

Creating an Advocacy Network at Your School

2014 South Carolina State Convention



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Overview of Workshop Goals

At the end of the workshop, you will know how to:

Discuss PTA Relevance

Create an Advocacy Plan with the PTA
Strategy Chart

Encourage the Community to Care
About Your Issue

Find Helpful PTA Resources



PTA's Advocacy History

PTA Advocacy: A Legacy in
Leadership

PTA's Continuing Relevance

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Why It Matters for Advocacy

Continuing PTA Relevance

It is important to be able to discuss the past successes of PTA, at all levels, so that your community knows the association's advocacy relevancy. Keep track of successes and let your community and school district know when you achieve a policy win!

More importantly, though, is being able to tell PTA members and your community what you are doing now. To engage people, you must be able to show them that your PTA is continually relevant to your school.



What is Relevancy?

How do we define relevancy?

- Relevance: the relation of something to the matter at hand.

To remain relevant to your school and community, your PTA must ensure that it is addressing the “matters at hand.”

Think:

What is your state PTA doing to tackle issues that local units find relevant?



Creating an Advocacy Plan

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A Systematic Approach

Advocating in your Community: Why?

WHY be a PTA advocate?

- Change only comes through speaking up!
- Families are children's best advocates.
- Fosters a positive environment in the community.
- Allows folks to get involved in effecting change in areas that matter to them and their children.
- It is fun and rewarding!



Advocating in your Community: Who, Me?



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Advocating in your Community: Who, Me?

Common Reasons People Think They Can't Be an Advocate:

“I feel awkward asking for something.”

“I don't know enough about the issues.”

“They're too busy to listen to me.”

“I don't have enough time to do this.”

The truth is: every person can be an advocate!

Creating an Advocacy Plan

Taking the fear out of advocacy: how do we do this?

- Advocacy: public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

For the purposes of PTA Advocacy, this simply means speaking up for children.

What does this look like?

Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences, speaking at a school board meeting, or gathering community support for school millage funding are all forms of advocacy.



Creating an Advocacy Plan

How do you reassure your members that advocacy is not something to fear?

Simplifying advocacy:

- pursue relevant issues that impact your district
 - have an advocacy plan in place
 - outline tactics that utilize member skills

Advocacy does not always involve speaking with Congress; in fact, it rarely does.

Using a Strategy Chart

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Choosing an Issue

Build major campaigns around issues that impact your school.

Remember: keep your PTA relevant by tackling the matters at hand.

Question: What are some child welfare issues that your school district and community care about?

Goals

Goals: *the victory you want to achieve.*

Long Term – may extend beyond this particular campaign

Intermediate – what you want to win now

Short Term – a step toward your intermediate goals

Organizational Considerations

Resources: What will your PTA invest in the campaign?
Be specific.

- Money: how much can your PTA invest?
- Staff:
 - Both paid and volunteer
 - How much time can each person devote?
 - What are their skills and strengths?

Gains: What will your PTA gain through the campaign?

Internal Problems: What internal issues does your PTA have to consider when pursuing the campaign?



Constituents, Allies, and Opponents:

Constituents: Who cares about this issue.

- Be clear why.
- Why would the “target” be concerned about this group?

Allies: Who or which organizations would support this issue but are not members of PTA?

Opponents: Who will oppose you?

- Be clear why.
- How will you prepare for this opposition?

Targets

Targets are always a person, not a board or group

Targets are always decision-makers who have the power to address your concern with certainty.

Primary Targets:

Generally, these are elected officials. But that depends on your community, your issue, and your intermediate goal. He/she is the ultimate decision-maker.

Secondary Targets:

These individuals can influence or direct the primary target to act in your favor. Consider their power as leverage.



Tactics

Tactics are what the constituents (and sometimes the allies) do to further the cause of the association.

Tactics are assigned to a specific individual or organization.

They are creative.

They demonstrate your group's power.

Tactics

Examples of tactics:

- Invite high school students to share their views of your topic with the local school board.
- Organize a community demonstration or rally around a ballot measure.
- Ask your members to send e-mails or call the target on a specific day to show unity behind an issue.
- Invite local, state, or Congressional leaders to visit your school.

Note: it is important to know what tactics are allowed for nonprofit organizations. Ensure that you understand the appropriate election and lobbying rules.



Using the Strategy Chart: Tips

Choose to pursue an issue that is both within the scope of PTA public policy priorities and relevant to your district. Ensure that you set appropriate and obtainable goals.

Ensure that your organizational considerations are realistic and hopeful gains are fully developed so all members know the goal.

Reach out to families, parents, teachers, administrators, etc, as allies that have expressed interest or concern for the issue. Also, be prepared to educate families on WHY they SHOULD care. In other words, what is in it for them?

Targets are not always the opposition. The goal is to make a supporter of the target, not anger or embarrass them.

Always use tactics that are family friendly and engage communities; NEVER purposefully alienate or anger any person or target.



Making People Care



Tips for encouraging your community, families, and school leaders to speak up.



How Do You Make People Care?

Take the fear out: if people know WHAT advocacy is, they are more likely to participate. Remember, something as simple as calling the teacher to talk about a child's test score is advocacy.

Build up your advocates: give people more responsibility in a gradual way to build confidence.

For example, don't ask a new PTA parent to meet with a member of Congress right away; instead, ask them to do something they are already comfortable with or have time for.

Use people's strengths: ask a parent who works in finance to prepare an easy-to-understand document on budget cuts; ask a parent who is more creative to design event posters; ask someone who likes to speak in public to be your spokesperson, etc.



How Do You Make People Care?

Choose relevant issues: people are more likely to get involved on topics that interest them OR are impacting their own children

Make it local and applicable: Related to choosing a relevant issue, bring the topic down to the family and community level.

For example, if the education budget is being cut at the state level, figure out how that will impact local schools in a concrete way. Don't use abstractions. If a school is going to lose 1 million dollars, tell parents exactly how many teachers, support staff, and/or course offerings will be lost in that cut.

Tell people: Families cannot advocate for a problem if they don't know it exists.

PTA Advocacy Resources



Located in the following areas of the National PTA website:

pta.org/advocacy

<http://takesaction.pta.org>

pta.org/electionguides

pta.org/advocacytoolkit

www.pta.org/commoncore

PTA Advocacy Resources

- Annual National PTA Public Policy Agenda (PPA)
 - National PTA's annual federal policy priorities, developed through National PTA's Position Statements, Resolutions, and the timeliness of legislative priorities.
- Executive Summary
 - A brief overview of the PPA that can be utilized with PTA members, partners, or legislators
- PTA Policy Issue Reference Cards
 - A more comprehensive collection of National PTA's public policy positions that is not updated annually. This is a handy reference guide that can be used generally in your work. Please also note that position statements are available online.
- PTA Advocacy Brochure
 - A brief description of PTA's advocacy history, resources, and ideas for activism. This can be distributed to members, the community, partners, or potential members.

PTA Advocacy Resources

- DVD: “How to Lobby the PTA Way”
 - A 30 minute presentation providing an example of effective lobbying.
- DVD: “Legacy of Leadership”
 - PTA’s history as an advocacy association. This tool should be shown at every PTA function.
- Election Guides
 - Recently created through a partnership with Nonprofit VOTE, the election guides help PTA members navigate the sometimes confusing landscape surrounding allowable nonprofit election activities.
- Common Core Toolkit
 - Provides information and training around implementation of the Common Core State Standards, including guides for parents that discuss implementation and assessments.
- Special Education toolkit
 - Provides training and resources for working with the families of a special education student, including the rights of parents and students under IDEA.

PTA Advocacy Resources

Advocacy Toolkit: Includes the following guides to assist with your advocacy activities:

- Conducting a Hill Visit
- Corresponding with Members of Congress
- How a Bill Becomes a Law
- Working with the Media
- Federal Appropriations and Budget Process
- Hosting Site Visits for Members of Congress
- Utilizing Social Media for Advocacy
- Preparing Testimony

Questions?

Contact Information

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