



Informing & Inspiring New Teachers

a
Kappa Delta Pi
publication
Volume 19, No. 1

KDP Executive Director
FAYE SNODGRESS

Consulting Editor
STEPHANIE L. SCHAEFER
Managing Editor
KAREN L. ALLEN

Assistant Editors
KATHIE-JO ARNOFF
SALLY RUSHMORE

Art Director
CHUCK JARRELL

NSTOY Liaison
PEGGY TORDOFF

NTA

BERNARD BULL
REA KIRK
MADELINE KOVARIK
JACQUELINE LYDY
GINA RILEY
STEPHANIE L. SCHAEFER
NICHOLAS J. ULIANO
MACK WELFORD
MICHAEL P. WHITMAN



ISSN 1070-7379 published four times during the school year by Kappa Delta Pi, 3707 Woodview Trace, Indianapolis, IN 46268-1158.

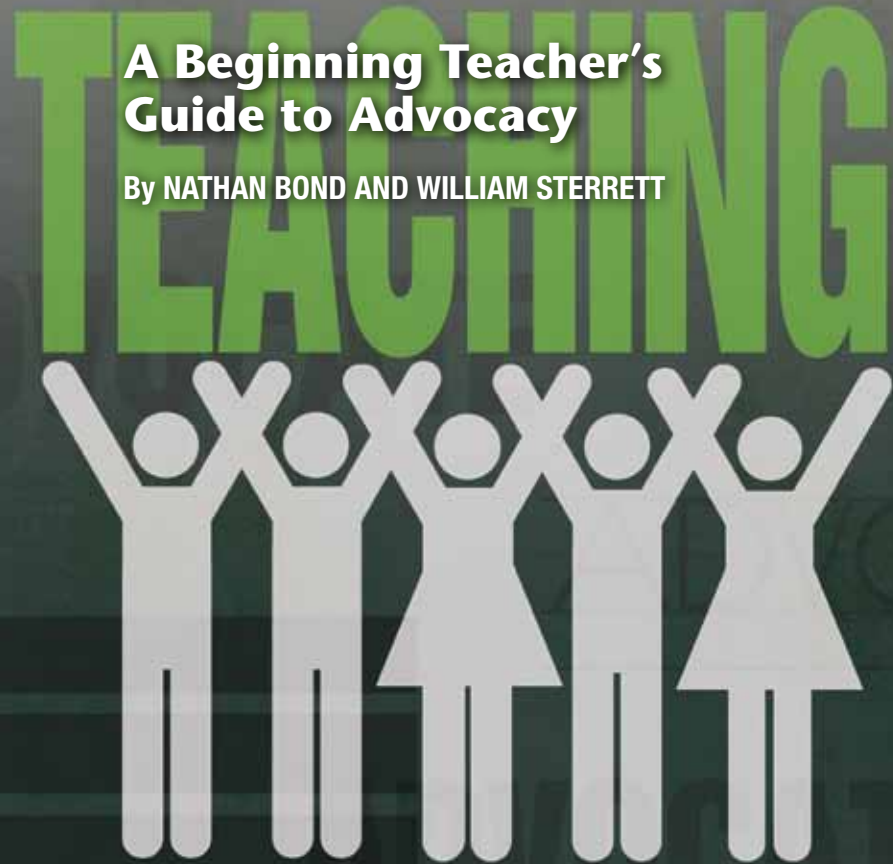
Send all subscription orders and editorial correspondence to address above, call 1-800-284-3167, or visit KDP Online at www.kdp.org. Subscription rate: \$10.00, members, per year, domestic; \$12.00, members, foreign; \$12.00, nonmembers, domestic; \$14.00, nonmembers, foreign. Single copies, \$3.50 (+s&h). Third-class bulk permit paid at Columbus, Ohio. Postmaster does not return issue to publisher with address change.

Subscriber must send changes to:
Kappa Delta Pi, 3707 Woodview Trace,
Indianapolis, IN 46268-1158.

©2011 by Kappa Delta Pi. All rights reserved.

A Beginning Teacher's Guide to Advocacy

By NATHAN BOND AND WILLIAM STERRETT



When asked in surveys why they chose education as a profession, beginning teachers often cite the opportunity to help others. As Charney (2002, 22) noted in her classroom management book on responsive teaching, "We all have an inherent need to be useful and helpful to others." Teachers—new and experienced—generally are regarded as kind-hearted people who want to better the lives of the children in their classrooms; they want to "make a difference." By doing so, they serve their community and make a positive impact on society as a whole.

Dr. Bond, Associate Professor at Texas State University, currently serves as President of Kappa Delta Pi International. He is Counselor of the Eta Zeta Chapter and a member of the KDP Public Policy Committee.

Dr. Sterrett, Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, serves as Chair of the KDP Public Policy Committee. He is a former principal and upper elementary teacher.

Though beginning teachers tend to focus on creating positive change within their own classrooms and with their individual students, they also can make a difference in the lives of others on a larger scale and beyond the classroom. They can advocate for the profession. Indeed, teachers serve a powerful professional role as they "not only exert significant influence on the performance of students, but they also influence the performance of other teachers and school leaders" (Reeves 2008, 2).

What is advocacy and how can new teachers be advocates for the profession? Merriam-Webster (2011) defines advocacy as "the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal." Teachers have many opportunities to lend support and provide a unique perspective on current instructional practices, school policies, and community responsiveness amid increasing changes and challenges. This article identifies four ways to advocate for the profession and the steps that Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education (KDP) is taking to assist in this area.

Join a Professional Organization

In a recent *New Teacher Advocate* article, Kapavik (2011) offered several excellent reasons for joining professional organizations, which include networking with colleagues and experiencing professional development opportunities. Implied in the article is the belief that teachers can network and pool their resources and talents to back important issues. There is strength in numbers, and the collective voice of teachers can be powerful. The role of many professional organizations is to draw on these numbers and channel the collective voice through their public policy branches.

To build the collective voice of its members, KDP recently launched its Public Policy Committee with the mission “to create a forum to communicate and exchange educational policy issues that advance the field of education in a reflective manner in order to sustain professional opportunities, advancement and growth for educators, and success for students” (view the Welcome Video at <http://bit.ly/KdpPP1>). Members of Kappa Delta Pi already have taken the first step in becoming advocates for the profession—they are on the roster of an organization that stands up for educators and students.

Stay Current on Issues in Education

Another way to advocate for the profession is to read and monitor print and electronic sources of information, including newsletters, newspapers, television and radio reports, Web sites, and social media sites. Educators at all levels need to be knowledgeable about concerns at the local, state, and national levels and be familiar with matters relevant to the profession so they can position themselves as informed voices from the field. Knowledge is power.

So where does a teacher start? KDP gathers current information from many sources and posts and links to these materials on its Public Policy site, <http://bit.ly/KdpPP1>. KDP Online, www.kdp.org, also provides various news and resource listings recommended by members. Members are encouraged to share their favorite educational-related Internet sites or timely journal articles for “Views and News” in the Information Station section of the Public Policy site. Keeping yourself and colleagues informed is one of the first steps in advocating for the profession.

Communicate with Decision Makers

Just as every vote counts at the polls, so does every communiqué to elected officials. The offices of elected officials daily receive and tally calls, texts, e-mails, faxes, and letters from constituents expressing their opinions on current issues.

Educators’ voices need to be in the mix! Practitioners must not abdicate their unique perspectives and voices; they must champion teaching and learning.

Educators can thoroughly, confidently, and succinctly communicate their views when contacting elected officials by doing a little prep work, as they do for lesson planning. KDP’s Guide to Getting Started, listed in the Information Station, offers tips on effective ways of “Making Your Voice Heard.” The Public Policy Discussion Board, <http://bit.ly/KdpPP1db>, is a good place to get feedback and refine one’s thinking about educational topics. Once informed and ready to speak out, educators can turn to the Take Action section on the Public Policy site, <http://bit.ly/KdpPP1>, to locate contact information for their congressional representative and senator.

Participate in Person

Of course, nothing speaks “taking action” like serving on a decision-making committee for the school or district and testifying at local school board meetings or sessions of the state board of education. When teachers speak at these events about proposed policy or legislation, they provide authentic insights and can explain how decisions impact the lives of teachers and students in the classroom.

Anna Shults, the 2007 Indiana State Teacher of the Year, believes strongly in the voice of teachers and its influence, as well as the need for educators—at any level—to exercise that voice. In discussing educators’ roles in policy-making she said, “As the ones accountable for implementing policy decisions, teachers have a responsibility to stay current on topics of reform at both the local and national levels.”

Teachers are invited to get involved as KDP develops its public policies and plans opportunities for members to participate in discussions at the local, state, and national levels. Teachers of today—and tomorrow—are uniquely poised to shape and strengthen the role of educator. Whether they speak out on behalf of reauthorization legislation, weigh in on a local bond hearing, or lend perspective in shaping curriculum standards, teachers must be advocates for the profession. The time is now. 🍏

References

- Charney, R. 2002. *Teaching children to care*. Turner Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Kapavik, R. R. 2011. The importance of joining a professional organization. *New Teacher Advocate* 18(3): 2–3.
- Merriam-Webster. 2011. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Available at: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.
- Reeves, D. B. 2008. *Reframing teacher leadership to improve your school*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.



As the ones accountable for implementing policy decisions, teachers have a responsibility to stay current on topics of reform at both the local and national levels.

Anna Shults
2007 Indiana Teacher of the Year



New Teacher Advocate goes digital!

<http://bit.ly/NTAf11v19>

Thanks to The Watkins Printing Company, printer of *New Teacher Advocate* and sponsor for Convo 2011 Crossroads of Excellence.