

Get Advocacy!

How can parents network and advocate on issues?

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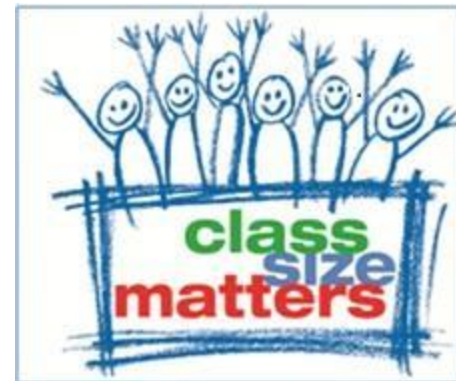
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Organize around your issue

- **Network with your PTA, your School leadership team, schoolboard or Community Education Council, and or the teacher union chapter leader at your school.**
- **Have a meeting at your house, school, local café or other meeting place.**
- **Develop a message: 3-5 sentences that communicate your position and your values.**
- **Decide on your goals or “asks”: a concise list of the outcomes that you want; hopefully, they will be specific with a rationale to support them.**

Organize Part II

- **Ask parents (and teachers) to sign letters or petitions in front of school.**
- **Also use online petition sites such as www.ipetitions.com or www.signon.org**
- **Signon can also send emails to officials.**
- **Petitions, either paper or online, are also great for collecting parent contact info and developing an email list to follow up with updates and action alerts.**

Hold a rally or press event

- **Have a rally, protest or press conference in front of your school or City Hall.**
- **Or hold a forum or town hall meeting, at your school, church or elsewhere.**
- **Be sure to invite elected and education officials, parents and reporters at least a week ahead.**
- **Email a brief press advisory by 2 PM the day before to info@ap.org and reporters, with the date of the event in the subject line, telling where, when and what. Be sure to provide a contact person w/ email and phone no., for more info.**

At the rally/press event

- **Take photos and videotape event and post on YouTube and Flickr or other online site.**
- **Distribute a press release at the event, one or two page document, briefly discussing the issue, with quotes and soundbites from the participants.**
- **Send it out shortly after the event has taken place to reporters, parents, officials, and others who could not attend.**

Piggyback on the news

- **Jumping on a news story with your viewpoint is the best way to get your issue out there, but you have to be fast!**
- **How to stay current? In NYC, subscribe to NYC education list and to DOE press releases and join Twitter.**
- **Also check out Chalkbeat or Google News at least once per day**
- **When you see news breaking that relates to your issue, email or call reporters immediately. Reporters are always looking for relevant quotes from parents!**
- **Pick out a good soundbite first and repeat it frequently.**
- **Do not overuse your press email list or reporters will start treating your messages as spam.**
- **Also, write letters to the editor; do not forget the community papers. For the tabloids, keep them as short as possible! Or ask if they want an oped.**

Advocacy

- **Send letters and/or petitions with a cover letter to elected officials and key decision-makers. (Always keep a copy of your letter and the original petitions!)**
- **Do not forget to copy and/or contact your state legislators and city council members.**
- **Schedule meetings with key elected officials who represent you, including other parents in their districts.**

Advocacy Part II

- **Prepare succinct “talking points” to make sure of a coordinated message, and have a pre-meeting with other parents to coordinate roles.**
- **Demand a written response and bug them until you get one.**
- **Do not forget to copy and/or contact other electeds.**
- **Always send a follow-up thank you letter after meeting with them; reiterating your points and your asks.**
- **Follow up with emails to parents and reporters with regular updates about your issue.**

Use social media

- **Form a Facebook group or “page”**
- **Sign up for Twitter at twitter.com; you will get followers as soon as you follow others!**
- **Develop your own “hashtag” and post comments to officials and reporters**
- **Create your own website and/or blog. It’s free and only takes a few minutes!**
- **Free blog sites: www.blogger.com, www.blogspot.com/; <http://wordpress.com/>**

Don't give up!

- **It can take months or years to accomplish your goals.**
- **Be persistent, vocal and make sure you have evidence on your side.**
- **Join and contribute to a national organization that supports strengthening public schools, like Parents Across America and/or Network for Public Education.**
- **Parents are the “sleeping giant” in the fight to preserve our public schools, according to Diane Ravitch; time to wake up!**