

Schools for Equity in Education

*“The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, **it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools.** The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state”.*

*Minnesota Constitution
Article XIII, Section 1*

Legislative Action Committees (LACs)

Definition: Legislative Action Committees (LACs) are non-partisan, grassroots community groups of parents, grandparents, business leaders and other community members who have an interest in the future of our kids and community and who strongly believe in a quality and fully funded education for our children. This group supports education and advocates for public schools at the state legislature. They advocate for the passage of new laws that build strong schools and for the repeal or modification of existing laws that detract from education by:

1. Having a presence at the state capitol while building relationships with legislators and state leaders.
2. Educating and engaging the community in the political process to build grassroots support for public schools.

Following are ideas for activities in the three areas of organization, legislature and community that a LAC can use as a guide. These are merely suggestions which can be adapted to fit with the individual priorities of your LAC.

Organizational

1. Determine the organizational structure for the LAC.
2. Develop a mission statement, legislative platform and set priorities for LAC advocacy efforts.
3. Create a web site.
4. Create and expand a database of education supporters in your community (Databank.com, Constantcontact.com, etc.)
5. Develop communication systems via email, phone, mail or via school communications systems.
6. Assign LAC liaisons to each school.
7. Determine fundraising needs.
8. Depending on the size of your LAC – create committees to work on LAC priorities, for example:
 - a. Membership
 - b. Fundraising
 - c. Legislative Buddies/Contacts
 - d. School Liaisons
 - e. Legislative Information and Committee Coordinator (monitors legislative activity and Committee meetings)
 - f. Communications
9. Network with other education organizations such as Parents United Network, Schools for Equity in Education(SEE), Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA), PS Minnesota, Alliance for Student Achievement, and Minnesota PTA.

Legislative

1. Build a positive relationship with legislators in the district.
2. Assign a member from the LAC to each legislator to act as a liaison.
3. Monitor legislative committees and activities.
4. Keep informed of pending legislation
 - a. Actively communicate how legislation will specifically impact your district with elected legislators and state leaders.
 - b. Alert LAC members when action is needed.
5. Develop when appropriate “call to action” alerts and distribute through communication system.
6. Host “Meet Your Legislator” events

7. Attend legislator's town hall meetings and other events.
8. Host a campaign forum.
9. Make sufficient, stable and sustainable funding a campaign issue.

Community

1. Publish LAC legislative updates – weekly during session and sporadically throughout the year.
2. Have a LAC presence at school events such as conference, carnivals, BINGO nights.
3. Give LAC updates at PTA/PTO meetings.
4. Build relationships with target groups in your community.
 - a. ECFE
 - b. Seniors and grandparents
 - c. Businesses
 - d. High School Students
 - e. Etc.
5. Meet and get support of local business leaders.
 - a. Especially effective to have LAC business members communicate with legislators and state leaders using their business letter head.
 - b. LAC business members can bring education issues to local chamber of commerce meetings and other business organizations.
6. Meet with and develop relationships with editorial staff and journalists at local papers.
7. Research the various media organizations in your community – newspaper, radio, local cable channels, etc. Meet and develop relationships with representative from these organizations.
8. Organize a constant presence in local papers through writing letters to the editor.
9. Create and circulate a petition in your community and then deliver to your legislators (ex. “The Education Funding Formula is broken and it is vital to the future of education for the legislature to develop and implement a new funding formula that is directly linked to student learning and outcomes.”)
10. Support your education-friendly legislators and work to educate resistant legislators.
11. Publish “Legislative Report Cards” around election time.
 - ◆ Parents United has been developing a Legislative Report Card for all state legislators – LAC’s can use this information and make it specific to their community and their issues.
12. Develop a “marketing” strategy or PR campaign to increase the value and perception of the schools and the district in the community.
13. Work to get the word out at how successful your public schools really are.
14. Talk with neighbors, friends and family about LAC issues
15. Educate the community on the need to demand a new funding formula.
16. Get to know the opposition.