Amplifying Our Voice: Leading Boldly for Our Students, Our Professions, and Our Union

The Power of Your Voice
(Locally to Internationally)

ADV103 / Level: 1, 3

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NEA Leadership Competency:

Advocacy (ADV): Advances the cause of public education through advocacy for students including addressing racial and social justice in education and how it benefits our students and members' professional needs and rights.

• NEA Leadership Competency progression:

  Level 1: Foundational (PP1) Suitable to those that are new to leadership or to the subject matter.

  Level 3: Agenda-Driving (PP3) Suitable for advanced highly experienced leaders or those with deep knowledge of the subject matter.

• NEA Leadership Competency:

  • Utilizes best practices in advocacy and political efforts (CT1)
  • Engages and builds mutually beneficial relationships to advance advocacy and political goals (CT2)
  • Leads public education policy reform (CT4)
  • Acts as a political advocates (CT5)
NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority:

- **NEA Strategic Goal:**
  - Securing a pro-public education environment for students, educators, and families
  - Advancing opportunities that will identify, organize, and engage new and early career educators: amplify the voices of all educators, support our members' professional growth, and promote social justice for our students, our communities, and our nation

- **NEA Organizational Priorities:**
  - My School, MyVoice
Goal and Objective

• The goal is to clearly define advocacy and its three levels.

• Participants will walk away with strategies that can be applied immediately that encourage speaking out about what is happening in their classrooms. Strategies such as word choice, presentations to various audiences, and even how to not upset administration while advocating. This is appropriate for teachers who have been teaching anywhere from 1 to 100 years!
Who Am I?

• Twenty years experience (educator/member)
• Mother of a teenager/preteen with special needs
• Best friend pushed me to do more
• Moral Monday March guest Speaker
• Repeated requested pre-teacher guest speaker
• Blogger
• Cover of Time Magazine
• Mentioned in 3 books
• National Radio Shows
Now, Who Are You?

#1 Have the participants sit in a circle and tell them that you are going to pass around a roll of toilet paper.

#2 Invite players to “take as much as they will need to get the job done.”

#3 After every one has had a good laugh over the amount of paper they took, tell them that for every piece of toilet paper they ripped off, they must tell the group one thing about themselves.
What obstacles stand in the way of teachers taking on advocacy roles?

- TIME . . . TIME . . . TIME.
- Personal reluctance and fear of risk-taking on the part of teachers.
- Community pressures.
- An us-versus-them atmosphere
- Limits on teachers' energy, given existing day-by-day demands.
- Need for staff development and administrator's support.
- Parents tend to expect their children's school experiences to mirror their own.
- Parental reluctance to participate in school-related activities (except athletics).
- Some teachers aren't particularly comfortable having others in the classroom.
- Lack of support from colleagues, principal, district.
- Media that goes against best practice.
- Parental opposition to new practices.
- Lack of informed state legislators.
- Lack of informed citizens when it's time to elect local and state school board members.
- Limited funding. No funds for dissemination of information.
- Change takes time and energy.
- 19. Difficult to talk issues in the face of political agendas.
- Lack of clear, articulated goal
What can educators do to inform their communities about their teaching needs?

- Stay focused on being an advocate for the children in our classrooms.
- Be proactive, not waiting to act until there's a problem.
- Learn to articulate the "why" first to parents and the community. Provide the evidence.
- Be a part of the community, talking about issues at community events, helping schools develop parent libraries, etc.
- Give presentations at PTA/PTOs.

- Give public readings of student writing
- In the fall make welcome-to-our-community phone calls designed to begin an ongoing conversations.
- Don't always hold community meeting in school buildings.
- Talk to colleagues. Take a common stand as a group with support from administrators. Ask students to write about their classroom experiences. Publish them widely.
- Publish a literary magazine.
- Invite the media to sharing activities.
- Invite others into the classroom. Show experiences, the good, the bad, the ugly.
What Does Advocacy Look Like?

Basic Generic Advocacy

Public Education Advocacy

Three Levels of Advocacy

- Student Level- Working with individuals
  - Working with students directly
  - Acting on behalf of students
- Systems Level- Working with schools and communities
  - Working with the community/school to effect systems change
  - Taking leadership to change systems
- Public Arena- Working with broader audiences
  - Public information
  - Social-Political advocacy

Hall, Goodnough, Sandy (2000)
Steps for Successful Advocacy

- **Goal**
  - What are the needs of the individual or group?
  - What is the ultimate goal?
- **Plan**
  - What do you need to know?
  - Consider the audience
- **Discussion**
  - Who will you advocate to and how will you do it?
- **Evaluate**
What Does Advocacy Look Like?

• Identify and pick an issue
• Go local.
• Get informed.
• Speak out (write out)
• Help someone else become involved.
• Take advantage of the status you’ve earned. What’s next?
Types of Advocacy

- **Phone Outreaches**
  - Phone banks

- **Written Outreaches**
  - School board, County Commissioners, Elected officials
  - Community Stakeholders
  - Opt Eds

- **Other Grassroots Advocacy Activities**
  - Social Media
    - Studies show that for many Twitter users, Tuesday is the most active Twitter day.
    - Be Clear, Be Concise, Be Contrasting, Be Convincing
  - Face to Face Conversations
    - Food/Childcare
Event Planning/Logistics

- Date/Time
- Venue
- Food, beverage and entertainment taxes
- Producing a Program Brochure
- Printed materials
- Audio Visual Services
- Presentations (Speakers and Moderators)
- Program Evaluation/Follow up survey

How to Make a Town Hall Meeting More Engaging

- Present honors/awards/gifts of thanks
- Play music
- Small sessions/Submitted answers
- Opportunities for face-to-face conversations with officials/guests
What Can I Do...next

Go back to the levels of advocacy....let’s match the following activities and add few of our own:

• sign an online petitions
• share a social media graphic
• send emails to your elected officials
• speak at your school board meeting
• attend a rally
• write a letter to your local newspaper
• distribute information door to door
• participate in a phone bank

• Volunteer on a pro-public education candidates campaign
• Association representative in your school district
• Host a gathering
Group Exercise

Select an issue that will make the foundation of your advocacy plan (e.g. nurse/social worker split between 3 schools, curriculum changes, budget funding, proposed teacher salary cut, elimination of electives/specialist classes)

• Process:
  1. Work in your groups
  2. Discuss each process
  3. Develop a strategic advocacy plan
  4. Brief report of plan (use worksheet)
Types of changes expected from advocacy

- Changes in policy/decision-making
- Changes in policy implementation (practices)
- Changes in people’s ideas/awareness of policies and practices
ONE LAST ACTIVITY

• Everyone’s favorite strategy: ROLE PLAYING
  • Create a group of 4 people
    (Yes, someone you don’t know)
  • Assign roles:
    Advocate
    Stakeholder
    Defendant
    Bystander
  • Pick a new topic
  • Show us how its done!
Questions and Answers?

Parking Lot
Session Outcomes

The content from this session can be used in the following ways in your current position/role:

• Outcome #1 - By the end of the session, the learner will be able to use his/her voice to advocate for public education through use of various media.

• Outcome #2 By the end of this session, the learner will be able to increase awareness as well as engage and mobilize community stakeholders and the general public regarding policies that affect educators and students.

• Outcome #3 By the end of this session, the learner will be able to mobilize resources (human, financial, etc.) to support the implementation of effective advocacy.
Closing

• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session by using the NEA Summit Mobile App!

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment