



Only a generation ago, children with disabilities were routinely excluded from participating in the educational programs offered by local communities.

Seeing power in numbers, parents joined together to form local, regional or statewide groups. These groups, which formed voting blocks, began to realize the power they had. Working together, they could force change through state and local government.

In the mid-1970s, parents' efforts really paid off. Public law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) was passed.

It is important to always maintain an historical perspective. Parents of young children and young adults with disabilities believe they have a right to services which will be protected. They don't believe that these rights can be taken away from them. They are wrong. History continues to repeat itself. The first generation of parent advocates understand how bad things were, and how bad they could be again. Young parents need to work together with these early pioneers to ensure that the gains that were won during the last two decades are maintained for future generations (Raskin, 1993). To read the entire article: **A Brief History of the Parent Advocacy Movement**, go to: <http://www.catsedu.org/earlychildhoodteaching/36.pdf>

Advocacy

What is Advocacy?

According to common dictionary definitions, ad-vo-ca-cy is a noun, meaning:

- **“giving aid to a cause”**
- **“active verbal support for a cause or position”**
- **“the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy”**
- **“active support”**

Advocacy comes in many forms, from gentle persuasion to all-out-in-your-face confrontation. The form or style that is most effective often depends on the type of advocacy you are pursuing. In parent advocacy, one extremely important consideration is the long-term working relationship between you, as a parent, and the educators who have a continuing role in your child's educational development.

If you are advocating against a new shopping mall development that would over-take a neighborhood park and playground, an all-out-in-your-face confrontational style may be necessary to gain attention and make your voice heard, and if it is necessary, it may be appropriate. After all, you probably don't need to have a constructive long-term working relationship with the real estate developers. You don't have that luxury in educational advocacy. To view this article in its entirety, please call for hard copy or view online at:

<http://www.askresource.org/newsletters/PTI%20NL%20April%2008.pdf>

An Effective Advocate Prepares

Be sure that the input you want to provide gets to the appropriate decision makers on that issue and that it is presented in an efficient manner.

Public Input at Local Level

Whether you're addressing your School Board, City Council or Board of County Supervisors there is generally a time in the meeting for public input. Make sure your message is short and concise; don't rant and rave; and offer solutions.



Who Makes Decisions?

- ◆ A school board's major responsibility is setting district policy. Board members also make decisions related to protecting the morals and health of pupils, establishing budgets, adopting curriculum and textbooks, and choosing transportation systems.
- ◆ County Governments provide state services and determine local needs such as social services, mental health, intellectual disability, and developmental disability services, and other disability support services.

Public Participation in Board Meetings

- ◆ Review Board Policy: most boards have a policy on how the public can participate.
- ◆ Be knowledgeable on the issue you want to discuss with the Board.
- ◆ Contact the Superintendent or Board President prior to the board meeting if you'd like to address the Board. Boards generally limit the amount of time and number of speakers who can address the Board.

To view the full power point: How to Become an Effective Advocate at the Local, State, and Federal Level, call for a hard copy or view online at: <http://www.askresource.org/Publications/Understanding%20the%20Political%20Arena%20Effective%20Advocacy.ppt>

For legislative information at all levels of government and tips on developing your message:

InfoNET Iowa , a project of Iowa Developmental Disability Council, has the information, tools, resources and opportunities you need to take action. You can visit them at: www.infonetiowa.com/ Also, check out the Advocacy Toolkit from InfoNET! Details can be found under "Tips & Tools".



The Iowa Education Summit will be taking place in Des Moines July 25th and 26th. The goal of the Summit is to build a consensus for how to give all students a world-class education. While Iowa has had a proud history of great schools, we face a new challenge: better preparing our young people to compete in the 21st century, knowledge-based, global economy. If you can't attend the summit, you can watch it online. For more information go to: <http://iowaeducation.iowa.gov/education-summit/>



As education reform begins in Iowa, it is important to **keep an eye on the services that are essential for our kids to flourish and realize their dreams.**

Direct services are often impacted by program reforms and budget cuts. The more we remind our policy makers of that, the more likely we will help lessen the impact to our kids. Some potential changes to watch for include:

- Fewer one on one settings for needed special education direct services
- Larger group settings for needed special education direct services
- Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy offered via consult rather than directly
- Reduced time allotted for special education direct services
- Fewer para-educator services for students in inclusive classroom settings
- Reduced options for curriculum and materials outside of what is offered in general education

***Never doubt that a small group of
THOUGHTFUL, committed citizens CAN
change the world; Indeed, It is the only
thing that Ever does.***

~ Margaret Mead

One of the best ways to advocate for the needs of your child is by simply telling your personal story.



The best advocates are good storytellers. If you want to be a good advocate, and motivate your elected officials to do something about your issue, you need to be able to tell your story.

Lobbyist can give legislators lots of facts and figures about an issue—but the one thing you have that no lobbyist has is your story. Why is an issue important to you? How does it affect your life, or your child's life?

To learn how, go to :

<http://www.fastfamilysupport.org/fasttraining/WorkingForChange/English/FAST%20telling%20your%20personal%20story.pdf>

Historical Lesson in Self Advocacy

Self-advocacy for Lois Curtis, one of the original plaintiffs in the Olmstead Supreme Court case, has been a long but rewarding journey. Lois did not give up on her dream to live in her own home in the community, even though state officials refused her request. **Lois' inspiring story and the historical implications for all individuals with disabilities is celebrated as she meets with President Obama during the 12th anniversary of the court decision:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/06/22/olmstead-champion-meets-president>

To find out how the Olmstead decision continues to impact the lives of individuals with disabilities:

<http://www.pacer.org/tatra/legislation/olmstead.asp>

The **Advocacy Toolkit**, from InfoNET Iowa, is filled with all the information new advocates need to get started in their advocacy - or help seasoned advocates brush up on the basics. Call to have a copy of the Advocacy Toolkit sent to you, or click [HERE](#) to view online.

Want more information on Advocacy? See our April, 2008 Newsletter on Educational Advocacy—including **"It's Not About the Pickle"** a modern parable about how to be an effective advocate and keep your focus on the issue. Call to have a copy mailed to you, or click [HERE](#) to view online.

Tips & Tools

We are going **"Green"** and making some changes to our newsletter. We welcome your feedback as well as your ideas of topics you would like to see in future newsletters!

Help us to reduce costs and put more money toward direct services! Sign up to receive your newsletter online by emailing us at: info@askresource.org

Contact us if you need a hard copy of the articles in this newsletter in their entirety.

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