

Why Advocate?



It's probably safe to say that no one first joins PTA to be an advocate. You joined PTA because you wanted to know what was going on at your child's school, because you wanted to help at school, or maybe because you remember your mother being a PTA member back when you were in school. Whatever your reason, it certainly wasn't to advocate.

So as a PTA member, you go to meetings and share your thoughts when the principal asks for ideas on an issue the school is facing. You help run an activity booth at the fall carnival to help raise funds to purchase items that teachers needed in their classrooms. You talk to your child's teacher when another child was bullying them. You work a shift or two at the book fair because the school library would get extra books after the sale. You do all these things because you want your child's school to provide the best education possible.

And in doing all these things, you've been involved in advocacy, because at the most basic level, advocacy is simply working to make things better. Sometimes that involves speaking to someone with the power to make a change. Sometimes it is raising funds to support that change.

If you can talk to your child's teacher about a problem they are having in the classroom, you already know the basics of advocacy: talk to the person who can change the situation, share what the problem is, and ask them to fix it (possibly with your solution). The approach is the same when you advocate with a school board member, a state legislator, or a member of Congress.

The Illinois PTA Local Unit Advocacy Toolkit is designed to help you and your PTA become more effective advocates, whether that advocacy is in your school, in your district, or at the state or national level. It will help you strategically attack an issue, recruit supporters, build coalitions of like-minded groups, structure your arguments, and communicate effectively. It will help you engage your PTA's members in advocacy and teach you how to take advocacy success from the local level to the state or national level.

PTA was founded on the idea of advocating for children at school, in the home, and in their community. Your PTA has already been involved in advocacy, even if you didn't call it that. Now, with the Illinois PTA Local Unit Advocacy Toolkit, you can strengthen that advocacy, because when we advocate for change, we make things better not just for our child right now, but for every child going forward.