



Advocacy

Be A Voice For All Children

Pennsylvania

PTA[®]

everychild.one voice.



What is advocacy?

- The act of mobilizing individuals to spark changes in programs and policies at the local, state, and national levels.
- Focused persuasion for the purpose of influencing decision makers in order to achieve change.
- Identifying, embracing, and promoting a cause.



Advocacy VS Lobbying

- Lobbying is a specific, legally defined activity that involves stating your position on specific legislation to legislators and/or asking them to support your position.
- Much of what your organization is doing to improve laws, policies, and conditions in your community falls under advocacy.
- The laws limiting the lobbying done by nonprofit organizations do not govern other advocacy activities such as public rallies and volunteer activities.
- Lobbying is classified as direct or grassroots.



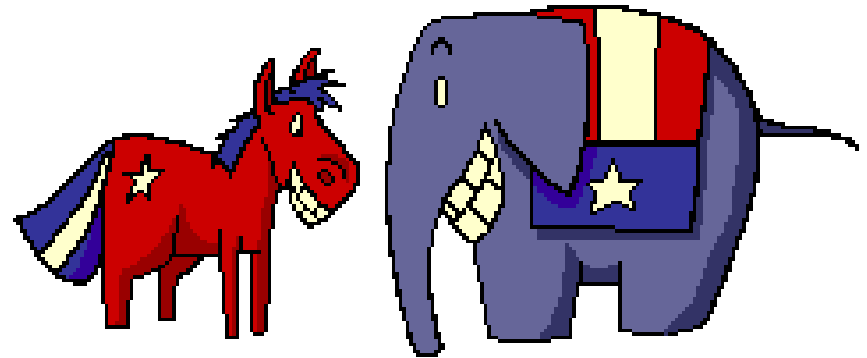
Grassroots Lobbying

- Communicating your position on particular legislation to the general public, and then asking the general public to contact their elected representatives to request their support of this position.



What you may NOT do as a PTA or a 501 (c) (3)

- Participate in political campaigns
- Endorsements
- Provide financial and other support





Ten Reasons To Lobby For Your Cause

1. You can make a difference.
2. People working together can make a difference.
3. People can change laws.
4. Lobbying helps find real solutions.
5. Policymakers need your expertise.



Ten Reasons To Lobby For Your Cause

6. The views of PTAs are important.
7. Lobbying is easy.
8. Lobbying helps people.
9. Lobbying advances your cause and builds public trust.
10. Lobbying is a democratic tradition.



Steps to effective advocacy

- Determine and frame the issue
 - Present it in a manner that makes sense to people.
 - It should thoroughly address their concerns.
 - Does it offer a clear solution that is worth the efforts made?
 - Make sure to frame or define the issue in a way that appeals to your audience (members of school board, lawmakers, voters, etc.).



Steps to effective advocacy

- Check Pennsylvania PTA and National PTA resolutions and positions
 - Any issue taken up by a local PTA cannot be in conflict with state or National PTA resolutions and positions.
 - Local board or committee approval may be required before undertaking any PTA-sponsored or supported advocacy activity.
 - It is important to attain consensus for action and gauge the level of support among local PTA members before moving forward.



Steps to effective advocacy

○ Research the issue

- Framing or shaping an issue for PTA action requires continually remaining on top of the facts.
 - ✓ Gather info from PTA and other child advocacy organizations
 - ✓ Review minutes of public meetings
 - ✓ Get copies of proposed rules, regulations or laws
 - ✓ Internet – check the source to make sure accurate reflection of the facts
 - ✓ How has the issue been covered by the media
 - ✓ Study the opposition's arguments and determine how to counter them (not every argument can or should be answered)



Steps to effective advocacy

○ Gather stories

- Similar advocacy efforts and the results
- What happened because no one advocated for change
- Personal stories
- How does the issue touch their lives, the lives of their children, and the community at large



Steps to effective advocacy

- Build your volunteer network

- Let PTA members know how they can participate in the advocacy process by clearly communicating the issue, the information, and the goal.
- Reach out beyond the PTA.



Steps to effective PTA advocacy

○ Communication

- Regular communication is essential to maintaining the advocacy network.
- Give advance notice about informational, organizational, and action meetings.
- Build community support.



Steps to effective advocacy

- Provide a variety of ways to help
 - A variety of duties allows volunteers to pick a task that fits their situation and time constraints.
 - Provide volunteers with the necessary tools to complete their task.
 - Make sure a volunteer's experience is a positive one.
 - Say thank you!



Steps to effective advocacy

o Goals

- What is the desired outcome of your actions and activities?
- What do you want the community to demand from the decision-makers?
- How will you measure your success and what will you deem a victory?
- Are there successive steps that can be identified and celebrated on your way to victory?
- Will the goals leave the group stronger and larger once the goal is achieved?



Targeting

- **Primary**

- Most of your persuasion efforts should be focused on the decision-makers who have the power to deliver your goals.

- **Secondary**

- Prominent members of the community who can help you influence your primary targets.

Targeting

- On-going
- Who are your most likely supporters among the public at large?



Influencing Your Targets & Spreading The Message

- Phone calls
- Faxes, letters, emails
- Fact sheets
- Letters to the editor
- Op-Eds
- Coalitions
- In-person
- Newsletters
- Internet





Putting it all together

- Create a written plan in which you identify:
 - The group's goals
 - Organizational capacity
 - Target audiences
 - Potential allies
 - Opposition
 - Activities to be pursued
- ✓ Tip – consider using a strategy chart



Keep the issue visible

- Give updates at meetings and events.
- Include issue updates in newsletter and on website.
- Speak of the issue publicly.
- Send email updates.



Finally...evaluate your success

- **When your advocacy effort is complete, ask the following questions:**
 - Is our group a more powerful and better-trained advocacy network?
 - What has been successful and what would we do differently?
 - Have we built membership with our efforts or generated positive publicity for our group?



Communicating With Legislators

1. Establish agenda and goals

- Know the issue
- What do you want out of the visit
- Allow some time for small talk
- If group visit, decide who will start discussion and put agenda on the table



Communicating With Legislators

2. Listen

- What is the legislator's view?
- Is there an opportunity to provide good information?
- Long-winded type? Look for openings to bring them back to the point.
- Silent type? Ask questions.



Communicating With Legislators

3. Be prepared

- But don't feel like you have to be an expert. Speak from your heart.
- Know when to admit "I don't know"... but offer to follow up with the info.
- Be open to counter-arguments, but don't be argumentative or confrontational.
- Leave behind fact sheet, business card.



Communicating With Legislators

4. **Don't stay too long**

- If you're in agreement, express your thanks and leave.
- If not in agreement, thank her, leave the room and continue discussion at another time.



Communicating With Legislators

5. Follow-up

- Send thank you note after the visit.
- If commitments were made, repeat your understanding of them.
- If staff members were present, write to them too.