story; approach this conversation with an open mind and try to understand where the other person is coming from.

APPROACH THE CONVERSATION FROM A COLLABORATIVE PERSPECTIVE.

Frame the conversation in terms of both of working together to solve a common problem. Work to define the issues that are common.

ENSURE NEUTRALITY.

Select a facilitator that can play a neutral role; ask clarifying questions to help a group delve more deeply, but does not weigh in with opinions on what is discussed.

Getting Started

DIVERSITY

A healthy cross-section of voices at the table is vital.

SAFETY

Create a safe space by establishing clear rules and ensure every participant is heard.

PATIENCE

Resist the tendency to rush or to control things. Plan enough time to allow for 'slowness' where good thinking and reflection can take place.

LISTENING

Emphasize that everyone has something to contribute, so we must all be able to both hear and be heard.

NEXT STEPS

Listening creates expectations for action. A measurable set of next steps must become clarified and implemented as follow-up to the conversation.

Sources:

[Community Tool Box](#)

[Community Workbook](#)

Goal-Setting

Setting and defining clear goals for your group is the very foundation of a successful group. Goals define what the group is trying to accomplish.

Provides Focus, Increases Motivation, Improves Group Cohesion, Clarifies the Groups Identity, Promotes Buy-in, Provides Mechanism for Accountability, Creates Openness and Transparency, and Ensures Progress is Measurable.

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART:

- S – Specific (or Significant).
- M – Measurable (or Meaningful).
- A – Attainable (or Action-Oriented).
- R – Relevant (or Rewarding).
- T – Time-bound (or Trackable).

Goal-Setting

HOW TO GET STARTED

Know the issues
and their relevance



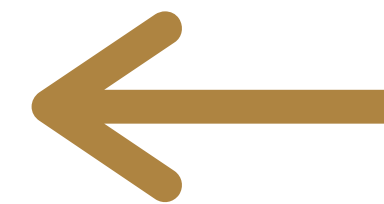
Know the strengths/
weakness of the group



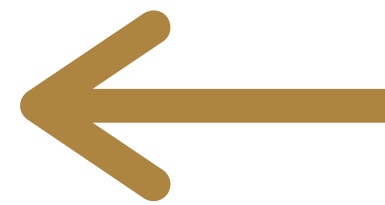
Know where you want
to be within a specified
amount of time



Determine who is
contributing
and their role



Establish how the goals will
be communicated – what is
the messaging?



Build in time to reflect
and evaluate if the
goals succeeded

Develop an Action Plan[s]: action plans describe the specific steps to be taken in order to achieve the goal.





A C T I O N P L A N

ACTION

What is the specific action step you will take to achieve this goal?

WHO?

Which individuals will be a part of this action step?

WHEN?

What is the timeline for completion of this action step?

RESOURCE

NEEDS

What resources are needed to achieve success?
What other groups need to be involved?

SUCCESS

INDICATORS

How will you measure success on this action step?

Sources:

[Community Tool Box](#)
[Community Workbook](#)

Virtual Testimony: How To



DC COUNCIL

DC Council has options to submit testimony via voicemail [(202) 430-6948], email [cov@dccouncil.us], or live during virtual meetings. Watch DC Council Meetings live at <https://dccouncil.us/council-videos/>.

DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

DCSBOE has public meetings, where parents are invited to provide testimony at public meetings. Sign up via phone [(202) 741-0888], email [sboe@dc.gov], or this form and be prepared to submit your testimony 48 hours in advance.

DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

DCPCS has options to submit testimony via voicemail [(202)-328-2660], email [public.comment@dcpcsb.org], mail [Public Comment, DC Public Charter School Board, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 210, Washington, DC 20010], or in person.

Parent Leadership Opportunities

LOCAL SCHOOL LEVEL

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's), Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO's), Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSA's), and HomeSchool Associations (HSA's)

DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Parent and Alumni Leadership Council (PALC)

PRIVATE, PAROCHIAL, AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The Parents Council of Washington (PCW)

DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Chancellor's Parent Cabinet- a group of parent leaders who directly inform the Chancellor around system-wide policies affecting schools

WARD BASED ED GROUPS

Each of the 8 wards has an organized group on a regular basis to discuss public education issues and advocate on behalf of the schools and communities in the ward

NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIVES

There are 5 neighborhood collaboratives. While there are 8 wards in DC, some community collaboratives serve more than one ward.

Boards and Commissions

PARENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

District boards and commissions vary in size and complexity, yet all are designed to help shape and influence critical decisions and services for District residents. The Mayor makes appointments to over 180 different public bodies, including boards and commissions, independent agencies, advisory groups, task forces and organizations. There are many different opportunities tailored to education and parent voice for you to become involved.

 [Vacant Seats](#)



...[W]hen people are civically engaged, when they understand what their rights are, when they understand that...you can...actually shape and form future policy, ...it changes the perception that a lot of [people] have about where power is.

ILHAN OMAR

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

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DC_Advocate



DC.Advocate



**CONNECT
WITH
US!**

Resources

The background of the slide is a soft-focus photograph of a desk. On the left, there is a light green pencil holder containing several colored pencils. In the center, an open notebook lies flat. On the right, a stack of three books is visible, with a green apple resting on top of them. The entire scene is bathed in a cool, blue-toned light, creating a calm and studious atmosphere.

Getting Started: Resources

[Determining the Right Parent Organization for an HISD School](#)

[Start a PTO Fact Sheet](#)

[How To Start a PTO](#)

[How Do I Start a PTO?](#)

[How to Start a PTO in Your School](#)

[6 Steps to Start a Parent Organization at Your School](#)

[My Role in the PTO](#)

[Suggested PTO Leadership Roles](#)

[PTO Checklist](#)

Sources:

[Community Tool Box](#)

[Community Workbook](#)

Goal-Setting & Action Plan: Resources

Setting concrete goals and clear action steps is the very foundation of a successful organization. Goals and action plans define what the organization is trying to accomplish.

[Determining Objectives for Your Parent Organization](#)

[Action Plan Template](#)

[Organizing Parents: Building Family Advocacy Organizations](#)

Diversity and Recruitment: Resources

In today's environment, and particularly given the inherent diversity of the DC educational landscape, parent organizations must understand how to work with the range of issues and communities they serve.

[Diversity: School, Family, and Community Connections](#)

[Family and Community Involvement: Reaching Out to Diverse Populations](#)

[Getting Off to a Good Start: Positive Interactions with Diverse Families](#)

[Potential Community Partners and Locations for Parent Outreach Activities in Diverse Communities](#)

[Strategies for Success in Local Early Childhood Parent Outreach Activities Among Diverse Cultures](#)

Diversity and Recruitment: Resources

In today's environment, and particularly given the inherent diversity of the DC educational landscape, parent organizations must understand how to work with the range of issues and communities they serve.

[Webinar: New Guidance for Partnering with Diverse Families: The National Framework for Dual Capacity-Building](#)

[Communication Matters: Communicating Effectively with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families](#)

[Cultural Competence: Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families](#)

[Overcome the Language Barrier: Effective Strategies Parent Groups Use to Reach Out to Non-English-Speakers](#)

[Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?](#)

Social Media

ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTS - LIKE, COMMENT,
ASK QUESTIONS, LEARN
ABOUT NEW EVENTS

Sample Accounts:

- <https://www.facebook.com/councilofdc/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/dcpublicschools>
- <https://www.facebook.com/DCPCSB/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/DCSBOE/>

