Advocacy

Teacher Toolkit Guide

Overview

FCCLA's Advocacy Project is an excellent way to improve your schools, communities, and states by advocating for change within them. Yet sometimes, the goal you want to achieve can seem intimidating and difficult to accomplish. You may find yourself asking: What can or should I change? How do I go about doing it? Or, you can get caught in the middle of your project at a standstill, not knowing how to continue in the FCCLA Planning Process. Most commonly, beginning your Advocacy Project seems unmanageable.

Colorado FCCLA's First Vice President Hazel Hill and Colorado FCCLA's VP of Membership Renee Root have designed and implemented a step-by-step guide to assist you in completing those Advocacy Projects by using the FCCLA Planning Process. Extensive examples have been provided at each step along the way to spark the brainstorming process.

Who knows? This time next year, you could be credited with initiating a change that positively affected numerous aspects within your community. You just have to get started!

Identify Concerns

Within your FCCLA chapters and classrooms, ask the following of your members:

- **What changes within our school would we like to see implemented?**
  - *Ex: Year-long school, block schedule of classes, better variety of courses*
- **What changes within our community would we like to see implemented?**
  - *Ex: Wider sidewalks, street lamps, Main Street beautified*
- **Is there an addition/alteration that would change lives for the better?**
  - *Ex: Addition of a recreation center, swimming pool*
- **How could we commemorate an event, person, or loss?**
  - *Ex: Memorialize a site of an accident, make a figure of the town founder*
- **Is there an annual event that could be completed more effectively?**
  - *Ex: Community holiday gatherings, Farmer's markets*
- **What community organization/building seems to be struggling and could use assistance?**
  - *Ex: VFW, Senior Center, library*
- **Is there a problem in our community/school that we would like to see resolved?**
  - *Ex: Homelessness, drinking and driving, drug abuse, bullying*
- **Are there safety concerns?**
  - *Ex: Absence of a necessary stoplight, lacking school security protocol*

Use these questions to get the students' minds percolating. If you get to a standstill in brainstorming, provide the given examples as potential answers. Allow the conversation to flow in your chapters; don't cut short any discussion in order to move on to another question.

Designate a recorder/scribe to keep track of all ideas presented. Even if it seems unachievable, record it. Maybe you will be able to utilize it during the years to come.

Identify Concerns

Now that your chapter has recorded potential ideas, it is time to select one. Before deciding which advocacy idea to pursue, ask the following of your students:

- **Are you passionate about resolving this issue?**
  - *Make sure your students truly want to work for this; otherwise they will lose interest and the project will be nothing more than an idea.*
- **Will this affect a majority of people in a positive manner?**
  - *Not everyone will be happy with every implementation. However, try to ensure that the majority will be pleased.*
- **How do you think that our community/school would change with this implementation?**
  - *What will be the effects?*
- **Is this a project within our ability?**
  - *Consider your time, numbers, and financial status. Though you can reach out to other councils/organizations for assistance and approval, the project should still be within your general means and ability.*
- **What is the time frame on this project?**
  - *Will it last more than a year? If so, will the next generation of students be interested in completing this as well?*
- **Is this targeted towards a certain age, gender, or demographic and excludes others?**
  - *Targeting to a select group is OK (i.e. school systems target to students). However, excluding others should probably be avoided unless circumstances permit (i.e. creating a program only for those of a certain religion).*

If your ideas seem to answer each idea in a positive regard, then vote on an idea to accomplish. We recommend using limited parliamentary procedures rules during voting to ensure that fairness is achieved.

Congratulations! Your chapter has just decided on a project to advocate for!

⬆ Set a Goal

Though you have now designated a project of interest for completion, it would be meaningless without setting and working towards a goal. Many of the Advocacy Projects can be focused into different directions to achieve separate goals. In order to determine the direction you would like to take with your project, ask the following:

- **What aspects should we focus on most in our project?**
- **What aspects should we focus on least in our project?**
- **What is our ultimate purpose or what do we want to leave behind?**

By identifying a particular direction and purpose of your project, setting a goal can be much more specific. When setting a goal for your Advocacy Project, remember to make goals <u>SMART</u>.

Acronym Letter	Meaning	How to Achieve SMART Goals
S	Specific	Be detailed in the creation of your goal. Who? What? When? How? Where?
M	Measurable	How will you know if you achieved or failed? What indications throughout will measure your success?
A	Achievable	Is this a goal that can be attained with your resources and time?
R	Relevant	Does this goal pertain to the direction you wish to take your Advocacy Project?
T	Timely	When will you complete it? What is your timeline of events?

Form a Plan

While keeping your goal in mind, form a plan to accomplish it. Be specific in your planning. Make sure to address all the following…

- **Who should we contact to make this change in our community/school?**
  - *Ex: School board, town council*
- **What help do we need from other organizations?**
  - *Ex: Financial assistance from Rotary Club, partnership with FBLA*
- **What materials do we need to accomplish it?**
  - *Ex: Building materials, petition*
- **What roles should each member assume?**
  - *Ex: Chairperson of Fundraising Committee, secretary, chief liaison between partnerships, person required to correspond with officials*
- **What is our timeline on this project?**
  - *Ex: December: write letters to superintendent, January: go speak to the school board, etc.*
- **Where and to whom will the final project be directed/affect?**
  - *Ex: Will be in Roosevelt High School and affect all 900+ students*
- **Is there any need to advertise this project?**
  - *Ex: Sign petitions, pass out flyers, hang posters*

Make sure to delegate responsibilities to each member in your chapter. This is certainly a group effort and in order for it to be achieved in an efficient and timely manner, everyone needs to contribute with positive participation.

Act

After identifying concerns, setting a goal, and forming a plan, it is finally time to put your Advocacy Project into motion! Here are some generic tips for acting upon your plan:

- **Be flexible**, but follow the original goals and plans that your chapter solidified as best you can.

- **Motivate your members** to participate, maybe with a fun contest and the privilege of signing off on community service hours. Let them know they are making a huge difference and the community will appreciate it.

- **Don't get discouraged** if your project runs long or if your timeline of accomplishments gets out of whack.

- **Keep track** of community service hours, money raised, awareness campaigns, or items donated. Despite the wide varieties of projects, groups almost always need to refer back to these details if a student decides to focus their STAR event on it or if other figures request more information.

Good luck! Whatever endeavor you identified, we are sure you will leave your school/community in a better place than what you found it!
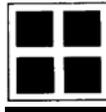
Follow Up

Congratulations! You have finished your Advocacy Project!

Your community and/or school are now benefitting greatly with the addition or alterations that your Advocacy Project has provided. It is important that you review the effects your project has imposed upon others during this step. Please consider the following information when compiling your "Follow Up" step…

- **Who did you affect and in what capacity?**
- **How long did your project take?**
- **What partnerships/assistance/permission did you acquire?**
- **Which aspects of your plan failed and which succeeded?**
- **What would you do differently?**
- **What did you learn?**
- **What were the effects of your project?**

We appreciate your help in completing projects that will affect so many people in such a positive way.

Thank your members for their involvement and participation!

Advocacy Teacher Toolkit
Example Project

⊙ Identify Concerns

We are concerned because our school's students have low grades, teachers have to repeat material, and classes are being interrupted by the long summer break.

↑ Set a Goal

We want to advocate for year-round schooling at Roosevelt High School so that this new schedule can be implemented in August 2016.

▢ Form a Plan

The RHS FCCLA has noticed much talk circulating about implementing a year-round schooling system. We would like to capitalize on this idea by bringing up this formal request to our principal and superintendent. Before these meetings however, it is imperative that we have researched the extensive benefits of year-round schooling. We will have to assign the research to a group of three FCCLA members and then have another five do the presentations. Upon their approval, we plan to take it to the school board. If necessary, we would be more than willing to develop a petition for students and staff to sign if they were interested. Since this is a community-wide decision as well, we would have families of students in Weld County vote upon the issue through an online voting site. If all succeeds, we hope to work on implementing this new schedule no later than two years after the decision is finalized.

▣ Act

Surprisingly, our Roosevelt FCCLA chapter was able to follow our plan almost exactly. The principal, superintendent, and school board succumbed to our persuasions that the benefits of year-round schooling truly exceeded the few disadvantages. We advertised the idea extensively among our peers and staff and through the community. Parents of students received emails and phone calls one week prior to the start of the voting period. They were then provided a link where they could vote on the new schedule. After the voting period closed, the votes proved an astounding amount of families in support of the year-round schedule. Considering that it was March, beginning this new schedule at the end of May was out of the question. So we waited for one year until we began the new school schedule.

⊞ Follow Up

Year-round schooling might be the best alteration our school district has ever seen. Students' grades have drastically increased and teachers don't have to teach repetitively at the start of each new term. Breaks are spaced out equally throughout the year, providing more time at holidays and students come back refreshed and ready to work. We are so glad we advocated for this change because as it turned out, hundreds of people were secretly yearning for it and we were privileged to finally initiate it.