

Planning Local Music Education Advocacy



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The Advocacy Cycle



The Advocacy Cycle Explained

This guide is intended to help individuals advocate for music programs at the local level. The cycle above illustrates different aspects of successfully meeting an advocacy goal. The key to achieving advocacy goals lies in breaking down your outcome goal(s) into specific steps. This cycle illustrates those 10 steps. The steps described here are ongoing, can be approached in multiple orders, and can overlap. Recognizing that specific aspects may be more or less relevant to your individual situation, it is always important to make advocacy decisions based on your unique situation.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a group's process of defining goals and planning how to reach them. This is critical for success because it provides a means to monitor progress and enables an efficient use of time and resources. Strategic planning includes the following components:

Goals

Select one or more goals and select target dates for meeting them. The goals should be quantifiable. (For example, your goal may be to get 15 people to attend your booster meeting on May 2 or to get your district to mandate a 1-credit music graduation requirement for the 2015 school year.) It is important to determine who has the power to help you reach your goal(s).

Who

Decide who will be a part of your core team and what strengths each person brings. The core team can be any size that makes sense for your goals. In general, it is better to have a smaller group of dedicated members than a larger group that is not cohesive. Additional people can assist you but not serve on your core team.

Timeline

Determine and set dates for numerous short-term goals that will allow you to reach your main goal(s). (For example, you may want to recruit 15 volunteers by February 2 or have materials printed by October 30.)

Organize

Organizing refers to establishing a local support network that will assist you in meeting the short-term and long-term goals listed in your strategic plan. Organizing might include:

Human Resources – What people are needed to meet each of your short-term goals? (How many outside volunteers will be needed?) How will you divide up the work? (It is important to delegate responsibilities and not do everything yourself!)

Communication – What is the best way for the core team to communicate? How often will you meet? How will you communicate with additional volunteers and stakeholders?

Analyze

Analyzing involves “getting smart” on the issues. Know your issue inside and outside by researching all aspects of it, including its history within your local community and current trends in other places. Consider all of the people who might be stakeholders in your issue, and learn everything you can about them. Create a list of talking points and practice them. The goal of analyzing is for you and your core team to be the smartest and most prepared people in any room. Doing so will enable you to communicate more efficiently and effectively.

Seek Partnerships

Local businesses, arts and education organizations, and other community groups and leaders can be powerful partners. Consider how they can help you meet your advocacy goals. For example, they might be able to donate time, assist you in recruiting volunteers, or provide physical supplies (such as printing and copying). Your core group can brainstorm potential partners, particularly those with whom they have ties. Determine who is the best person on your team to approach each partner, and have a specific ask in mind. (For example, perhaps that partner would be willing call or write a letter to the superintendent.)

Act

Now you are ready to put your plan into action. Stick to your timeline and assess your progress throughout. Consider changing course based on your progress towards your short-term and long-term goals.

Evaluate

Reflect on your progress throughout your work and at the end of your campaign. You might ask questions such as: What went well? What could we have executed better? Was the work load apportioned fairly given individuals' needs? How could we have made better use of our time? What people might we call on in the future to assist us in our efforts? Were our goals and timeline realistic? What additional factors might we consider in future advocacy efforts? Where are the appropriate opportunities to apply these lessons in the future?

Maintain

Advocacy is an ongoing process and it is therefore essential to maintain some level of momentum and cohesion with your support network. Decide how you will stay in contact with your core team members, volunteers, and other partners. Consider planning regular meetings or phone calls or sending periodic emails to key advocates. Establish a system for staying informed about what is going on within your school and district as well as in national education policy. Share information with key advocates whenever possible.

Building Relationships

It is important to continue building relationships even when you are not directly committed to a specific goal. Continue reaching out to people you meet at various events, ranging from parent nights to school events to your own personal endeavors. Strong relationships provide you a firm foundation for future advocacy campaigns. There is a role for everyone to play. Contact your local Music Educators Association to find out more.

Resources:

<http://advocacy.nafme.org/resources/> - This page contains all of NAFME's advocacy resources.

<http://advocacy.nafme.org/make-your-case/> - This page contains various research and writings that may help you in advocating to specific constituents.

<http://advocacy.nafme.org/policy> - This page contains information about current national education policies and trends.