

Advocacy Plan

1. Briefly, describe the individual or group that is/are the focus of your advocacy and the plan you have developed for the advocacy effort.

New Hope Elementary School has recently started a Latino/a parents group to meet in coordination with the School Improvement Team (SIT). This group has chosen a representative who will coordinate with the SIT at their monthly meetings. However, the meetings take place during evenings when parents may not have an available means of childcare. I propose beginning an enrichment program for children of these parents, allowing more parents to participate on the committee.

2. There are two related justifications for engaging in advocacy. These are moral and/or legal (e.g., IDEA, FERPA, etc.). What issue or issues underpin your advocacy plan?

The Latino/a population make up approximately 25% of the New Hope student body, yet no parents from this community are present on the SIT. The school has previously stated that it hopes the SIT will accurately reflect the viewpoints of its shareholders, but it is currently missing a vital portion of its demographics in representation. Assisting this group's formation would help to balance the opinions of the committee and help give each student a voice.

3. Effective advocacy is data based. What data do you have that supports the need for the advocacy identified in your plan?

Since this is a brand new venture by the school, we have not had the opportunity to collect attendance data yet. However, previous parent programs utilizing a simultaneous children enrichment program have achieved high attendance. A parenting program provided by Orange County counselors in February 2011 also offered a separate space for children to connect with volunteers from the community, including high school students. This allowed parents to attend the classes without having to worry about their children's wellbeing, which the children were able to connect with a mentor from a higher grade level.

4. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your advocacy efforts? What are your objectives?

My plan is twofold: firstly, I would like to increase Latino/a parental involvement in regards to the SIT through a concurrent student enrichment program. Secondly, I would like to use the program to benefit those students in attendance by setting a mentoring opportunity or extra enrichment classes in a fun, exploratory atmosphere.

5. What are the barriers that must be overcome if advocacy is to be successful?

Resource availability will be the biggest obstacle to this advocacy plan. It would only be possible through volunteers working with students while their parents are attending the meeting. Without a consistent volunteer base, or money to pay teachers to come in for extra fun lessons, it would be impossible to ensure that students will be supervised during meetings.

6. Are potential collaborators/allies in the advocacy process included in your plan?

Volunteers from the community, including other adults or high school students, would be vital partners for the efficacy of this plan. Volunteers would have to be available once a month and the school would need to make sure we always have enough volunteers to watch students present. Also, if the program were set up as with mentor/mentee relationships, the same volunteers would need to come to each meeting. This situation makes allies an invaluable part of our mission.

7. What risks are associated with the advocacy effort to you personally and the counseling program? What are the potential rewards?

The risks from this advocacy plan are minimal while the rewards are far greater. I might face frustration or a lack of enthusiasm, but I do not believe this plan would present any severe risks. I could, however, greatly increase the number of Latino parents who are involved in the school improvement planning system and add an additional viewpoint to the proceedings.

8. In order to be successful, advocates must have certain dispositions. These are:

- a. the belief that advocacy is a part of their jobs - 8**
- b. a commitment to their code of ethics - 10**
- c. the belief that the purpose of education and school counselors specifically is to empower students and their family - 8**
- d. the belief that caring should underpin educational and counseling practice - 10**
- e. a passionate approach to helping - 9**

Using a 1-10 scale with 1 being low and 10 being high, please rate your dispositions. Will any of your dispositions have to be strengthened for your advocacy plan to be successful?

I believe our job as school counselors is multifaceted, but it absolutely must include advocacy for those who need a strong voice within the school system. I would probably have to strengthen my views on this specific program to make it a true success, but I already believe in my duty and ability to complete the task at hand.

9. Advocacy efforts often require specific skills such as: (and using a 1-10 scale, with 1 being low and 10 being high, please rate your skills in these areas)

- a. assertive communication - 5**
- b. systematic problem solving - 7**
- c. small problem-solving group leadership - 8**
- d. conflict resolution - 8**

e. forming advocacy teams - 5

f. data and information collection - 9

g. collaborative leadership skills - 8

What specific skills will be needed in the advocacy process that you have outlined?

This advocacy plan will need an assertive leader to manage volunteer assignments and take care of any problems that may arise between team members. A charismatic individual will help to draw in additional volunteers who should all be able to work as part of a team. In order to determine the effectiveness of the program, someone familiar with data collection would also be an essential asset to the team.

10. What evaluation method(s) could be used to determine the effectiveness of your advocacy effort?

A measure of parental attendance at the Latino/a parent committee can be used to evaluate the advocacy effort. If attendance increases between meetings before that student enrichment program is in place, it would help indicate a positive correlation between student programming and parent attendance. Pre/posttests could also be used to measure the students' feelings of school connectedness if a mentor program is put into place. Grades on curricula points could also be used if the student program were set up as a more subject enrichment opportunity.