

# Creating An Advocacy Network At Your School

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# Overview of Workshop Goals

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

Explain Why Advocacy is the Core Mission of PTA

Create an Advocacy Plan

Find Helpful PTA Resources



# PTA's Advocacy History

PTA Advocacy: A Legacy in  
Leadership

# Why is Advocacy Relevant?

Teaching parents how to effectively advocate for their child's education is one of the most important factors in the success of any school.

To remain relevant to your school and community, your PTA must ensure that it is addressing current education issues which directly impact children.

*Ask Yourself:*

What is your PTA doing to tackle issues that your members find relevant?



## 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?

## Top Reasons People Think They Can't Be an Advocate:

"I feel awkward asking for something."

Response: "Our kids are worth it!"

"I don't know enough about the issues."

Response: "It is easy to learn!"

"They're too busy to listen to me."

Response: "It's their job to listen."

"I don't have enough time to do this."

Response: "Advocacy is quick and effective and can be done on your own schedule."

Every person can be an advocate!

# Creating an Advocacy Plan

Taking the fear out of advocacy

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

We already have an advocacy network in place, all members need to do is tap into it.

*What does advocacy look like? Engagement!*

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

Simplify, simplify, simplify:

- Find your legislators at [www.statehouse.gov](http://www.statehouse.gov)
- Add contact info to your cell phone
- Find a point person to be your chair
- Use the “SCPTA Award of Excellence in Legislative Advocacy” checklist at [www.scpta.org](http://www.scpta.org)
- Pursue relevant issues that impact your school which your parents already care about
- Identify your board member skills, i.e. writing letters, communicating on social media, public speaking
- *Start small: Advocacy does not always involve speaking with Congress. In fact, it rarely does.*

# Choosing an Issue

Build major campaigns around issues that impact your school.

Examples: education funding, bus transportation, Teacher recruitment and retention, school lunches

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.

- How much money can your PTA invest?
- Encourage your members to join the SCPTA Advocacy Unit online for \$25.
- Designate a legislative advocate on your board to receive and share information and a team to make calls, send emails, use social media (20 points towards SCPTA Advocacy Award)
- Can your board commit to sending at least one board member to the 2016 Legislative Conference, Friday, April 15, 2016 in Charleston?

# Constituents, Allies, and Opponents:

Constituents: Who cares about this issue?

- Be clear why.
- Why would lawmakers be concerned about this group? Power in numbers!

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?



# 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.
- Use social media to educate and garner support for your issue.
- Ask your members to send e-mails or call decision makers 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.

# Strategy 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?

Decision makers are not always the opposition. The goal is to build relationships and to garner support, not to anger or embarrass them.

Always use tactics that are family friendly and engage communities.





# 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, i.e. writing a letter or sending an email

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

# PTA Advocacy Resources

National PTA website:

[pta.org/advocacy](http://pta.org/advocacy)

<http://takesaction.pta.org>

[pta.org/electionguides](http://pta.org/electionguides)

[pta.org/advocacytoolkit](http://pta.org/advocacytoolkit)

# 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.
- 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

# SCPTA Resources

SCPTA website: [www.scpta.org](http://www.scpta.org)

Join the SCPTA Advocacy unit

<http://www.scpta.org/main.php?pid=9>

SCPTA Legislative Platform & SCPTA Legislative Resolutions

SCPTA Legislative Advocacy Training Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtnGWGYWzUg>

Public Education Partners of Greenville County [www.pepgc.org](http://www.pepgc.org)

Greenville County School District “Eyes on Legislation”

<http://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/Departments/main.asp?titleid=bdlegi>

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Training Video:

