



# ADVOCACY IMPLEMENTATION: DEVELOPING YOUR MESSAGE

The core of your advocacy campaign is *communication* with your PTA members, potential supporters, and your targets. Each audience needs a message tailored to their situation. Therefore, it is critical to take care in crafting your message.

## Creating a Message Box

Once you researched your issue and laid out your campaign strategy, it is time to start crafting your message. A good first step is to create a “message box” that will help you prepare not only for what your PTA needs to say, but also how to respond to what your opposition may say. In creating the message box, you will need to fill in these four quadrants:

What PTA Says About the Issue	What Opposition Says About the Issue
What PTA Says About Opponent’s Position	What Opposition Says About PTA’s Position

Your completed message box helps to frame all messaging during your campaign. A consistent message is essential. Your PTA members are likely to be tired of the message long before it begins to sink in with the decision makers and your community. Also keep in mind that the message box may need to be updated as your opposition crafts different arguments to your message. Your message may need to respond to those updated arguments but keep the consistent focus on your goal.

## Creating a Message

In crafting your message, you may find it easiest to start with a long argument supporting your position or a list of talking points and then cutting it down to a focused message, an elevator pitch, and a hashtag. As you create your message, remember the Five Cs of Messaging:

1. **Clear:** Focus your message on two or three simple, easy-to-understand points that address the problem and your solution.
2. **Connect:** Make sure your message connects with your audience and your PTA’s values.
3. **Compelling:** Your message should make your audience care about the issue. Personal stories that illustrate the problem or how your solution has worked elsewhere can help make a compelling message.
4. **Concise:** Your targets are likely busy people, so make sure you put what you are asking them to do right at the beginning of your messages to them before adding supporting information.
5. **Continual:** Keep your message consistent and keep it in front of your audience.

## Framing Your Message

Framing your message simply means focusing on the problem in a specific way to highlight the need for change. When you think about framing your message, consider what stories you can tell about the issue you are advocating. What stories highlight the problem? What stories illustrate a way to your solution? What stories will make your targets care about the issue? With PTA advocacy, we often have the advantage of focusing on issues that involve children, and most people inherently want to help children. Think about how you can focus your advocacy message on how the issue affects a single child and how you can tell that child’s story.

## Different Types of Messages

Throughout your advocacy campaign, you are likely to need a variety of messages. While the message may be tailored to a specific audience, be sure to keep your advocacy goals front and center in every message. The types of messages you might need include:

- To encourage your PTA members to act
- To raise awareness of and educate people about the issue
- To decision makers to take the action you want
- To encourage counter opposition to your advocacy
- To share your successes along the way towards your long-term goal to encourage more people to join your advocacy