The Need for One More Thing On Your Plate:
*Why Kids Need Us to Step Up Our Advocacy Game!*

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WHY…

Do I have to be an advocate?
Turn to Your Neighbor

And finish this sentence:

“I love my work, but…”
What’s Happening in New Jersey?

- The Cost of Doing Business
- *Grow NJ Kids*
- Subsidy Policies & Reimbursement Rate
- Minimum Wage
- Ever-increasing needs of children and families
- E-childcare
- Hiring and retaining qualified staff
- Pre-K Expansion

*Did we miss anything?*
Preschool Expansion

- 35 school districts offer full-day preschool to all their 3- and 4-year olds, many using mixed delivery
  - *Does everyone know what “mixed delivery” means?*
- 16 school districts offer full-day preschool to some of their 4-year-olds, only 3 are using mixed delivery model and only Head Start
- 25+ school districts just received state funds for preschool expansion, and limited number plan to use mixed delivery
• Child care reimbursement rate has not been increased in NINE YEARS
• It is becoming too expensive to care for infants
• The minimum wage is increasing...again
What’s Happening in Washington?

- Child Care for Working Families Act
- Budget and Appropriations
- Tax reform
- Higher Education Act
- Head Start
- Implementation of ESSA and CCDBG
Do you see why you need to be an advocate?

*Because so much of what is happening outside of your work environment is affecting what is happening inside that same environment.*
Your Secret is Safe With Us

What have you done about these issues?

What are your barriers to action?
What is advocacy?

- “To speak up, to plead the case of another, or to champion a cause.”
- “Usually, advocacy involves bringing influence to bear to win change or to keep the status quo.”
- Advocacy means different things depending on the circumstance.
What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

› What do you think are your strengths in this area?
› What are some of your worries?
› What do you need to know to feel comfortable?
› What lessons have you learned in the past?
You’ve Got This.

- No one is born knowing how to do this!
  - We all have to learn and practice.
- It pays to prepare – don’t wing it!
- YOU ARE SMART, POWERFUL LEADERS FOR CHILDREN!
Step 1: Be An Educated Advocate
Preschool Expansion


Child Care

Be aware of what politicians are saying.

“He will focus on making quality child care affordable and accessible for all.” – Ivanka Trump, July 2016

"As part of this new future, we will also be rolling out proposals to increase choice and reduce cost in child care, offering much-needed relief to American families.“ – Donald Trump, Presidential Candidate, August 2016

“My administration wants to work with members of both parties to make childcare accessible and affordable.” – President Donald Trump, February 2017
...There are some things you need to know...

• An underfunded child care system means that the vast majority of children (84%) do **not** receive the support for which they are eligible.

• As of 2015, child care assistance spending was at a 13-year low

• The number of children receiving CCDBG–funded child care assistance is at a 17-year low.

• 373,100 fewer children received CCDBG-funded child care in 2015 than in 2006

• Only one state provides reimbursement rates at the federally-recommended level of the 75th percentile of market rates

*CLASP, CCDBG Participation Drops to Historic Low, January 2017*
Education Goes Beyond Google

- Talk to your colleagues
- Talk to your families
- Become a member of organizations that represent you and your program
- Attend workshops/conferences
- Become a member of ACNJ & NJAEYC!
Step 2: Identify Your Issue
Defining the Problem

• What is the issue?
• Who does it affect?
• Who is responsible for it?
What Happens When?

› Understand the timeline and key dates at the local, state and federal level.
  
  • Legislation
  • Budget
  • Elections
Let’s Talk

Who are the **key decision-makers** that impact a child’s early education and development?

**WHAT** do they need to know?

**HOW** will you share the information?
Early childhood educators understand the importance of building strong, consistent and supportive relationships in their work with children and families. When it comes to being an advocate, **building those relationships with policymakers is equally as important.**

Who is responsible for addressing your issues? Where do the decisions about policy, financing and oversight get made?
What is a committee?

• A subgroup of elected officials who take on specific tasks for a certain area of policy.
• Along with their sub-committees, they consider bills, and oversee agencies, programs and activities within their specified area or jurisdiction.
• The Senate has 20 standing committees; the House has 21. Both have additional joint and select committees.
• The chair of each committee and a majority of its members represent whichever party is the majority party at the time. The minority party also has members assigned to the committee. The leader of the minority side is called the Ranking Member.
• Each party assigns its own members to committees, and each committee distributes its members among its subcommittees.
• Committees have staff, and advocates may meet with committee staff, in addition to the personal staff of their members of Congress.
Key Senate Committees

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) (Relevant Subcommittee: Children and Families)

- Jurisdiction over health care, education, employment and retirement policies.
- Responsible for legislation such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, now known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA).
- Critical pieces of early childhood education, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, the Higher Education Act and other issues involving children, youth and families.
Key Senate Committees

**Finance** (Relevant Subcommittee: Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy)

- Responsible for taxes and revenue
- Oversee programs under the Social Security Act, including Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

**Appropriations** (Relevant Subcommittee: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education)

- Largest committee in the U.S. Senate and controls the discretionary spending for the federal government
- Annually decides how much funding will be spent where and on what, across different government agencies, departments, and organizations.
Key House Committees

**Education and the Workforce** (Relevant Subcommittees: Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education; and Higher Education and Workforce Development)
- Counterpart to the HELP Committee in the Senate
- Jurisdiction over education and workforce matters, including CCDBG and Head Start, as well as higher education.

**Ways and Means** (Relevant Subcommittee: Human Resources)
- Counterpart to the Finance Committee in the Senate
- Responsibility for raising the revenue required to finance the Federal Government, including control over taxes
- Also has jurisdiction over programs authorized by the Social Security Act, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

**Appropriations** (Relevant Subcommittee: Labor, Health and Human Services, Education)
- Controls the discretionary spending for the federal government, allocating dollars across the different government agencies, departments, and organizations on an annual basis.
What is a caucus?
A congressional caucus is a group of members committed to common themes or legislative objectives. Congress also has coalitions, study groups, task forces and working groups that can serve similar purposes. Here are some of the key caucuses and groups you need to know who are or may be interested in advancing early childhood education and educators:

- Congressional Black Caucus
- Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues
- Congressional Community College Caucus
- Congressional Hispanic Caucus (Democratic) and Conference (Republican)
- Congressional Labor and Working Families Caucus
- Congressional PreK Caucus (bipartisan)
- Republican Main Street Partnership
Agencies

The scope of issues in early childhood education, inclusive of children birth through age 8, are primarily addressed in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

At HHS, the most relevant offices are within the Administration for Children and Families, including the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation and the Office for Early Childhood Development, which includes the Office of Child Care and the Office of Head Start.

At the Department of ED, the most relevant offices include the Office of Early Learning, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), which oversees Part B and Part C of IDEA.
Define the solution

• It’s as important as documenting the problem
• Come up with a specific solution
• Develop strategies that can be used to fix the problem
We need **significant public investments** that will give all families access to affordable, comprehensive, high-quality child care and early childhood programs.

Skilled, supported, and knowledgeable early childhood educators provide high-quality early childhood programs. An average wage of $10.40/hour undermines that quality and diminishes the benefits to children, families, and our economy.
Step 3: Organize Your Colleagues
Who are your partners?

- Usual suspects—People in the same profession, interested in the issue, share your goals/concerns
- Unusual suspects—People who may have a different profession but share your goals/concerns
Step 4: Find a Champion
In a perfect world…

- Identify a leader who can champion your issue
  - Is it a constituency concern of theirs?
  - Does this person have some kind of personal involvement in the issues?
  - Has this person supported a similar issue in the past?
  - Is this person in a position that will help advance the issue?
In a not-so-perfect world
In a not-so-perfect world

• Start with the people who represent you
• Whether it is in DC or in Trenton, they are there because you and the citizens of your community put them there.
• They may not know anything about the issue, and they need to be educated as well.
• Learning about these issues does not happen by osmosis.
Step 5: Elevate Authentic Voices
Data is the backbone of any advocacy strategy
But people’s stories put a face on the issue
Identify who is affected by the problem, including parents and children.
Find those who are willing to talk about their experiences because you will be most effective with those voices.
Step 6: Know Your Opponents and Understand Their Opposition
How to work with opponents

• Find out who doesn’t agree with your issue or solution.
• Identify the reason for their opposition.
• Be honest about the opposition.
• Is compromise an alternative?
Step 7: Come Up With a Plan
Make It Happen

• Design your plan
• Decide who is doing what
• Come up with how best to communicate your issue
• Make sure the plan includes a solution
• Keep colleagues informed
• Get moving!!
Always, Always, Always, Make it About the Kids....
Are you ready?

- Sometimes it’s a phone call
- Sometimes it’s a letter
- Sometimes it’s an email
- Sometimes it’s using social media
- Sometimes it’s testifying
- Sometimes it’s a meeting
Getting Ready for a Visit

To Do Today:
Leave my
Comfort Zone
What To Do

› Do your research and get to know your elected officials
  • Photos, Bios, Voting record, Committees

› Assign roles in your group
  • Facilitator
  • Notetaker / Follow up tracker
  • Story Teller
  • The Thanker / Sharer of materials
  • The Closer

› Agree on key messages
› Prepare materials
The Visit

- The meeting starts when you enter the office! Be aware of small talk.
- Be happy to meet with the staff – they are the key.
- Have a clear understanding about how much time you have to meet and manage your time well.
- Be clear about who will start the meeting and deliver the opening messages.
- **Follow the ABCs**
  - Accurate, Brief, Concise
- Share data and impact of federal funding and programs.
- Avoid inaccessible language (e.g. acronyms.)
- Take a photo and share on social media.
- Say THANK YOU.
Meeting Format

› Introduce yourself and the organization you are with
› Briefly explain why you requested the meeting
› Review your priorities, the need, and your requests
› Engage the policymaker related to their priorities
› Tell a story that connects your priorities, the policymaker’s priorities/personal history, and your request
› Offer to be a resource
› Thank everyone in the room and leave something behind.
What if the policymaker doesn’t seem to be interested in what I’m saying?

› While the importance of our issue may be obvious to you, remember that lawmakers and staffers meet all day with people who feel as passionately about a different issue as you feel about early childhood education.

› They may not know or understand the basics of early childhood education, so ask the policymaker what his or her current issues are and identify ways in which your issues and priorities might dovetail with those.

› Ask what your organization might be able to do to support the policymaker’s priorities.

› If interest still seems to be lagging, shorten your conversation and move on.
In the Meeting: Common Challenges and Questions:

What if the policymaker disagrees with my organization’s mission / priorities / request?
› Remember that a burned bridge is hard to rebuild, so try understand the other side of the story you are telling and be prepared to respond without attacking.
› Remember that hard questions are not personal and do not necessarily reflect any disregard for your issue.
› Be prepared, calm, polite and happy to answer the questions that are asked.

What do I do if I don’t know the answer to a question?
› Don’t ever make up an answer. It’s okay if you don’t know something.
› Say you’ll find out and then follow up. Ask for help if you need it!
After the Visit

› Write personal notes - hand written are best.
› Offer to be a resource.
› Follow up and share information that they may be interested in.
› Develop a plan to keep in touch – no one hit wonders!
› Add your elected officials to your newsletter mailing list.
› Sign up for their newsletters!
› Follow elected officials on Twitter, Facebook, etc.
› Check out NAEYC’s resources on how to invite a policymaker to a site visit and how to organize a site visit for a policymaker.
Call, Call, Call

• Policymakers’ interest in an issue can depend on how many calls the office is getting at the time and how you present your story.
• Staff members taking calls write them down, compile them, and present reports.
• A large volume of calls on an issue could bring an office to a halt, sometimes spurring the legislator to put out a statement on his or her position.
REMEMBER

› YOU ARE SMART POWERFUL LEADERS FOR CHILDREN.
› You are the content expert. Be a reliable source.
› You don’t have to cover every single thing in this meeting – make sure everyone knows the 3 most important points to cover.
› Break down the research – one pagers and key findings.
› Local data is key, makes the issue relevant for elected officials.
› Stay current and share new research with elected officials.
AND THEN….  
REPEAT!  
AND THEN…AGAIN!  
AND THEN…AGAIN!
Follow Up On Your Success

• Always acknowledge your champions and leaders
• Review whatever change you helped bring about
• Monitor any implementation changes
• Assess your lessons learned
• Learn from your mistakes
Our Stories Matter.

What is my story?

• I believe every child, family, educator and community has strengths, and that it is our collective responsibility to build on those strengths to ensure they have fair and equitable opportunities to succeed.

• I am committed to building on strengths and elevating the voices of early childhood educators as advocates.

What is your story? Why do you do this work?
Final Activity:
Making the Case / Share Your Story

All you need:

› 1 research finding
› 1 policy example
› 1 personal example
Imagine you have just entered an elevator in a tall office building. As the doors close, one of the candidates for Governor steps on. Hoping to reach out to a potential voter, the candidate asks, “What do you do?”

› “I work in (NAME YOUR ISSUE).”

› The candidates pauses and thinks, then says, “I have been hearing a lot about that issue and my advisors have recommended increasing funding. Can you tell me why is it important and what else we can do in our state?”

› You have 30 floors and 30 seconds to answer the question. GO!
Making the Case: Share Your Story

› Use 1 research finding to explain how high-quality early education improves child outcomes.

› Use 1 example of how public funding has helped support and/or improve your program’s quality.

› Use 1 personal example to explain how your program has had an impact on children and families, including:
  • Parent engagement programs;
  • Professional development and training;
  • New curricula and materials,
  • Accreditation support; and
  • Child assessment training.
Why advocacy matters

› You can make a difference!
› People working together can change policies and laws.
› Policymakers need your expertise.

(Derived in part from Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest, www.clpi.org)
Opportunities for advocacy and engagement

**Go to a meeting.**
- Stand up and raise your voice on behalf of children, families and educators.
- City council meeting, a school board meeting, a briefing, a hearing, a rally, or a town hall - in person or on Facebook!
- Get to know your leaders and partners - and let them get to know you.

**Tweet.**
It’s only 140 characters. You can do it. Follow your elected officials & let them know how you feel about their votes & positions. #ecewins

**Join your Affiliate.**
- Community sustains us.
- Come together with fellow educators and advocates in your state today.
- Visit [www.naeyc.org/membership](http://www.naeyc.org/membership) for more.
Be ready.
There is always a time when intention needs to become action.
Stay informed and connected so you can engage, advocate and mobilize at the moment your voice is needed.
Final Reminders

• Be patient
• Be persistent
• Stay informed
• Keep your colleagues informed
• Be open to different ideas
• DON’T GIVE UP!
Don’t be afraid to contact us!

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