What Every Educator Should Know About Advocacy: What, Why, and How

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Webinar Objectives

In this webinar, participants will:

Part 1: What is advocacy?
• Define advocacy
• Compare and contrast the different types of advocacy

Part 2: Why advocate?
• Explain why advocacy is important

Part 3: How can you advocate?
• Evaluate different ways to advocate
• Create a personal plan for advocacy
Reasons why teachers don’t advocate

1. No time; feeling overwhelmed by job and family demands (Fiedler, 2000)
2. Risky professionally to challenge the status quo (Fiedler, 2000)
3. Fear of criticism from people who disagree politically (Gasman, 2014)
4. Afraid to be viewed as a complainer or whiner (Hess, 2015)
5. Too new to teaching, better suited for experienced educators (Fiedler, 2000)
6. Disinterest, uncertainty, and unawareness (Lyons & Webster, 2015)
7. Lack of knowledge about advocacy (Radius, Galer-Unti, & Tappe, 2009)
8. Lack of knowledge about the issues (Burke, Sandman, & Perez, 2017)
9. Feel disenfranchised, suspicious of politicians, and discouraged about their ability to make an impact through political activity (Wade, 2003)
Attitudes are Changing

More Young People Report Feeling Politically Empowered

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“A small – but significant – surge of young people say they feel politically empowered. According to the survey, 46% of the people ages 15 to 34 now believe they can have at least a moderate effect politically, a significant increase from two months earlier, when 37% said the same.”

Youth Political Pulse Survey from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and MTV
Part 1: What is advocacy?

- Define advocacy
- Compare and contrast the different types of advocacy
What is advocacy?

- A political act, comprised of various strategies, that makes public officials aware of people’s views about issues or problems in the hope that the officials will be influenced to support the views and remedy the problems. Advocates are resources – to give public officials information and help them to understand issues (Pillow-Price, 2009)
What are the types of advocacy?

1. Personal
2. Case or client advocacy
3. Legislative or public policy
4. Private-sector
Where do advocates focus their efforts?

1. “inside the system”
2. “outside the system”

“Teachers have an obligation to advocate for our students both inside and outside our classrooms. Individually we can change the lives of the students we work with directly every day, but it takes collective action to improve the system for all students” (Stone, 2015, p. 127).
Who advocates?

Groups advocating to bring about policy changes:

1. Corporate community, foundations, and think tanks
2. Special-interest groups and trade associations
3. Groups focusing on the selection of specific candidates
4. Opinion shapers who influence public attitudes
5. Citizens through elections and appeals to legislators

(Domhoff, 2006)
Part 2: Why advocate?

- Explain why advocacy is important
Why advocate? – Legal Reasons

- Supreme Court cases that protect a teacher’s right to advocate
- General ideas to remember
- Always consult legal advice before doing advocacy.
Why advocate? – Ethical Reasons

Professional Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Educators
Why advocate? - Professional Reasons

- State Standards for Teachers
- National Standards for Teachers

- As Albert Einstein said, “The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”
1. You’re an advocate whether you want to be or not.
2. If you don’t advocate, then ....
3. Teachers know the pupils, the pedagogy, the content, and the context (Dever, 2006).
4. Teachers, when working with decision makers, create better laws (Coggins, 2017).
Part 3: How can you advocate?

- Evaluate different ways to advocate
- Create a personal plan for advocacy
How can you advocate?

1. Teach well every day.
2. Join professional organizations.
3. Share with colleagues at your school.
4. Attend a conference.
5. Participate on social media.
6. Vote.

Note: Building relationships is a theme running through many of these advocacy strategies.
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead, American anthropologist, 1901-1978

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Recommended Resources

Resources on the Internet
• Kappa Delta Pi – webpages for the Public Policy Committee
• https://constitutioncenter.org/
• www.congress.gov
  • Your representatives’ contact information, websites, committees, bills, voting records
  • Videos explaining the legislative process and lesson plans

Books about advocacy

Articles about advocacy