



ADVOCACY

Green Schools Advocacy Roadmap

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Green Schools Advocates,

Any advocacy planning process begins by setting an achievable goal. In the case of green schools, the policy goal we'll want to advance is to have specific school districts pass a resolution requiring that every new school and major renovation project achieves LEED for Schools Silver certification.

With this goal in mind, you should use the roadmap detailed below as a guide to prepare for designing, coordinating and implementing your green schools advocacy plan. By following these steps, which may not always progress in this specified order, you will be able to implement and run a much more effective grassroots green schools campaign. Good luck, and remember your neighboring chapters and USGBC national are here to help!

DEVELOPING YOUR GREEN SCHOOLS ADVOCACY PLAN

*Setting a Goal(s); Identifying Primary and Secondary Audiences;
Assessing the Political Climate; Refining the Message; Identifying Resources*

SETTING A GOAL(S)

- Your **goal** is what you want to change, who will make the change, and by how much.
- Your **goal** should be a realistic step that focuses on a specific action that the school board or state can take.
 - ✓ **Example (local):**
 - That within the year the School Board (or Schools Boards X, Y and Z) will pass a resolution requiring that every new school, new building and major renovation project achieve LEED Silver.
 - ✓ **Example: (state)**
 - That within a year the state will pass a law requiring that new schools and major renovation projects achieve LEED Silver.
 - That within a year the state will pass a law providing a financial incentive for the construction of green schools

EVALUATING YOUR GOAL

- Is the goal achievable, considering the political feasibility?
- Will the goal generate support from a broad coalition of groups and people?
- Is there data to support achievement of this goal?
- Can the target decision makers be clearly identified?
- Is there a clear timeframe?

IDENTIFYING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY AUDIENCES

- The **primary audience** is made up of the gatekeepers to the decision-making process: policymakers and decision makers with the authority to approve the proposed change.
- The **primary audience** makes up the target audience of the advocacy strategy.
 - ✓ **School Board members**
- The **secondary audience** is made up of those who influence the decision makers and those who influence opinion and action of decision makers.



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- The **secondary audience** can often include policymakers or typical decision makers, but who are external to the decision process at hand. (i.e. mayors can play a large role in helping pass a green schools policy)
 - ✓ Students
 - ✓ Parents (PTAs)
 - ✓ Teachers (state and local branches of NEA or AFT)
 - ✓ Principals
 - ✓ Superintendents
 - ✓ NGOs

PINPOINTING THE AUDIENCES

Who might they be?

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Parents (PTAs)
- ✓ Teachers (state and local branches of NEA or AFT)
- ✓ Principals
- ✓ Superintendents
- ✓ **Elected Officials:** Mayors, City council members, County commissioners/supervisors, State representatives, etc.
- **Government Officials:** Building officials, city managers, heads of agencies, etc.
- **NGOs:** PIRGs, Sierra Club, Local groups
- **Voters:** The general public
- **Media:** Business/Real Estate reporter; Environmental beat writer, etc.
- **Businesses/ Business Leaders:** Businesses with commitments to sustainability, shopkeepers
- **Practitioners:** Architects, facility planners, engineers, developers, trade associations
- **Opinion Leaders:** local, regional leaders on green building or related issues
- **Professionals:** Stakeholders and credible sources who may support your policy goal

ASSESSING THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

- Know your school district, locality and state
 - ✓ **Example (state)**
 - How are decisions made? (policy/ decision-making process)
 - How many Representatives/Senators? What do they support?
 - How many Republicans/Democrats? What pieces of your policy goal might be supported by Republicans, by Democrats or both?
 - Who is the Governor and how might her/his track record suggest his/her support?
 - When does the Legislature convene? What similar/ parallel issues are being discussed?
 - ✓ **Example (local school district)**
 - With what relevant issues do school boards identify? What do they reject?
 - How do they make decisions? Is there a leader? Are they unified or split on decisions?
 - To what parallel issues can you relate your message?
 - Who is with you? Who is against you? Who is persuadable?

REFINING THE MESSAGE

- Craft a “message” specific to each primary and secondary audience with which the audience can identify, and that promotes and advances what needs to be achieved
 - ✓ **Example:**
 - Highlight the environmental benefits for an environmental columnist
 - Highlight the triple-bottom line to business leaders with sustainability commitments
 - Highlight the health benefits to parents, students and teachers



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CLEAR, CONCISE, CONSISTENT AND CREDIBLE

- Provide a clear & concise message that is easy to understand
 - To ensure your campaign message is heard, do not confuse your audience with multiple messages – stick to one appropriate and relevant angle for your audience
- The clearest messages are consistent messages
- Ensure that the Message is delivered by reliable, credible sources
- The message should lead directly to the desired outcome, including:
 - **What:** This is you want to achieve (demonstrate momentum)
 - **Why:** This is what are the positives if the proposed change occurs / what are the negatives if proposed action is not taken
 - **How:** This is what you propose to achieve the action

IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

- Have your resources handy:
 - A compelling PowerPoint presentation
 - Press kit
 - Facts & figures - studies & anecdotal evidence
 - Achievements (green schools policies passed/ LEED certified/ registered schools)
 - State & local resources
 - Your team – internal & external champions

COORDINATING AND IMPLEMENTING THE ADVOCACY PLAN

Building Coalitions; Getting the Message Out; Managing the Effort

BUILDING COALITIONS

- Provide clear goal for the formation of your coalition – one that facilitates consensus
- Reach out to:
 - Environmental community
 - Development community
 - Business community
 - Public interest groups
 - Professionals/ practitioners
 - Educational community
 - Labor
 - Public officials
- Utilize networks to gauge interest
 - Individuals, organizations, groups, etc. who are willing to assist and collaborate in the effort
- Assemble by invitation only to help maintain the focus
- Hold coalition meetings
- Cultivate & grow, cultivate & grow...

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

- Target specific media outlets – the more specific the target, the more efficient
 - Personal letters/ mailings
 - Specific news writers/ editors
 - Meeting with school board members
 - Specific TV producers/ reporters
 - Specific radio shows
 - Community or group newsletters
 - Writers of web-based media
 - Canvassing to a specific audience
- Be mindful of which forms of media will be most effective in reaching your primary and secondary target audiences
 - Also recognize that each form of media can frame the message differently – do you want an editorial or a news story? A web log or a paper flyer? What will best reach your audience?



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- Utilize your reliable, credible sources and your internal/external champions

MANAGING THE EFFORT

- Manage your team:
 - Listen: Ask for feedback, use good suggestions, modify plan as necessary
 - Act: Motivate, delegate, empower, value personal relationships
 - “Thank you” & the importance of praise
 - Others: Are your coalitions effective? Are your resources still resources? More recruits?
- Manage your message:
 - Is your message being received? How can it be modified?
 - Have you connected with your target audiences?
 - Has the political climate changed? Does the message need to change?
- Manage your management:
 - Are you keeping everyone informed?
 - Are you asking them to take action?
 - Is it easy to plug in those willing to help? Are they empowered by joining the effort?
 - Are you attracting more recruits?
 - How and when will you assess the effort and make appropriate changes?