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

Teaching Students from High Poverty Environments
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NEA Leadership Competency – ADVOCACY

• NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s).
  2: Mobilizing & Power Building

• NEA Leadership Competency themes within the competency that this presentation will address.
  • Utilizing best practices in advocacy and political efforts
  • Engage and build mutually beneficial relationships to advance advocacy and political goals.
NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority this session will address:

- NEA Strategic Goal
  - 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, communities and our nation;
  - securing a pro-public education environment for students, educators, and families; and
  - building the capacity of the local, state and national union to ensure the success of public education.

- NEA Organizational Priorities
  - Racial Justice in Education
  - My School, My Voice
Objectives

• Participants will discuss challenges facing students living in poverty while attending public schools.

• Participants will learn ways to advance these students academically.

• Participants will discuss ways to advocate for these students by reaching out to parents, administrators, board members and political figures in their state.
“You will only sacrifice when you passionately believe in the outcome.” — Dave Ramsey

Suffered abuse as a child from his father; attempted suicide; and have lived in his car

Tyler Perry – Producer, actor and writer

How you during?

Photos from bing.com
Poverty/Socioeconomic status

Poverty - The state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support; condition of being poor.

Socioeconomic status - the position of an individual on a social-economic scale that measures such factors as education, income, type of occupation, place of residence, and, in some populations, heritage and religion.
Issues facing students living in poverty

• One-parent homes/lack of parental support
• Hunger
• Limited resources
• Less privileged
• Financially strained
• Stereotyped

Can you think of any other issues these students’ face?
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

1. **Physiological needs:** food, water, warmth, rest
2. **Safety needs:** security, safety
3. **Belongingness and love needs:** intimate relationships, friends
4. **Esteem needs:** prestige and feeling of accomplishment
5. **Self-actualization:** achieving one’s full potential, including creative activities

The pyramid shows the hierarchy of needs from basic to self-fulfillment needs.
How can we help these students?

- Protect them from being harassed or bullied, and be careful not to embarrass them.
- Expose them to worldly experiences to connect their book learning with real-life situations.
- Listen to your disadvantaged students.
- Boost their self-esteem by praising their school success.
- Provide access to computers, magazines, newspapers, etc.
- Keep expectations for poor students high. POVERTY DOES NOT MEAN IGNORANCE.
- Discuss rules and procedures in your classroom.
- Arrange a bank of shared supplies.
- Do not require costly activities.
- Make it clear that you value all of your students for their character and not for their possessions.

- By Teaching Community
Strategies to use in the classroom

• Make sure there is student-led active learning
• Incorporate kinesthetic learning – GET THEM TO MOVING!
• Group learning – “keep the groups small and heterogeneous and assign roles” – Bogan and Ogles
• Use of technology
• Role playing
• Connect to their prior knowledge
• Anything competitive – “We shouldn’t rob children of the opportunity to play games or restrain them from their inner desire to be competitive” – Bogan and Ogles
• Get Parents involved!
ADVOCACY – it’s time to fight!

If a disadvantaged child has an advocate – to teach reading, to take an interest, to hold to a higher standard, to ask questions, to hold accountable, to be both demanding and supportive, to care – a child’s chances for success are far greater.

- Carol J. Carter with the Huffington Post
What are some things that students living in poverty and attending public schools are faced with?

• Less field trips than other privileged schools.
• Limited extra-curricula activities at school (sports, clubs, after school activities, etc.) due to low funds.
• Poor curriculums
• Limited vocational classes for high school students (typing, auto-mechanic, cosmetology, accounting, etc.)
• Outdated buildings
• NO FUNDS!
NECESSARY TOOLS NEEDED BEFORE ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS!

- COMPASSION/LOVE
- SUPPORT
- SECURITY
- LOOKING BEYOND THEIR FAULTS

Now, we can start the process of ADVOCATING!
ADVOCACY – Preparation before the fight
(assess your skills, training patterns, and mental state)

1st – WHAT’S THE ISSUE AND GOAL/ACTION PLAN:
Select what you are passionate about and set goals using an action plan. NEA suggest that we use the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goal setting theory.

- NEA Education Votes
ADVOCACY – Taking it to the next level
(Train to maximize physical conditioning and skill development)

#2 – WHERE/HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SPEAK OUT:
Speak at your school board meeting, attend a rally, write a letter to your local newspaper, distribute information door to door, or participate in a phone bank. - NEA Education Votes

“The most critical actions you can take will be on the ground and in person, at rallies and protests, at meetings with elected officials, and at any assembly open to citizen input.” – Amanda Litvinov
ADVOCACY – Go local

(Set benchmarks to achieve before getting in the ring – endurance)

#3 – WHERE TO BEGIN:

Start with what you know best: your school, your district, your city or town, your state, and so forth. Pick an issue you are most passionate about, one that, if addressed, can produce tangible benefits for students.

- NEA Education Votes
ADVOCACY – Teamwork

(Set benchmarks to achieve before getting in the ring – get someone else involved)

#4 – WHO ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO INVOLVE:

Collective action makes change possible. So reach out to that friend or co-worker who has been thinking about becoming more involved but doesn’t know how or needs an encouraging nudge. Share your knowledge, volunteer together, and lighten the load by sharing the work.

- NEA Education Votes
ADVOCACY – Get informed

#5 – INVESTIGATION:

Who will be contacted? What can be done? What can be learned from this?

- NEA Education Votes
ADVOCACY – Have the conversation
(Your fight has begun!)

#6 – TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE STATUS YOU’VE EARNED:
Activism starts with the everyday conversations you have with friends, your family, colleagues and people you meet. By knowing your issue and actively listening to what others have to say, you are more likely to encourage others to get involved.

- NEA Education Votes
Sample of advocacy action plan
Activity – Complete your advocacy action plan

**ISSUE:** Special Education students with exceptional learning disabilities should not be taking a state test.

- **GOAL/ACTION PLAN:** Gather testing data to show low scoring from these students; share information with parents; ask parents to meet me at the board meeting in the district and sign a petition for me to send to the state along with a letter regarding the matter.

- **HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SPEAK OUT:** At the school board meeting and via letter to the state department of education

- **WHERE TO BEGIN – GO LOCAL:** I will start with phone calls to my parents regarding the test. I will then speak out at the local board meeting regarding my issue.

- **WHO ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO INVOLVE:** Parents, other special education teachers, and local association.

- **INVESTIGATION (Who will be contacted? What can be done? What can be learned from this?):** I will gather testing data from the state and contact parents regarding the issue (students unable to use a computer, communicate correct answers, etc. and portfolios need to be re-established to assess these students). As a result of the investigation, students with learning disabilities need a voice when being forced to take a state test.

- **WHO ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO BE HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH TO GET THEM INVOLVED?** Other special education teachers at other schools, administrators in the school, city representative (politician).
References


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