



Parent Advocate Toolkit

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Parents, did you know . . .

- **PARENTS** are a very important part of the school board process and can help create positive change for their students.
- **PARENTS** must be fully active in their kids' education beyond attending parent conferences, and helping with bake sales, which means attending school board meetings and vetting candidates running for school board, among other things.
- **PARENTS** have far more power with their voices and votes than school officials want you to realize.

- **PARENTS** are the most vital voice in the educational system. Our presence is a threat only to those who use our kids and schools for nefarious reasons, like the school board union (NSBA) that likened parents to “Domestic Terrorists”. We must rescue our kids from those corrupt forces.

Dear Parents,

As you know, there have been many recent events in the news where you are being portrayed as instigators instead of concerned parents using your voice for your students. Teachers’ unions across America are working hard to keep the parent voice out of the decisions in their children’s education. This toolkit has been created to help educate parents on how to use their voices to impact positive change for students. These are suggestions, but you know what works best for your situation. Feel free to contact us with your stories. This is never an easy endeavor, so stay strong! Your children see your support for them. You are inspiring the next generation to speak up and stand up for what is right.

1. When and why should parents attend school board meetings?

PARENTS should always try their best to make time to attend school board meetings. These meetings are where the major decisions that impact your children and their futures happen. Board members and the district staff discuss curriculum, raises for staff, teachers, administrators, and funding for programs vital to your child’s education. Parents see firsthand the discussions and how/why school board members vote the way they do. It is also a great opportunity to listen to other parents speaking and connect with them. You may not feel compelled to speak every time, but it is so critical to experience what is happening in your school district. A good start is to review the school board meeting agenda prior to the meeting.

2. What happens at school board meetings?

There are many procedures to follow at school board meetings, so sometimes parents feel intimidated or bored. Regardless, the parent voice is **vital** at all board meetings. Why? District administration will make presentations to help “guide” the board in decision making and special interest groups like Teacher Unions, Planned Parenthood, ACLU, etc. also pressure school boards, which is why the parent voice is critical at board meetings. Special interest groups stand to make millions off education funding, so parents must ensure those resources reach the kids in positive ways.

The school district will post an agenda publicly at each district site and on the district website 72 hours before the meeting time. Each board meeting usually has the following:

- **Closed Session:** This is where school board members meet in private without the public being there. It is usually where personnel issues, disciplinary action for students, and lawsuits are discussed.
- **Open Session:** During open session is where the public is allowed to participate in the board meeting. Open session is much of the meeting. You will see how the school board and district administration works.
- **Public Comments:** The public is welcome to speak to any non-agendized item. This is usually toward the start of the meeting, so the public does not have to sit through the entire board meeting. This is also a time to hear what others have to say. If you hear someone who supports the same concerns, talk to that person, and set up a time and place to meet with others. This is how you can start and build a coalition in your community.

- **Consent Items:** These items are lumped together so the board can vote in one vote for all items listed. It is of particular importance to pay attention to these items as controversial votes can be placed within this section. Members of the public can request to speak to an item under Consent, which removes it from the Consent vote. Additionally, board members can remove an item from the consent vote for discussion. If you note something vital under Consent vote, contact your board prior to the meeting and request the item be open for discussion.
- **Information and Discussion Items:** This is where the public is notified of any proposed changes to facilities, curriculum, and a variety of other topics. These items are not open for a vote yet but may come up for a vote in future board meetings.
- **Minutes:** The board will be presented by the district administration with a review of previous minutes. The minutes usually include a summary of each speaker. If you spoke at the previous school board meeting, please review the summary of your speech to ensure the staff summarized it correctly. If they did not get it correct, simply contact the board secretary, and let them know you noticed a mistake. If they refuse to change your intended meaning, feel free to speak at the following board meeting during open comments to let the board know.

3. How do parents speak at school board meetings?

There are two ways parents can speak at school board meetings. The first path to speaking to a school board is to speak to an item on the agenda. Parents can speak to any item on the agenda, even if it is a “Consent” item. Do your research ahead of time to learn how to submit your desire to speak. Some districts require you to register prior to the board meeting, while some allow for a speaker card. You can call the board secretary, the communications person, or the superintendent’s secretary to find out how to submit to speak.

The second way parents can speak to the board is during open comments. This is when parents speak to items NOT on the agenda. In fact, if you speak to an agenda item during open comments, the board can stop you and require you to wait for the item.

Things to remember when speaking to a school board:

- You must speak directly to the board. You can direct the board to ask the district administration to act on an issue, but you cannot speak directly to the administration during your public comments. Sometimes, the board will stop you during your speech if you are not speaking directly to them.
- The board may vote to limit speaking time. Be prepared. Please have a speech ready for the time your district allows, usually 2–4 minutes.
- If you have paperwork or anything else to submit to the board, please give it to the board secretary to distribute to the board. Do not give directly to the board members. Additionally, it is always a good idea to provide the board secretary a copy of your speech. This helps to alleviate any issues with the summary of your speech for the minutes.
- All your comments become public record and available to the public. Be aware of your words, your tone, and make sure you are basing your discussion on facts - not rumors.
- You **do not** have to provide your home address, if directed by the board. You may simply state that you are uncomfortable sharing your home address on public record, and your address is on file with your child’s student records.

4. Can parents contact school board members outside of school board meetings?

Yes! Parents can contact their school board members via email or calling the district office to set up an in-person appointment. The school board was elected or appointed to their position, which means they work for you. It is often better to email or meet with your school board trustees prior to speaking at a school board meeting. Let them know your concern or need to add something to discuss on the agenda.

Additionally, you can meet with your district administration, including your superintendent. Call to schedule an appointment. Their salaries are paid with your tax dollars.

5. How do parents get community support and build a coalition?

The scariest thing to a corrupt or incompetent school district and school board is informed parents building a coalition that directs them to change their course. In fact, in many districts, parents speaking up is a new experience as school boards and special interest groups have had full control for decades. Parents have far more power than they realize. The following are ways to unite and hold school districts and their boards accountable.

- **Social media:** This is a free option. You can start your own page on social media that allows parents and fellow constituents to support your cause and share ideas on how to fix an issue within your school district.
- **Print Media:** Some parents have also taken time to write an op-ed (opinion piece in the print or online newspaper, also called an editorial) to share their concerns. It is a great way to inform others of what is happening in your district and get them to join forces with you. The newspapers welcome these pieces for consideration to be included in their Editorial Section and may even assign a writer to do a story on your topic.
- **Coffee Chats:** Create an event at a local coffee house, community center, or a private home to present issues and discuss ways to fix such issues.
- **Park Playdates:** Inviting busy moms, especially with younger children to meet at a local park is a great way to get more people in attendance. Most moms would like to be more involved but are busy taking care of their children. This is a great alternative way for them to join the cause.
- **Ads and Billboards:** Some parents have pooled money to pay for ads and billboards to really get the attention of the school board as well as provide an opportunity for other parents to unite with their cause.
- **Speak to Local Business Leaders and Companies:** Do not be afraid to expand your cause to others in your community, including businesses. Some of the business leaders in your area may not be aware of what is happening. You can ask for a meeting or send an email. Create an informative flyer for your cause and coalition and ask them to display it. Contact Chambers of Commerce and ask if you can speak at one of their meetings.
- **Meet with Your Local Leaders:** Elected officials are ALWAYS looking for an opportunity to meet with constituents. Take time to reach out to your city council and congressional members to share your story with them. It is a great way to not only inform them of what is going on, but you can ask them to write a letter of support for your cause. If they do not, let them know you will inform your group that they are not in support. It is especially important to speak to your representatives at the state level as they make the decisions that impact education for your state. Also, please know that many times, it is the staff who will meet with

you. This is just as important to meet with them as they advise the elected official on votes and what is happening in the community. Here are a few rules to remember when meeting with elected officials:

- **Always** be polite and kind regardless of if they agree with your cause.
- **Ask** for an email for follow up.
- **Ask** for a photo with the staff or elected official you spoke to; and
- **Send** a thank you note.

6. What are additional ways to advocate for your cause?

There are many ways to get more attention for your cause. Always have a variety of speakers from different angles related to your cause. Involve parents, grandparents, local business owners, pastors/priests, and even local political leaders. Take time to meet with your city council members, sheriff, police chief, fire department leaders, and church groups. Speak about issues regarding your school district at your city council meetings. Contact your state representatives and tell them you want to testify at your state house for this cause.

7. What if I cannot attend a school board meeting for an important vote?

Let's be real. It is never easy to attend school board meetings. Some parents must hire babysitters, while others may have to take time off work. However, if you are choosing "taco Tuesday happy hour" over a school board meeting, then you might have to rethink your priorities. But there are times when attending a school board meeting is impossible. If you cannot attend:

- Email the board your thoughts on the upcoming vote. Make sure you add the superintendent, the board secretary, and the communications person at the district on your email. That becomes public record.
- Ask the board to read your email in lieu of you speaking to the board. The board is not obligated to do so, but some will state that they have received emails from constituents on how to vote.
- Have a friend deliver your speech at the meeting.
- Call the district and school board members, but always follow it up with an email.

8. Do parents need to speak to the superintendent and the district staff?

Absolutely. It is recommended that you speak to them and always cc them in emails. They work for you and your children. The superintendent and the district staff create the agenda, the wording for votes, they make voting recommendations, and they create workshops for the community and the board on issues in the district.

School districts across America have their own protocols on communication with the district. Many prefer that parents speak to their teachers first, and then speak to their principals as a last resort. Districts sometimes frown upon parents speaking directly to the superintendent. Some will contact the principal of your child's school to talk to you instead. This is a tactic used to try to intimidate parents. As a parent, constituent, and taxpayer, you have every right to speak directly to the superintendent and school board.

It is vital to include the following recipients in your emails:

- Superintendent

- Secretary to the Superintendent
- Board Secretary
- Communications Director

You may be contacted by your principal or vice principal stating that the best way to solve a problem is through them. This is a typical tactic used to try to intimidate a parent into not bothering the superintendent or district staff. Simply share your concern about your issue, thank them for reaching out to you, and politely tell them you plan to continue to contact the district, but you will add them to your email list. Parents always have the right to contact their district staff and superintendent. If they are non-responsive, tell the trustees in public comments at your next school board meeting.

9. How do parents make long term changes?

Long term changes mean consistent involvement of parents and long-term commitment to staying informed, involved, and to VOTE. The most impactful way to make long term changes in your school board is to vote for school board members who support students over teacher union political agendas. It is most important to follow the money and see how school board candidates are funded.

- Start a social media group of school parents to rally them to go to board meetings and speak out on their concerns.
- Have meetings at parks or homes to engage and educate other parents.
- Create a texting group using an app you like to easily reach out to core parents in your group.
- Put as much pressure as possible on each school board member to meet your needs by emailing, calling, and setting up meetings with them to share your point of view.
- If the school board does not budge, then the community needs to elect board members who will meet the parent's concerns.
- Publish editorials in the local paper about the lack of professionalism among school leadership.
- Recruit viable candidates to run in the next election.

10. Should parents also engage their children's teachers in this advocacy?

Absolutely! It is important to talk to your teachers about your concerns. They might feel the same way, but it is harder for them to openly support you because they will likely be harassed by corrupt administrators and teacher union officials. Some teachers have even been chased out of the jobs for daring to speak out. One way to empower your child's teacher is to talk to them about the issue(s). You can also add them to your emails to the district and superintendent. If you do not feel comfortable doing that, you can forward your emails to them.

Another way to engage your teacher is to help educate them on what is happening. For Kids and Country has resources specifically created to help you support and empower your child's teachers.

- [Adopt A Teacher](#) is a link on [For Kids and Country](#) to help parents educate and engage their teachers on understanding issues in education and how their union really works against them.
- You can also share with your child's teacher this [teacher toolkit for how to opt out of their teacher's union](#).

- [Union Exit](#) is another resource to help teachers consider other options outside their teacher's union.
- Buy your child's teacher our book [Standing Up to Goliath](#). This book shares so many stories of the struggle both parents and teachers have in education. It is relatable and inspiring.

11. What if your teacher does not support your advocacy efforts?

Some teachers are very focused on their teacher union agenda, which does very little to support students and often brings harm to kids and families. If your teacher is upset with your advocacy and becomes hostile towards your child there are steps you can take to protect your child:

- Start by making sure everything is in writing by emailing your principal of the situation. Include the teacher, your superintendent, and school board of what is happening and your expectation to resolve the issue.
- Ask for a meeting with the teacher and principal to try to alleviate the issue.
- Demand to have your child either moved to another classroom or the teacher removed if the situation is not resolved.
- Your child should never be the victim of bullying by a teacher. If your child continues to be a victim, you may have to consider more drastic options like removing your child from the school and consider speaking to an attorney for a potential lawsuit.

12. Should parents join their paid parent organizations?

The choice of paying for a parent group at your child's school is yours to make. However, there are some facts you need to know. Many of the parent groups that require payment for their membership at school are the equivalent to the parent version of the teachers' unions. They often have a similar political agenda as the teachers' unions and that agenda is often harmful to kids. They decide what legislation they will support or advocate against at the local, state, and federal levels and it always matches that of the teacher's unions. These organizations do not support [school choice efforts](#) as they advocate for more governmental control of public school education with more funding strictly for public schools.

13. Helpful online resources

- [Moms for Liberty](#)
- [Moms for America](#)
- [Fight for Families - Loudoun County, VA](#)
- [Robert's Rules of Order](#)
- [American Education Advocates \(AEA\)](#)
- [American Federation for Children](#)

*Visit the websites of your local school district, county department of education, and your state department of education for specific information for your community. You can call them as well.

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Julie Collier started her career as a public-school teacher from Orange County, California. She became an accidental advocate for students when witnessing as both a teacher and parent how children are not a priority in the education system. She left teaching and has been a decades-long, outspoken advocate for parents and their children. A longtime supporter of education freedom, she helped start one of the top performing K-8 schools in California at a time when there were limited school choice options in her community. As an advocate for students having their own path to academic success, her own children have participated in public, private, and homeschool opportunities. Her family recently relocated to Texas in the DFW area to ensure quality education and freedom. She started her own parent nonprofit organization in 2006. She worked for a California Congressman as well as National School Choice Week. Julie recently started an education consulting company called American Education Advocates where she helps organizations with outreach, communications, and project management. She also serves political candidates with campaign and social media strategies.