

ADVOCACY BUILDING

United Methodist
Church – North
Carolina
Conference

Board of Church and Society

This series provides congregations and individuals the skills to build and deploy justice ministries and advocacy methods. Other methods in this series include:

*Building relationships with elected representatives

*Writing a letter or email to your elected representative

*Writing a letter to the press, blog or website

*Organizing a rally or protest meeting

*Building a congregational justice ministry

*Proposing legislation

*Parish based Community Organizing

*Creating a Conference Resolution

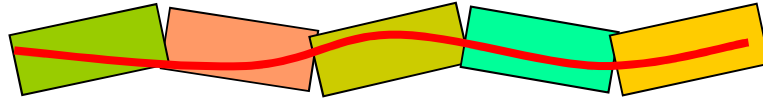
*Asset Based Community Development

*Challenging legislators

*Community Listening

The Board of Church and Society provides advocacy and justice programs for congregations.

<https://nccumc.org/christianformation/church-and-society/>



Education Advocacy

All public education is under constant pressure to reduce costs to satisfy the growing demand to reduce taxes. In many states funding for education is channeled towards Charter schools, which typically have less requirements to meet than public schools. The economy everywhere demands higher skills and increased human productivity. Poverty reduces a child's chances of finishing grade school. If a child cannot read by the end of the third grade, the risk of that child will ending up in prison is greatly increased, a journey known as the School to Prison Pipeline. The consequences for society of a poorly run public education system are well known, and legislators need to understand the importance of more than just adequate education funding. The challenge is to build an advocacy strategy that engages more people in the process of influencing elected officials to improve all aspects of the education delivery system. Get involved now, and improve the chances for your child, and your neighbor's child, to get a world class education.

Build an advocacy plan that is based on the real data about the school, its student profile, its budget and resources.

- Form a small Task Force
- Review their experiences at the School while providing a variety of direct support initiatives and discern what deeper needs exist.
- Review with the school management what needs they have which don't get supplied by the School District and State. Identify the resource shortcomings and build a resource requirements list.
- Engage with the PTA to establish a relationship but also to help define needs.
- Define those advocacy needs that one would take to these levels of education governance:
 - The school management or PTA
 - The District School Board and even the county given that taxes and revenue for schools start there
 - The State Board of Instruction, and the Superintendent
 - The General Assembly.
- Identify key players at each governance level and where possible try to build a relationship with them.
- Identify key advocacy strategies appropriate to each governance level and plot appropriate action.
- Keep connecting the practical school needs uncovered while providing practical support to teachers and students, with advocacy, use data from the one to build strategies in the other.
- Establish a simple vision of the extent to which you want the congregation engaged in education advocacy, with the caveat that you want every member to at least do one simple act of advocacy each year.
- Identify each congregation member in terms of a simple characterization so as to discern the extent and capacity of each member to be engaged in education advocacy. (percentages below are guesses- but getting this sort of profile is important to gauge advocacy capacity)

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Education Advocacy

1. Neutral or disinterested – least likely to participate; will have other priorities (35% of active congregation)
 2. Basic interest – would sign a petition; maybe write a letter if one is drafted for them; may contribute items needed through the C4C program. (50% of active congregation)
 3. Active interest – involved in school support; likely to attend briefing sessions and workshops on education; contributors to appeals for food, schools supplies, \$\$ etc; will participate in some advocacy activities. (10% of active congregation)
 4. The committed – very engaged; leaders in direct support and advocacy efforts; (5% of active congregation)
- Growing the “active” and “committed” percentages is a goal. Keep those lists because allocating advocacy work to each category will be the future action.
 - Build a matrix chart that has the four levels of governance agencies on one axis; and all the types of advocacy actions on the other. Within the matrix write in what advocacy actions the congregation will undertake, and use the 1, 2, 3, 4 numbers to identify which category of the congregation will be engaged, or at least you will try to have engaged.

Examples

- Action... Petition to School Management to provide a new support service to students – get all levels to sign.
- Action .. Group to attend County Board Budget hearings to advocate for sufficient school funding – levels 2, 3, 4
- Action ... letters to GA Reps to increase budget for teacher salaries, and for ESL classes – levels 3, 4
- Build an advocacy action plan with dates, accountabilities and actions, and date lines that cover a years-worth of advocacy work.
- Get organized, and get on with it!!!!

There are several advocacy organizations that do research and compile large amounts of extremely useful data. They will be glad to share their resources with your congregation. They all do advocacy work at the NC General Assembly, and can provide advocacy resources for your congregation.

Community Alliance for Public Education	ncalliance4publiced@gmail.com
NC Child	www.ncchild.org
Public School Forum of North Carolina	www.ncforum.org
North Carolina Justice Center	www.ncjustice.org
North Carolina Council of Churches	www.nccurches.org
North Carolina Association of Educators	www.ncae.org
Public Schools First NC	www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org
Education NC	www.ednc.org

This document was created by Brian Heymans while he served on the Board of Church and Society.

