

New York State

PTA

everychild. onevoice.



How Can Our Voice Be Heard? The Advocacy Agenda 2016

**The Westchester-East Putnam Region PTA's
ADVOCACY BREAKFAST**

**Antoinette Darden-Cintron, WEP Region Director
Margaret Mager, AD of the East & Advocacy Chair
March 12, 2016**

Are you an Advocate?

Parents are advocates when they:

- Attend a PTA meeting
- Attend a parent-teacher conference
- Serve on a PTA or district advisory committee
- Organize an arts-in-education program
- Attend school board meetings
- Participate in school budget preparation meetings
- Disseminate information to their community about school board candidates and/or the proposed budget

Ways to Communicate with Decision Makers

- Visits
- Phone calls
- Letters, emails, petitions
- Fact sheets
- Letters to the editor, Op-Ed pieces
- News articles
- Coalitions
- Social Networking (Blogs, Twitter, and Facebook)

Check State and National Positions

NYS PTA

- Basic Policy
- Where We Stand (resolutions, position papers)
- Legislative Directives
- www.nyspta.org

National PTA

- Legislative Program (directives, resolutions, position statements)
- Public Policy Agenda
- www.pta.org

Advocacy vs. Lobbying

➤ Advocacy:

Parents hold meetings with experts on the link between opiate and heroin use in order to educate the school community on the potential for addiction.

➤ Lobbying: (next step)

Parents urge the state legislature to adopt a laws prohibiting or restricting doctors from prescribing excessive quantities of opiates.

Why Lobby?

- People have a right to change laws
- It works: Individuals can make a difference; people who work together can make an even bigger difference
- Lobbying leads to concrete solutions
- Policy-makers need your expertise and insight, and PTA positions matter
- Lobbying advances your cause and builds trust and support for it
- Lobbying is a democratic tradition; elected leaders represent you

PTA Advocacy & Lobbying

PTAs

- May engage in legislative activity
- Are non-partisan
- May not devote more than an insubstantial (5% of gross income) part of their activities to lobbying
- May not campaign for or against candidates for office
- May not contribute to a PAC (political action)



March is PTA Advocacy Month!

- Virtual Lobbying is NYS PTA's way of contacting legislators throughout NYS on issues we care about. Done through NYS PTA Website.
- Unit/council/region mailings are also important. Speak up on issues important to your district.

NYS PTA ADVOCACY EVENTS -

- Legislation/Education Conference (Feb 27-28)
- Lobby Day in Albany: February 29
- Virtual Lobby Day: March 8



2016 Legislation Issues

The NYS PTA Advocacy Agenda

- **Funding Our Schools**
- **Family and Community Engagement**
- **Early Childhood Education**
- **Heroin and Prescription Opiates**

2016 Local Issues

The WEPR PTA Advocacy Agenda

- **Common Core Reforms:**
Where Does It Stand?
What Should We Be Doing?
- **School Budgets in a Zero Tax Cap Year:**
Will Schools Have To Cut Budgets?
Cut Programs?
Lay Off Teachers?
What Should We Be Doing To Prevent Budget Cuts In Our School Districts?

Effective Grassroots Advocacy

Requires:

- Building credibility over time
- Solid planning
- Carefully devised activities
- Collaboration
- Personalization of issues
- Meeting decision-makers where they are
- Seizing windows of opportunity to influence
- Periodic assessment of initiatives

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

If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to sleep with a mosquito.

- Anonymous

Thank you for joining us!