

Advocacy and Your Student Council

Tips for Your Organization

This handout is geared to help in organizing your student council's advocacy efforts. Good Luck!

10 Things to Consider:

1. What issue do you want to address?
2. What is the cause of the issue, who is responsible?
3. What is your long-term goal?
4. What are you asking for?
5. What decision-makers can help you?
6. What is the decision-maker's title, role in the decision-making body, and position on the issue?
7. Who are your key opponents and what influence do they have on decision-makers?
8. Is your group the only one working on this issue?
9. How many people do you need to help? How many can you get?
10. Who are your allies?



Who are your elected officials? <http://mdelect.net/>



Remember!

The key to influencing your Board of Education, and other governing bodies is correspondence!

-So, be sure that your student council communicates with the local Board of Education and lawmakers by offering itself as a source of input, advocating its views, and always saying thank-you to those who support youth-friendly legislation and the student voice!

Modes of Communicating



- **Letters**- Very formal, respectful, can contain an abundance of information
- **Emails**- Less formal, can contain just as much information as a letter, but in many cases is easier to overlook, as it is perceived as an "easier" mode of communication, lacking the time and effort of a "snail mail" letter.

- **Phone Calls**- Less formal, but allows for discussion. Allows the "tone" of the communication to come through. Also, allows the use of a "cheat sheet" with important points, phrases, etc., already written out. If you are comfortable with a back-and-forth conversation, this is a good communication mode to use.



- **Face to Face**- Can be very formal, can be very informal; depends on the situation. Must be very confident in your position and knowledge if you are going to use this mode of communication. Allows for the tone of the message with body language as a valuable tool. It is immediate back and forth communication.



- **In view of the public**- Includes rallies, letters to the editor, and public testimony. Puts pressure on the Board of Education and lawmakers, but often may create tension and resentment - MUCH depends upon the content, tone, and delivery of the message.

RESEARCH!

Yeah, it's that important!



Don't get caught off-guard! Know everything you can about an issue before advocating! Students are generally seen as naïve, so we must prove that erroneous through our actions and knowledge!

(Resource: *Short Advocacy Video*: <https://youtu.be/NnOk2tTz468>)

Ways We Can Advocate

Advocate through Legislators

- Phone Calls
- Letters & Emails
- Face-to-Face Visits

Raising Awareness

- Regional SGA's
- Community Outreach
- Social Media

Signing Petitions

- Websites like change.org

Attending the MASC Advocacy Week with your Region

**Remember that you can advocate to any adult through these means. Not every student is expected to call politicians or testify at bill hearings, but all are encouraged to get involved.*



Consider in your testimony, the type of appeal that best fits the situation or cause:

Ethos - is an ethical appeal to your sense of right and wrong. It works to build authority, credibility, respect, and expertise with an audience....using someone with credibility to support you.

Samples: Taylor Swift endorsing a guitar string brand – or “These local nutritionists all support our ideas on healthier school lunches.”

Pathos - an appeal to an emotion - evoking certain emotions to feel the way the author wants them to feel. Usually the emotions of empathy, sympathy and pathetic are derived from pathos.


Samples: ASPCA commercials use sad music and imagery to play on viewers’ empathy – “When I went to a private school with uniforms, I felt too restricted as an individual.” – A teenager tries to convince his parents to buy him a new car by saying if they cared about their child’s safety, they’d upgrade him..

Logos - Logos involves the use “cold” arguments – like data, statistics, or common sense – to convince people of something. The best logos advertisement examples are when a speaker appeals to logic. Statistics, surveys, facts, and historical data can make a product seem like a more reasonable decision.


Sample: A car seat brand highlighting its safety features and crash test results

Ethos-Pathos-Logos


The Three Pillars of Persuasion!



Ethos:
Appeal to Ethics/
Credibility/ Morality



Pathos:
Appeal to Emotion/
Passion



Logos:
Appeal to Logic &
Factual Reasoning

Although this handout is geared towards advocacy of an organization towards a governing body, **these same techniques will work with a student council or individual in their own school towards their administration** - a very good place to practice being comfortable dealing with adults!