



Parents as Teachers

Advocacy 101

Advocacy for Parents as Teachers is about representing your organization and the young children and families you serve to government agencies, elected officials, board of education members, and other decision makers in your community. It's about getting out the message that... parent education and family support in the first five years of a child's life are essential for optimal child development and school readiness.

Here are a few tips for successfully developing an advocacy plan:

- *Develop a plan.* It is not enough to simply have a goal; you must also plan how you are going to reach it! Find out information about whom you plan to target, what will influence them and what opposing information may arise. Then, create strategies under all of the aforementioned circumstances.
- *Set a goal* prior to beginning your advocacy activities— know what you want to accomplish. Make sure your goal is clear and that measurements are in place to let you know when you have reached it.
- *Stay on point.* Ensuring that everyone who is helping to advocate for your organization is on message is crucial to successful advocacy. This means that everyone is giving consistent messages to all of those whom they are trying to influence.

Do

- Include decision makers on your mailing lists and invite them to events or meetings or on a home visit
- Be proactive, don't wait for a negative event to happen to take action
- Set goals, work with others and develop a plan
- Network and make frequent contacts with the people who make decisions about your program
- Educate the parents in your program about issues as they arrive and help them take action

Don't

- Overload decision makers with information; stick to the issue
- Anticipate that people know anything about Parents As Teachers or your organization; start with the basics
- Be offended if a decision maker cannot meet or refuses to meet your requests
- Beg or argue when meeting with decision makers
- Be afraid to take a stance and stand up on an issue