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

Using Educator Power to Move Politics & Policy

Marc Egan, NEA Director of Government Relations
Reed Bretz, NEA Board of Directors (Michigan), High School Music Teacher
COMPETENCY: ADVOCACY

• NEA Leadership Competency progression level
  • Level 1: Foundational

• NEA Leadership Competency themes within the competency that your presentation is designed to address.
  • Utilizes best practices in advocacy and political efforts
  • Engages and builds mutually beneficial relationships to advance advocacy and political goals
  • Acts as a political advocate
NEA Strategic Goal & NEA Organizational Priority this session addresses:

- **NEA Strategic Goal**
  
  - advancing opportunities to 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**
  
  - My School, My Voice, Membership Organizing, Racial Justice in Education
  - Supporting Early Career Educators
Keep in mind why you're lobbying

- You're the expert!
- Know your limits
- Play to your strengths
EXERCISE: Why are you lobbying?

• Think about some issues facing your local, your worksite, your district, and your state.

• Identify one issue or cause around which you would like to organize a lobbying campaign.
Know Your Audience

- Who do you need to convince?
- Executive decision makers
- Decision chains / influencers
EXERCISE: Know Your Audience

- Think more about your issue.
- Identify offices and, if possible, specific office holders key to the decision. Who do they listen to?
Be Prepared

- Member or Staff Background
- Priorities
- Common ground
• Choose one decision maker from your proposed lobbying campaign who you know a lot about.

• Identify as much information as you currently know about that person.

EXERCISE: Be Prepared
Learn the Ropes

- Working with staff
- Meetings are short
- Procedures and customs
Imagine that you are planning the first meeting of your lobbying campaign.

Draft an email request for the meeting. What’s needed?

**EXERCISE:** Learn the Ropes
Know Your Ask

• Specific
• Tangible
• Verifiable
EXERCISE: Know Your Ask

• Think about the issue you identified earlier and three individuals whose support you will need to succeed.

• Identify the ask you will make of each of those individuals.
Support Your Ask

• Key points
• All politics is local
• Be open for questions
Give Local Perspective

- Share your own story
- Emphasize your ties to the district
- Use local examples as well as figures
EXERCISE: Support Your Ask

- Think about one of the individuals that you plan to ask to support your cause and the ask that you will make.

- Flesh out your ask with as much detail as you can.
Not Too Political

- Bipartisan works
- Demands don’t
- Issues before politics
- Emphasize students first
EXERCISE: Not Too Political

• Think about presenting your ask to a public official with whom you disagree on nearly every issue.

• Determine how political your ask is.
Use Your Tools

• First and lasting impressions
• Be proactive
• Keep in touch
Use your Tools

- Good manners — send thank you notes, follow up
- Keep in touch — check in, share information
- Be proactive — invite Members to events, attend theirs
- Websites and apps — Facebook, Twitter, state websites, etc.
EXERCISE: Use Your Tools

• Think more about a relationship with a decision maker and how you can use your tools to build a working rapport with that person.

• Create a schedule for events that you will invite the decision maker to attend.
Be Yourself

• You know people
• You have people skills
• You have a superpower
EXERCISE: Be Yourself

- Think about your issue. What stories can you tell that support your position?
- Write a story to support your issue.
Build Relationships

• Give it time
• Build trust
• Be a resource
• Think about how you will establish or nurture a relationship with the decision maker that you identified.

• Identify opportunities to create or build relationships with key decision makers.

**EXERCISE:** Build Relationships
Mock Congressional Meeting

Congress voting on school vouchers next week

Scenario A:
• You are meeting with a conservative GOPer who generally supports vouchers
  • What do you say to persuade? What is your ask?

Scenario B:
• You are meeting with a moderate GOPer who opposes vouchers but also is worried about a primary challenge
  • What is your ask of them to help defeat this?
Session Outcomes

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

• Plan strategic lobbying campaigns
• Create effective messages to and requests of decision makers
• Develop the skills to build effective and efficient lobbying campaign plans
Questions and Contact Info

- Marc Egan, NEA Government Relations Director
  MEgan@nea.org; 202-230-9614

- Reed Bretz, NEA Board of Directors (Michigan)
  Rbretz@mea.org; 616-304-0774