

Building a State & Local Structure to Support Advocacy

Lessons Learned From Education Advocacy in Texas

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Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed citizens
can change the world.

Margaret Mead



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Five Key Factors to Create a Movement

Failure

Righteous rage or love

A vision

A plan

Keep going

- Michael J. Sorrell, *Paul Quinn College*



From Movement to Success

Create solid, lasting advocacy networks.

Cultivate allies (grassstops) and develop constituencies (grassroots) in support of your position.





Types of Advocacy Networks

Grasstops

- Qualitative
- Key persons
- Relationship builders
- Good for personal contact with lawmakers & staff
- Personal outreach necessary for this member

Grassroots

- Quantitative
- Broad-based
- Shows the importance of the issue
- Can be initiated and activated through less personal means

(ASAE, 2018)





Grasstops

- Identify influential community spokespeople with connections to:
 - The media
 - Key decision makers

- Turn grassroots into grasstops



Grassroots



- Community outreach/effective recruitment
- Gather data, build your base



Training

“Be sincere;
be brief;
be seated”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

- ❑ Overall goal of the organization
- ❑ Their role and why they are important
- ❑ Advocacy issues/programs
- ❑ How the legislative/city/school board process works
- ❑ How they can develop relationships with key decision makers and staff
- ❑ How to communicate with elected officials
- ❑ Social media training
- ❑ Different approaches to training grassroots and grassroots





You Built an Advocacy Network, Now What?

- Communicate to keep the network informed, motivated, and connected to the organization.
- Communication must be interesting & relevant.
- What communications resources exist in your gifted community to spread the word and keep people interested?
- Do you have gifted publications that can be repurposed to drive interest and are relevant?



Make Advocacy a Priority



□ Strategic planning

- Identify Key issues
- Determine your goal
- Identify key audience

□ Develop your message



Engage the Grasstops

- Start easy, bring them up the ladder
- Sign-on letters
- Regular briefings
- Advocacy Committee
- Visits
- Calls to decision makers

- Do you know grasstops in your community and/or organization?
- How can you keep them engaged in G/T and on your





Engage the Grassroots

- Attend legislative meetings
- Organize an advisory group
- Volunteer on a campaign
- Communicate with legislators
- Be sure to provide talking points
- Action alerts (sparingly)
- Phone only for critical timing



Tips for Effective Advocacy

- ❑ Know the key members you need to target
 - Legislature - Education Committee/Committees
 - Hierarchy of importance
 - Education Agency
 - Director of Gifted programming
 - Commissions/Coalitions/Committees for Gifted education

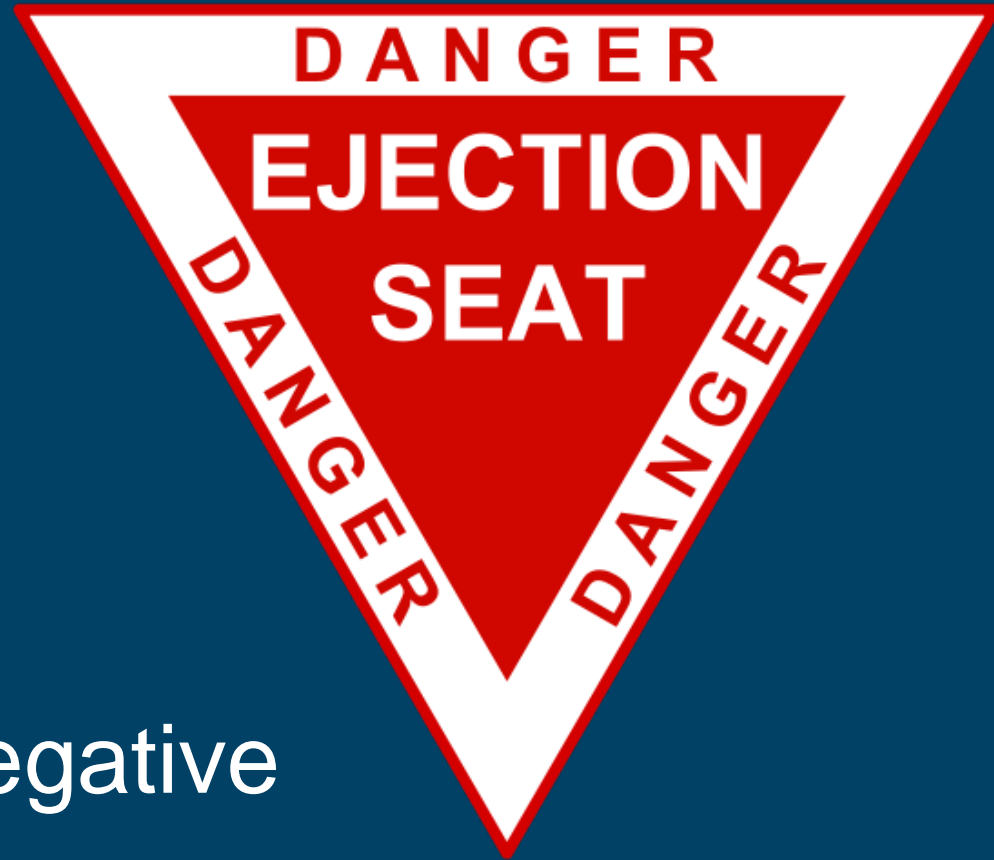
- ❑ Be respectful/be Bipartisan

- ❑ Keep messages short and succinct



Avoid the Pitfalls

- Partisanship
- Diving into the negative
- Not following up
- Ineffective grasstops deployment



A Tale of Testing in Texas

- ❑ Two women challenging the EOC 15% rule passed in 2009
- ❑ Effective grassroots cultivation and deployment
- ❑ Used grassroots to bring student stories to legislative hearings
- ❑ Intense grassroots pressure required the Governor to sign, not veto the bill



<http://www.tamsatx.org/posts/previous2>



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TAGT's Advocacy Network

- Getting the G/T student allotment
- Saving the G/T student allotment
- Collaborating on the Texas State Plan on Gifted Education

