

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH SCHOOL BOARDS

The majority of decisions about sexuality education are made at the local level. As a result, you will likely spend most of your time as an advocate for comprehensive sexuality education working with your school board members. Below are some tips to assist you.

Get to Know the School Board

Contact each school board member personally. Determine their educational priorities and their support for comprehensive sexuality education. Publicize their responses.

Remember that the school board is an elected body. During elections, find out each candidate's position on sexuality education and inform the community. Organize a voter registration drive and urge people to vote for candidates who support a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. School board elections typically have a low voter turnout—you can make a big difference in the quality of sexuality education in your community by urging the people you know to vote!

An even better idea is to encourage members of your advocacy group to run for seats on the school board! Or, how about you!

Let School Board Members Get to Know You

Introduce yourself to the school board members and provide them with research and relevant literature. Tailor the information to each board member's key concerns. For example, if you learn that one school board member is most concerned about teen pregnancy, be sure to provide that person with information about how the teen pregnancy rates in your community compare to state and national averages.

If possible, do this before the school board needs to consider making any decisions regarding sexuality education in the district. This will let them know that you are a reliable source of information and make them more likely to turn to you when a situation arises.

Have members of your advocacy group take turns attending meetings. Make sure someone is present at all school board meetings. These meetings are often sparsely attended so even a few people can make a strong impact. Regular attendance prior to any controversy or decision about sexuality education can increase your credibility with the board members.

Testify at school board meetings. Coordinate your testimony with other people so that your three or four key messages are reiterated.

Encourage community members to contact the school board members. Even a few calls, letters, or e-mails can make a big difference in the outcome of a debate about sexuality education.

SET REASONABLE GOALS

Do not expect a comprehensive sexuality education program to drastically change your community's teen pregnancy and STD rates, and don't promise that they will. It takes a wide-reaching, consistent effort over time to change sexual risk behaviors and social norms.