

LEADERS THAT LISTEN
PUBLIC SPEAKING CURRICULUM

Advocacy Guide



Advocacy is an important leadership tool for using your voice to draw attention to significant issues, compel people to act, inspire positive change, and demonstrate caring toward others. This toolkit offers guidance on how to use public speaking to promote social justice, including how to advocate for yourself and others in everyday situations. These resources help speakers and educators alike to cultivate advocacy skills by practicing speech structures, sentence starters, simulation activities, and school/community action projects.



Why We Need Leaders That Listen:

A Note from the Author

As a teacher and public speaking coach, I have always been drawn to the quirkiest students.

I love unexpected perspectives that make me think about an issue in a different way and inspire me to care about experiences I never understood. Unfortunately, we are surrounded by images of leadership and models of public speaking dominated by examples that are loud, angry, and driven by ego. Every day, I encounter students from as young as 7 all the way to adulthood who have beautiful voices and incredible stories but do not believe they are important. They have been taught that they aren't leaders because they do not look, act, or sound like the people in power.

It is important to have mentors and a community to help you have the courage of your own convictions; just because you don't look or sound like everyone else doesn't mean you don't deserve to have a voice. Our society needs leaders who know how to facilitate diverse perspectives, learn from different experiences, care about human beings, and listen without an agenda. This curriculum is a starting point for educators, coaches, and emerging public speakers of all ages who want methods for communicating in a way that is authentic and real, empowering their inner leader and encouraging diverse voices through inclusive education. Explore the guides in any order and choose tools that best fit your needs and build your confidence. Gather inspiration and feel free to adapt as you develop your skills and the abilities of those you lead.



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About the Author

As Founder and Executive Director of Bay Area non-profit, The Practice Space, AnnMarie Baines brings 20 years of experience coaching public speaking for youth and adults and currently teaches public speaking at UC Berkeley. As a Filipina leader, Dr. Baines is deeply committed to equity, and was awarded a Deeper Learning Equity Fellowship. In prior work, Dr. Baines was a program officer at the George Lucas Educational Foundation, where she applied her expertise in curriculum, project-based learning, and professional development. She began her career as a high school special education teacher and utilizes the Universal Design for Learning framework. Dr. Baines received her PhD in Learning Sciences from University of Washington, teaching credential from Boston Teacher Residency, and Master's in Education Policy from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

ADVOCACY GUIDE

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ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 1

Advocacy: The Heart of a Leader

Redefining Advocacy



Advocacy skills are an important tool to help leaders bring people together around significant issues and compel them to action. On a personal level, people can develop into leaders when they can clearly and persuasively communicate their needs and seek opportunities to take on more responsibility. Advocacy is at the heart of leadership and needs to be communicated with heart. As with many forms of public speaking, advocacy is less effective when the message is purely for the benefit of the speaker and fails to account for the need to build community around an issue. Advocacy should not be analogous with venting, but instead be a persuasive technique used intentionally to create a catalyst for personal or societal change. Ultimately, the most authentic advocacy is when a speaker has the ability to inspire others to be part of solving problems together.

Reflecting on the Problem

While we often see the final product of advocacy -- that final speech at the podium, the rallying cry at political events, the marches, the policies put into place -- it does not begin there. To clearly express your ideas as an advocate, the process begins with reflection. Sometimes, it is hard to know how to identify the problem you are trying to solve, or where that problem comes from. Without being clear on the problem, it will be difficult to even begin organizing a speech or crafting talking points that get your message across. Depending on the issue at hand, you might reflect on your personal struggles, internal emotional barriers, or external societal barriers that get in the way and give you a reason to advocate. Ask yourself about:

- **Personal Experiences**

- o Am I able to speak up for myself? How about the people I care about?
- o What issues impact everyday life, both for me and the people I care about?
- o Where should we ideally be heard and on what issues?
- o What happens when I can't speak up for myself? What does it feel like? What does it look like?

- **Internal Barriers**

- o How do we hold ourselves back from communicating our needs and concerns?
- o What fears or emotions get in the way?
- o What habits prevent us from moving our message forward?

- **External Barriers**

- o What types of situations or people silence us?
- o How have past experiences or histories gotten in the way?
- o What danger or harm might we face by speaking up?
- o What forms of institutional oppression might we face?

Beyond reflecting on the barriers, advocates should also reflect on what the ideal world looks like. What would the world look like if your message was taken seriously and people changed their actions? How is this world different from the status quo, in terms of social, economic, political, relational, or even emotional change? How might this positive change cause a ripple effect that results in benefits in other areas of society?

Positioning the Advocate

Even when we conclude that our message needs to be heard, some individuals are able to position themselves as advocates while others still cannot. According to decades of social science research, this happens because our identities are shaped by "social positioning", or how powerful we are viewed by others and ourselves. Being able to take a stand on an issue already implies that we believe we are capable of communicating in service of ourselves and others. Beyond believing that our voices are important, speaking up sometimes involves deciding to speak despite the real risks and dangers that we might face due to sources of institutional barriers and oppression. To develop the capability to face the vulnerability and danger associated with public speaking, emerging advocates need experiences that position their voices as so important that speaking up is worth the risk.

Throughout our lives, there are both positive and negative “positioning moments”, which can form patterns that stick over time and can shape what type of person people think we are, how capable we think we are, and whether we can be an advocate. When we have had encounters that help us believe that we are capable and experiences when we are positioned by others as an expert, it becomes much easier to take up powerful positions and advocate. Some examples of positive and negative positioning include:

	<i>Positive Positioning</i>	<i>Negative Positioning</i>
Verbal messages from self	“I know I can do this, I’ve done it before.”	“I’m just bad at this. Everyone else is better than me.”
Verbal messages from others	“You should pick her, she’s always the best.”	“Why is she even here? She doesn’t belong.”
Non-verbal behavior	Smiles, nods, encouragement	Never being called on
Culture	Being rewarded, receiving special opportunities	Sense of failure or being the victim of damaging stereotypes

Learning Environment for an Emerging Advocate

Because social positioning influences advocacy, it is important that your development as a speaker takes place in an environment and culture where your voice is positioned as important. Personal and societal issues that warrant advocacy are hard to communicate, and in the future, you may be speaking to an audience that is hostile or unwilling to listen. By the time you get to that audience, it is important to build your confidence and hone your message with people who will be there for you or can act as a thought partner. Practice your content in low-stakes environments before you move to high-stakes environments. Surround yourself with people who understand where you are coming from and gather information from their experiences to strengthen your message.

At the same time, developing a strong message cannot take place in a vacuum or “echo chamber”, where you only speak to people who agree with you. Part of strengthening your message means working your way to more high-stakes environments and remaining open to learning from differing perspectives. Resist the temptation to “other” people who think differently than you, making generalizations about them or thinking of them as enemies. When this happens, it becomes difficult to communicate effectively in a way that builds connections and brings people together. This does not mean that you must accept intolerance, discrimination, or oppressive behavior and there are times when openness and connection might not be possible. Still, take care not to rush to judgment based on a single moment and prioritize listening and information. Strong advocacy speaking skills requires extensive knowledge and awareness of views that may differ from your own.

The Final Takeaway

Advocacy is a skill that goes beyond communication and the way we express ourselves can go a long way to making sure our message is heard. Advocacy skills are strengthened when we take the time to reflect on personal, internal, and external barriers and gradually build from low-stakes to high-stakes audiences. For beginners and young speakers, advocacy can be challenging for those who think that their perspective is not as valuable or as important as others. Leaders have a social responsibility to help people who may feel silenced or may even silence themselves. In the words of the late Toni Morrison, “If you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.”

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ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 2

Self-Advocacy and Challenging Inequities



It is important to know you are not alone; barriers to equity have long histories and one person cannot dismantle them. Challenging oppression means building relationships that heal and equipping people with the tools and understandings needed to take a stance about who they are in collaboration with others.

Self-advocacy is an essential method for speaking up for yourself and navigating inequitable power dynamics to make your needs known. Opportunities to learn how to self-advocate, however, seldom line up with the people who need it the most. Speaking up for your needs requires a strong sense of identity and an innate feeling of self-worth built over years of social support that many people do not get to have. Breaking barriers to basic rights and opportunities to participate depends on people being able to tell their own stories using their own words and emotions, which is painful in traumatic exchanges. When you have been pushed to the outside, labeled by stereotypes, and taught to feel inferior, self-advocacy is even more essential but also embedded within entrenched histories of discrimination and deficit thinking. Burdening people with this formidable task and leaving them on their own without the tools to defend themselves is unjust. As long as inequities exist, self-advocacy skills must be central to education.

Feelings of Inferiority

One of the biggest barriers to self-advocacy is when you are taught to believe that your identity and your life experiences are somehow invalid, unworthy, or wrong. Experiences that “instruct us in our own inferiority” (Illich, 1971, p. 29) can happen when you hear these messages directly, when you see people who share your views being mistreated, when you witness body language that disregards your presence, and when you can just sense that you aren’t valued. In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois describes this shadowy

feeling of being a problem as “measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity”. This feeling begins at a young age and effectively disables people, especially people of color or people who have been minoritized and labeled as somehow not “normal”. As Aaron Piziali, who grew up with a learning disability, writes in his life story, “My disability is that I have been disabled, as well as discouraged and discounted by a temporarily able-minded, able-bodied general public. My learning disability is something I must perpetually fight to define and also something I must fight to reject” (Rodis, Garrod, & Boscardin, 2001, p. 31).

Because not everyone feels this pervasive shadow of being “lesser than” someone else, inherent inequities lie in who finds themselves needing to self-advocate in the first place. Even at a young age, some children are taught that they are “normal” and “valuable”, while others are told that they must overcome barriers and have to fight to be accepted. As disability rights scholars Beth Ferri and David Connor (2007) point out, “Because barriers are assumed to be inherent within the individual, as opposed to structural or external...the dominant group is positioned as deserving of success, rather than unfairly advantaged by virtue of their social positioning.” Pushing back against disparaging labels and racial biases goes beyond exerting one’s opinion; it means counteracting negative external forces that have been pervasive throughout history.

Learning to Self-Advocate

It is frustrating and angering to feel helpless about the direction of your life or how you are treated by the people around you. Unsurprisingly, when needing to self-advocate, the most common reactions are to repress emotions and be completely silent or lash out in anger. Advocacy is often accompanied by war analogies and words like “fight”, “battle”, and “enemy”. Situations that require self-advocacy are rarely the ones most conducive to learning how to communicate; they are frightening, high-stakes, and overwhelming for many people. Given the deeply entrenched social and historical influences on how people are treated, it can feel virtually impossible to know where to start. As Toni Morrison puts it, “Anger is a paralyzing emotion...it’s helpless. It’s absence of control.” On the other hand, Morrison continues by calling for another approach to inequity, saying “I need all of my skills, all of the control, all of my powers...and anger doesn’t provide any of that. I have no use for it whatsoever.” When learning how to self-advocate, self-confidence can rule over anger when you can turn uncertainty into knowledge. Even in the most upsetting situations, it is vital to:

- **Know your powers.** Effective self-advocacy begins with a strong sense of self. Self-awareness and the ability to articulate what you know, what you care about, what you can offer, and what you can still learn is the foundation for making your voice heard in a contentious conversation. It is a superpower to be capable of using public speaking skills to clarify complex experiences even in a heightened emotional state. In the midst of it all, a social support system and community can offer the powerful and nurturing relationships needed to buffer against the internalization of negative stereotypes.
- **Know the history and the evidence.** The origins of biases, stereotypes, and barriers to equity stem from long histories of exclusion. Facing these barriers means knowing they go beyond a single interaction or individual. Research and evidence about the source of problems must be part of any remarks advocating for your needs because the problem runs deeper than your experiences. Knowing your rights and seeking help in interpreting complex information helps you be clearer and more confident when you speak.

- **Know the conversation.** People in dominant positions are always privy to consequential conversations where decisions are made, and self-advocacy necessitates involvement in the decision-making process. In a 2002 study by Hapner and Imel, for instance, students with disabilities felt less disenfranchised with schooling when they could voice their concerns and play a role in educational decisions. In his firsthand account of his experiences with autism, author Sean Barron emphasizes the importance of feeling in control of the conversation, stating, “What mattered was that doing it made me feel a little closer to being a normal human being. I got recognition, and I felt powerful for at least awhile when I steered the talk where I wanted to go” (p. 49).

The Final Takeaway

Self-advocacy is complex and sensitive. The challenges associated with speaking up for yourself go beyond public speaking skills, but feeling prepared to participate in consequential conversations can open doors to being included in the decision-making process. Like with all public speaking, practice through simulations and coaching sessions where you can refine your ideas and understand your powers. Finding the words to express your identity puts you in a powerful position to help people understand your message. It is important to know you are not alone; barriers to equity have long histories and one person cannot dismantle them. Challenging oppression means building relationships that heal and equipping people with the tools and understandings needed to take a stance about who they are in collaboration with others.

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ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 3

Building a Team of Youth Advocates: Stories from the Author



For the past two years, I have been coaching a group of high school students in Davis, CA called “Distinguished Speakers”. As representatives from each of the four high schools in the school district, this group gathered to practice public speaking, learn new techniques, and connect to public opportunities to advocate for youth voice. Recruitment for the team was challenging. More than anything, the term “leadership” or “public speaking” brought with it all kinds of emotional reactions, from deep-seated fears and anxieties to an insistence that “being a speaker is not who I am”. It mattered whether students had negative experiences with public speaking, whether they viewed themselves as leaders, and whether they had a cause or issue that was important to them.

Ultimately, what made the difference was personal, one-on-one outreach from teachers, principals, and counselors. After identifying students who they thought were underrepresented and had important stories to tell, these personal interactions involved meetings where the educator explicitly invited them to the program.

According to the students, what made the difference was having someone tell them that they were capable of becoming a speaker and leader and that they had something valuable to offer.

If I could describe the first practice session, the word “uncertain” would come to mind. Everyone had vastly different ideas of what public speaking entailed, most of which included images

of someone standing at a podium in front of a crowd, presenting about an issue. As a coach, it was important for me to first disrupt any preconceived notions of what public speaking looked like, and instead expand definitions to include podcasting, stories, presentations, debate, discussions, and comedy. By trying out different methods, different student strengths emerged. For one student, Isabel, shyness transformed into delicate vulnerability when she had a chance to tell stories about aerial dance. For another student, Saif, debate unleashed a passionate urgency that was sometimes hidden behind his down-to-earth, conversational style. They embraced the challenge to discover what fit them and their message the best and took pride in mastering multiple formats.

Developing the team involved identifying important issues and making plans to present publicly, in addition to explicitly teaching public speaking skills. Once the students built up their speaking skills, they also increased their confidence to participate in discussions about social issues. After only a few sessions, students generated a comprehensive list of issues that mattered to them and soon had more content than they needed. To focus the group, we had a discussion about what all the issues had in common and how they might organize these issues under a theme or central question. While their group theme of “self-expression” was still quite broad, it helped the students focus on how they might individually contribute a unique voice or perspective. After that first discussion, I didn’t quite appreciate how unifying this theme would be. It brought everyone together and strengthened their bonds as a team.

My experiences with this group also highlighted the way I could be most useful: project management. While they had countless ideas, they needed me as an advocate for finding speaking opportunities or creating our own events. They needed a check on what scope of work would be most realistic and advice on how to create committees and plans to make sure the work got done. With just a little bit of structure and a lot of confidence-building, the team was able to advocate for consequential issues and tell meaningful stories in places where their voices mattered. By thinking beyond traditional models of youth leadership programs, the students could look beyond what they had always perceived as “public speaking” and “leadership” and instead focus on the advocacy that mattered most to them.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 4

Getting Advocacy Started: For Educators and Facilitators

Facilitators have the power to turn moments of angry conflict into moments where people can actually learn from one another.

Even when people do not agree, the role of any facilitator is to promote thoughtful dialogue where diverse viewpoints can actually be heard and explored. Use this guide as a set of reminders for how you can improve conditions for self-advocacy and advocacy for others, creating spaces where diversity is valued. Note: These suggestions are intended as personal checkpoints rather than used as a formula. Feel free to add steps or skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

Create Community Agreements

- 1) Pose different scenarios involving conflict and the need for advocacy. Discuss what needs to happen for different voices to be heard.
- 2) Co-create community agreements, including audience norms, speaker norms, and group norms. Discuss do's and don'ts for further detail.
- 3) Regularly reinforce agreements.

Value Diversity, Address Power

- 1) Discuss power: where it comes from, how we can tell who has it, and influences on who has a voice.
- 2) Pose questions about whose point of view is represented and which voices are missing.
- 3) Encourage and validate different perspectives. At times, agree to disagree and value diverse ideas.

Model Reactions

- 1) Explicitly teach how to respond productively when people want to disagree or agree with an idea. Post sentence starters.
- 2) The facilitator has power, so keep your opinions open and probe for different views. Validate every idea by responding or connecting it to something else before moving on.

Facilitate Thoughtfully

- 1) Facilitators have a responsibility to help people listen. Keep discussions structured and focused on ideas, not people.
- 2) Encourage deeper understanding. Ask questions that haven't been asked and make connections between ideas. Be extra sensitive to individual needs and emotions.

Refine Remarks

- 1) Help speakers focus on a specific problem and make sure they can back up their ideas. Provide feedback on structure and help keep their remarks concise and within time limitations.
- 2) Help speakers anticipate where the audience is coming from and adjust to provide greater clarity.

Reinforce Care and Connection

- 1) Reserve time and space to facilitate common ground through debriefs. Observe areas of conflict and identify areas in common.
- 2) Move discussions of ideas to plans of action. Stop people from getting too abstract: focus on human beings, research, concrete examples, and care for each other.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 5

Getting Advocacy Started: For Speakers

Advocacy is more than a presentation. It is deeply emotional, personally significant, and high stakes.

While it is easy to be defensive or fearful, remember to still try and connect with the audience, educate them about something they may not understand, and help people empathize with what you feel. To manage this challenging context, preparation is important! Use these suggestions as you begin to outline your points. Note: These suggestions can take place in any order that works for you and should be used as a set of reminders, not a formula. Feel free to skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

Imagine the Ideal

- 1) Identify a specific problem or need and reflect on why this problem exists. What personal, internal, and external barriers are at the root of the problem?
- 2) Write down what the ideal world would look like in great detail. How is it different than the current situation? How are lives improved?

Make the Problem Universal

- 1) Put yourself in your audience's shoes. Why would they not see this issue as a problem? What information are they missing? What do they typically care about?
- 2) Clearly outline the magnitude of the problem. Illustrate the extent of the issue with ideas or analogies the audience understands.

Identify Examples

- 1) Outline your most powerful arguments and then figure out what part your audience might not understand or believe at first.
- 2) Identify real-world examples that illustrate the issues your audience might not understand. Decide whether research or personal stories are better for this audience.

Be Selective

- 1) As you outline, remember that less is more. Select content that is most relevant to your central argument and keep your points concise.
- 2) Structure is important. Start by stating the problem, and progress to a possible solution and the ideal result. Choose examples wisely and consider your audience.

Anticipate Push Back

- 1) When you finish your outline, write a list of all the possible counterarguments, questions, and pushback the audience might say or might be thinking.
- 2) Draw an arrow from each item on your list and jot down a couple thoughts on what you would say in response to this pushback.

Show You Care

- 1) Remind yourself that emotions are powerful and advocate with feeling. Don't hide your emotions, but also don't let them overwhelm you so you can't speak.
- 2) Remind yourself that your points are worth saying. Come up with self-affirmations, like "My stories are more important than my fears."



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 6

Getting Advocacy Started: For Listeners

It is hard to advocate for a position and stand up for yourself.

In these situations, it is especially important that people feel heard, even if you don't personally agree with their points or you don't have any similar experiences of your own. Maintain a learning mindset and seek to understand more about the speaker's perspective. Use this guide to get started on becoming a better listener and help people advocate for themselves and others. Note: These suggestions are intended as reminders and personal checkpoints rather than used as a formula. Feel free to skip suggestions that do not work for you or the situation you are in—make it your own!

Assume Best Intentions

- 1) Get into the mindset that people are generally trying their best and are genuinely speaking from their real, lived, everyday experiences, even if you cannot initially relate.
- 2) Seek to understand where they are coming from and delay your urge to disagree. Avoid thinking about your next response or "yes, but..."

Be Surprised

- 1) Keep an open mind and make it a goal to identify at least one thing that another person says that genuinely surprises you.
- 2) Use differing ideas to inform your opinions. If you didn't know something, then what else do you need to research or ask? How can you revise your own thinking?

Step into Someone's Shoes

- 1) People are human and empathy is not a weakness. Take a moment to set aside your own biases and deeply listen to what matters to the speaker and how they feel.
- 2) Ask people for the stories and examples that informed their opinions. Dig into the origins of someone's thinking.

Delay Debate

- 1) Clarify the need that drives their arguments. Why do they identify something as a problem? If it is personal experience, find out more about it. If it is research, ask for follow-up on the facts and sources without being defensive.
- 2) Ask more about the ideal vision and what this solution solves.

Be Hard on Ideas, Not People

- 1) Advocacy is deeply personal, so do not attack people for expressing their experiences. Be rigorous with ideas by pushing to know more to genuinely understand an issue.
- 2) Be sensitive about how speakers are feeling and adjust. Can they handle questions and discussion, or do they just need to feel heard?

Seek Common Ground

- 1) Consider the description of the problem and vision of the ideal world. While you may disagree with the plan of action, you may agree on what it concerns.
- 2) Generalize from specific issues to more universal themes to find connection; it's okay to agree to disagree with some elements.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 7

Developing a Strong Stance: Mapping Your Expertise

...it is important to build your self-awareness of the knowledge, strengths, skills, and questions you can incorporate in your remarks. Developing a strong stance and a sense of humility is essential to being an effective advocate, which means you need to know what you can offer and what you can still learn. Fill out these columns to remind yourself to be confident, even in sensitive and potentially contentious situations (use the back for more room!).

ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 8

Basic Advocacy Speech Structures

The purpose of an advocacy speech is to communicate passionately and clearly about a current, controversial subject that impacts your life and the lives of others.

The purpose of an advocacy speech is to communicate passionately and clearly about a current, controversial subject that impacts your life and the lives of others. The content of the speech should carry social weight and should make us care and listen. It is also important for advocacy to be honest and full of integrity, rather than being delivered in a way that is purposefully inflammatory, emotionally manipulative, or unethical. You should always choose a topic that allows you to be fully committed to the ideas you are communicating.

Common Elements:

Regardless of how you structure the speech, always include the following:

1. Attention and Relevance—establish why the problem is relevant to your audience
2. Need—use evidence to show that there is a broader societal need for a solution
3. Satisfaction—show how you satisfy this need with a feasible, credible solution
4. Visualization—use language and stories to help us visualize the positive results
5. Action—outline the concrete steps that will/should be taken

Common Structures:

Advocacy speeches are all about contrasts – comparing one undesirable reality with another more desirable reality. This involves communicating a problem and a solution. Your speech time is likely to be structured as one of the following examples (often interspersed with stories):

- Type 1: Problem-Solution
- Type 2: Problem-Failed Solution-Proposed Solution
- Type 3: Cause-Effect-Solution

Self-Advocacy Example:

Sometimes, the topic is something that personally hits home. Here is a specific example of how you might structure a speech to tell a story that advocates for your individual needs.

Description
1. One sentence describing what we need in the world and what you personally need to feel safe participating in the conversation.
2. Describe the need and why it is important to you.
3. Tell a story about when that need was not fulfilled, using details about yourself, what you went through, and how it made you feel.
4. Describe an alternative reality and what you would have rather happened instead in that situation.
5. Explain why this need is important in this particular context.
6. Conclude by telling us what we should consider moving forward to best serve this need for you.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 9

Adapting to Audiences and Navigating Power Dynamics

Before your remarks, ask:

- **Who is your audience?**
 - What type and level of decision-making are they involved in?
 - What is their top priority?
- **What do they already know?**
 - What do they think they know about you?
 - What background knowledge do they have on this topic?
 - What past experiences have they had with this topic?
 - How are their lives different or similar to yours?
- **What do they want to know?**
 - What are they worried about?
 - What are they excited about?
 - What motivates them?
- **What keeps their attention?**
 - What level of detail interests them?
 - What level of detail do they need to be persuaded?
 - Which are they more likely to believe: research and data or personal experiences told through stories?
 - What helps them learn (examples, slides, visuals)?

During your remarks, observe:

- **Signs of power** (i.e. who people look at for approval, how people are seated, who speaks the most, who controls the conversation)
- **Affirmative and interested behavior** (i.e. nods, smiles, note-taking, leaning forward, direct eye contact, relaxed body language)
- **Signs of confusion** (i.e. furrowed brow, scowls, looking around at others, stiff and uncomfortable body language)
- **Signs of disinterest** (i.e. vacant eyes, looking at phone or clock)
- **Type of follow up** (i.e. whether people respond with interested follow up or changing the subject)
- **Topics for follow up** (i.e. what topics people focus on during any follow-up (i.e. are they getting caught up on particular details, do they need more clarity, are they exploring possibilities and ideas)

During your remarks, adjust:

- **Restate relevance and credibility.** Be clear about why your content is relevant to them and why you know what you're talking about.
- **Take the time to teach, without being condescending.** Offer more examples, explain what they don't already know, and define terms.
- **Modify your time.** Spend more time on something of interest and move on more quickly when losing attention. Pose rhetorical questions when you feel you are losing them.
- **Build background.** Make comparisons to something they know and build upon their prior knowledge. Highlight stories and examples that are unexpected, surprising, and different from their experiences.
- **Revisit top priorities.** Address their questions and concerns before they even mention them, based on what you know they care about.

ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 10

Advocating for Special Needs

Advocating for special needs is one of the most significant ways you can use your voice.

These needs are deeply personal and often connect back to long-standing labels and traumatizing histories of oppression, feeling limited, and misunderstood based on disability. It is important not to do this alone. These tips cover ways you can prepare and structure your thinking, ideally in collaboration with allies.

Preparing to Advocate

- Tips for Teachers and Allies: When learning to self-advocate, it is easy to feel lost and like your situation will never change. Help people with disabilities process their experiences by being a sounding board and building self-awareness. Support their reflection on strengths and barriers.
- When you prepare to advocate for special needs, find someone to talk through the following:
 - **Strengths, Weaknesses, Likes, and Dislikes (SWLD):** Think about places where you feel like yourself and more at ease. Why is this the case? Fold a piece of paper so that you have four squares and label each square with “strengths”, “weaknesses”, “likes” and “dislikes” and fill them out for what is most true for you.
 - **Barriers:** Think about what gets in the way of your success. Focus on a specific context and the factors that make learning, engagement, and participation harder for you.
 - **Goals:** How do the goals of a task make it difficult to even begin?
 - **Materials:** Are the materials difficult to use or engage with?
 - **Activities:** Do the activities involve skills that are overly challenging for you?
 - **Assessments:** Do the assessments make it difficult to express what you know?
 - **Environment:** Does the space, noise, or time constraints make it hard to learn?
 - **Relationships:** Do the people involved make it hard to fully participate?

Structuring Uninterrupted Remarks

Sometimes, you have a chance to advocate through a speech or a set of opening remarks, where you have dedicated time to make your needs heard. When this is the case, make sure you prioritize the most important needs and keep your remarks focused and to the point.

Suggested Outline	Sentence Starters
1. Begin with what you hope for and want to be able to accomplish in a particular setting.	“Someday, I would like...”
2. Describe an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and it felt impossible and why this was the case.	“One time, I tried this, but...”
3. Outline the barriers that get in the way of full participation (including perceptions of ability due to a disability label).	“I find it challenging when...”
4. Say what you’d like to be different and what would be possible if your needs were met.	“Instead, I wish....”
5. Conclude with how the audience can help, even if it’s just to listen and collaborate.	“Moving forward, I am looking for...”

Approaching Discussions and Meetings

- Other times, you have to make your needs known in more unstructured, conversational settings, like discussions or meetings. Here are some tips for how to approach these situations:
- **Tips for Ideal Situations:**
 - If you can, try to keep meetings and discussions intimate, ideally 1:1 or in a small group. Try to avoid overly public situations for discussions about special needs.
 - Bring an ally or identify someone in the meeting who makes you feel comfortable speaking up.
 - Bring notes in case you get overcome by emotion and lose your train of thought.
 - Before the meeting, ideally submit an outline of an agenda for what you want to cover. This helps set people's expectations and prepares them to listen.
- **Tips for Situations You Can't Control:**
 - Focus on one high-priority need you want to address that impacts a large part of your work or performance. Figure out in advance what will have the most ripple effects or what will be the easiest to change in the short-term.
 - Give as many concrete examples as possible.
 - Anticipate that, with some audiences, you may be individually blamed for not being able to overcome an obstacle, or that you may be thought of as "too sensitive". Be prepared to describe why you have been successful in other contexts and focus on the specific barriers that get in the way in this specific case.
 - Keep the conversation constructive and specify the help you need, who you need it from, and over what period of time.
 - Recap any next steps and follow up.

Improving Situations Over Time

- Build your community. Seek out people you can be vulnerable with, who will help you articulate your thoughts and prepare for contentious situations.
- Practice describing your needs as often as possible, starting in situations that are more comfortable and low-stakes.
- Spend time comparing and contrasting different situations and notice any differences in when you are more successful and when you feel most uncomfortable. What patterns do you notice?
- Find buffers for more challenging situations by seeking out people and places that build upon your strengths and interests.
- Find people with similar challenges and needs and listen to how they speak about them.
- Write down the ideal for yourself. In the ideal world, what do the goals, materials, activities, assessments, environments, and relationships look like? How will you feel in the ideal?
- Over time, gather words and language to talk about your needs. What phrases or examples seem to help provide a window into your experiences? What resonates with different audiences?



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 11

Advocacy Sentence Starters

This guide will help you translate what you are thinking into clear questions and comments, even when you are feeling nervous or uncomfortable advocating for yourself on the spot. The goal isn't to use all of the starters—pick a few that work for you and memorize them as your “go-to” statements or questions.

Inner Voice	Sentence Starters
SITUATIONS OF CONFUSION	
“I’m confused.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can you clarify what you mean by...” • “Can you give me an example of...” • “Tell me more about...”
“I don’t know how to answer that person’s question.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can you elaborate on your question?” • “When you ask that, do you mean...?” • “What would be the most helpful way to approach that question?” • “I am just answering from my own experience, but when I hear that question I think...”
“Wait...I lost track of what we were talking about.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Can you reiterate your point?” • “Wait, I didn’t quite catch that. Can you say that last point?” • “I want to make sure I got that right. Can you recap?” • “So, just to summarize...(state what you do remember and then ask them to fill in the blanks)”
RELATING OR CHANGING THE SUBJECT	
“That person’s idea makes me think about something similar.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Your point makes me think about...” • “I love what you just said. It brings up something similar....” • “I agree. What do you think about situations where...”
“I have a different idea that I want to talk about.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What you are saying just made me think about...” • “That’s interesting because _____. On a different note...” • “I hope you don’t mind changing the subject, but...” • “Speaking of....(link to your ideal topic)”
DIFFERENCE OF OPINION	
“I don’t really agree with what that person just said.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why do you think...” • “But what if....” • “To play devil’s advocate...” • “On the flip side...” • “But what is more important: ____ or ____?”
“I want to point out a different perspective about the issue.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why would...” • “Why should it be true that...” • “What about situations where....” • “Let’s take a different angle. What about...”



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 12

Advocacy Skill Drills

To become an effective advocate, it is important to get comfortable speaking spontaneously, with little to no preparation before you have to offer an opinion or stance. Spontaneous speaking skills take practice to build the muscles you need to process ideas quickly and respond on the spot.

Practice Area	Example Drill
1. Practice stating opinions on the spot.	Look up controversial debate topics by searching “moral debate topics”, “extemporaneous debate topics”, or “argumentative writing prompts” (like the New York Times list of prompts). Choose any prompt and set a timer for 1 minute while you offer a response to that prompt with no preparation. This works even better with a partner or as a car activity with others. This drill gets easier with practice over time, especially when combined with doing research and reading on a variety of topics to stay on top of current debates.
2. Practice offering suggestions and proposing ideas.	Have someone pose a problem that needs a solution -- this can be an example from real life, a typical issue in the workplace, or a hypothetical dilemma you might encounter. If working alone, write down real-world problems onto slips of paper and put them in a bag. Set a timer for 30 seconds and practice explaining solutions for each problem with positive, constructive language. For a fun twist, pose ridiculous, fantastical scenarios and practice trying to “solve” them.
3. Practice justifying statements.	<p>Justification involves explaining your process and/or decisions and how they result in something beneficial. They most typically involve explaining a problem/driver/need, then a solution (including action, timeline, cost, people involved), and the result.</p> <p>For practice, have someone pose a binary choice (i.e. something or something?). An easy example is something like “Drive to our destination or Take a Lyft?” or “Eat out for dinner or cook at home?” Practice picking an option and then explaining your decision in a short 30-second justification. Again, you can do this on your own by putting prompts in a bag.</p>
4. Practice speaking up for someone and inviting other voices into the conversation.	In everyday life, make it a goal to make sure people are included. Look out for perspectives that aren’t represented and invite others to contribute (without putting them on the spot if they don’t want to speak). Use phrases like, “But who wouldn’t benefit from this action?” or “What other opinions aren’t represented?”



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 13

Small Steps for Educators: Advocacy in the Classroom

Classrooms should be places where students feel comfortable enough to practice their emerging advocacy skills, which means cultivating classroom culture that welcomes perspective-taking and diverse viewpoints.

In English/Language Arts or History classes, it may make sense to have an entire unit on advocacy; in other classes, it is still possible to practice advocacy-related language and spontaneous speaking. These ideas are intended to illustrate a few starting points to imagine incorporating advocacy into daily instruction.

In Class...

- **Warm-ups.** As a discussion starter, pose one perspective on a current social justice issue and then ask the class, “Who is Missing?”. This gets students in the habit of looking for silenced perspectives.
- **Interview Assignment.** Have students interview someone in their life about their struggles and challenges. Instead of reporting out on their findings, have them instead create a set of 1-2 minute remarks advocating for addressing this person’s needs.
- **Show-and-Tell Routines.** As a quick weekly routine, have students bring social problems to share with the class and ask for volunteers to propose solutions.
- **Connection to themes in a novel study unit.** Ask students to select a character in a novel and answer the question, “How would you advocate for that character?” It is important for them to say their answers out loud to practice public speaking skills.
- **Self-contained unit in a public speaking or leadership class.** When combined with final public speaking assignments like community action projects, group advocacy presentations, and simulations, you can build students’ public speaking skills over time.

In School...

- **Peer mentor programs.** It is powerful for youth to practice mentoring younger students. These types of programs are great places to incorporate advocacy practice.
- **School podcasts.** If there is a school-wide podcast, students can submit personally significant issues and create episodes advocating for solutions to student struggles.

- **Integrate advocacy practice into existing student clubs.** Many clubs represent specific student interests, which make them great places to practice advocacy. Faculty sponsors can help incorporate practice sessions to improve speaking skills.
- **Increasing responsibilities for student representatives on school leadership committees.** Students can often be more involved in selecting topics for committee agendas, creating the actual agendas, and even facilitating meetings. Heighten student roles by making sure they have the chance to make consequential decisions, as opposed to only offering opinions when called on by adult leaders.

In High-Stakes Situations...

- **Practice for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.** For special education students and parents, it can be helpful to practice and rehearse how to self-advocate, including how to deal with challenging situations or a hostile or disinterested audience.
- **Parent advocacy workshops.** Students aren’t the only ones who can use practice with their advocacy skills. It is helpful for schools to offer workshops to help parents and families prepare for meetings, organize their thoughts, and feel confident and valued in decisions about their child’s education.
- **Student advocates.** Being an advocate can also mean offering support for people who need extra assistance, such as translation services, speech coaching and feedback, and thought partnership to refine ideas. When prepared, students can be paid leaders or volunteers who assist other students and parents to prepare for high-stakes situations.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 14

Activity Examples: Advocacy Simulations

Student experiences with advocacy vary widely. Those who are regularly exposed to advocacy speaking situations are often personally impacted by inequities or they are allies who are passionate about civic engagement and helping others.

While simulations are a limited tool for mirroring the real world, they can provide a starting point to expose all students to advocacy situations. These ideas are intended as introductory activities to get conversations started and peak student interest in becoming more deeply involved in helping people have a voice. These are not daily activities, but instead might take place over a whole week to allow for both preparation and extensive debrief discussions, so students understand the distinctions between the simulation scenario and what people actually go through in life. These debriefs can also be a good opportunity for students to address their own privilege and how they might approach future situations differently. With more time, it can be valuable to pair a simulation with the “Untold Stories” activity to balance the imaginary with real people.

What is the purpose of these activities?

1. Students research, present, and justify opinions and recommendations in service of advocating for people in need of support.
2. These activities can be done as a ramp up to a more involved group project or advocacy presentation or as a way of inspiring deeper discussions about advocacy.

How do these assignments connect to Common Core Speaking & Listening Standards?

- Regardless of grade level, the anchor standards for “Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas” require students of all ages to “Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.” (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6).
- **Anchor standards for all ages do not specify any requirement to develop oral communication skills to advocate for issues and special needs.**
- The anchor standards for each grade level articulate the skills required to build on talk in conversations and discussions, present ideas and stories clearly, and organize ideas supported by research. While these are all useful in the context of advocacy, advocacy itself should also involve the development of perspective-taking skills and empathy, as well as the capacity for social and emotional learning. It is recommended to think about advocacy in the context of social and emotional learning standards as well as the Common Core.

What do these assignments look like?

IEP Role Plays: Before doing the role play, students are introduced to the purpose of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting and the history of their role in serving the needs of people with disabilities. Have a discussion about why students with special needs would be underserved without the opportunity to advocate for themselves, but also what would make this experience go wrong or differently than intended.

- After the discussion and introduction, select 4-6 students to engage in a role play of an IEP meeting for the entire class. Give each student a slip of paper with an assigned role in the meeting. To save time, search for “IEP role play script” for descriptions of different roles (the University of North Carolina Wilmington option is a good one).
 - Example roles: Student in Special Education, Special Education Teacher, General Education Teacher, School Psychologist, Special Education Director, Parent or Family Member
- Secretly tell each student how “powerful” to be in the meeting and how much to speak -- make it so that the student and parent speak significantly less than the school psychologist and special education director.
- Conduct an IEP meeting with each student in the assigned role. Afterwards, have a discussion about who was most powerful, how they could tell, and how they would make it different.
- As a follow-up, divide the entire class into groups of 4 and have them all do IEP meetings that represent the ideal situation. For a deeper, more meaningful exercise, have people in the student role speak about real needs that they have in the academic setting so that they can practice advocating for true situations.

School Board Meeting: This activity is a way to practice for the real-world “public comment” section of any school board meeting. The day before this simulation, assign 5-7 students to the role of school board members, who set the agenda of what educational issues they will hear during the meeting and announce them to the rest of the class. Depending on how much preparation the remaining students get, this announcement can come one day or even one week before the simulation.

- Divide the remaining students into groups of 6 and assign them different community interest roles (i.e. parent advocacy group, teachers union, youth leaders, members of local community groups). Each group works together to prepare two-minute remarks that communicate their position on each agenda item.
- During the simulation, the school board members announce each agenda item and ask for public comment. Each interest group goes up to deliver their remarks related to the agenda item. School board members maintain a strict two-minute time limit for each set of remarks and can follow up with questions beyond the two minutes.
- For an easier version of this activity, think about other types of meetings that students might be more familiar with (or even create something wacky and completely imaginary!) The idea is just to get them to prepare a short set of remarks that advocate for the needs of a particular audience under limited time constraints. The benefit of the school board meeting is that students get exposed to a real-world scenario that directly pertains to their experiences in school.

Untold Stories: In this activity, students act like “investigators” or reporters who create long-form documentaries and journalism pieces highlighting untold stories in their community. Working individually or in groups, students interview real people about their experiences with inequity, discrimination, or prejudice.

- Each investigator creates an interview protocol to better understand and analyze the conditions that affect the well-being of people in their community.
- After students have completed their interviews, they pretend like they are on a documentary-based TV show by recording the voiceover audio of the story of their person. While this activity can become part of a bigger project involving media or a documentary, the benefit of only focusing on the voiceover audio is that it allows students to think purely about their public speaking and how they are telling the story. Otherwise, the risk is that they get overly caught up in the visuals and media.
- As a longer extension to this project, students can get into groups that each focus on a different story that was told. This focal story then becomes the inspiration for a participatory action research project, where they actually create projects that aim to make a difference for people who face the issues described in the story.



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 15

Class Project: “We Care” Group Advocacy Presentations

A Note to Teachers



This assignment is intended as a longer 2-3 week class project, ideally in the middle of the year, so that students know each other but also still have more time to take their public speaking skills to the next level. The public speaking skills involved in this assignment are fairly standard presentation skills within the comfort of a group. The purpose of this project is to help students advocate for an issue of personal importance in collaboration with others.

As you facilitate this project, make sure students put a great deal of thought into their choice of group members to make sure they have issues and interests in common (rather than just picking their friends). You may want to introduce this project by having students do an activity where they share their reactions to different controversial prompts or communicate their interests and opinions to others. Once they find their groups, make sure students clearly define the problem and societal need they are addressing through their project. Ask them questions such as “Who would disagree with your stance?” to make sure they are expressing a unique position and wording their central idea as a compelling driving question. Do not skimp on time for field and desk research on the issue and keep them accountable to backing up their arguments.

Since they are presenting in groups, finding time for presentations should not be as much of an issue as other assignments. Grades should be completed for each individual student (not for the group as a whole), using the same multiple grader approach with rubrics (peers and teachers).

We Care Advocacy Presentation Assignment Sheet

Effective communication skills are an important tool for advocating and speaking up for the needs of others. Beyond simply getting a point across, communication is a vehicle for promoting understanding, listening to others, and building relationships. This assignment highlights collaboration and interpersonal skills, both in terms of working with a team and also interacting with others to investigate a core driving question. It also gives you a chance to review the course content about advocacy and continue practicing your persuasive and informative speaking skills.

What is the purpose of this assignment?

- To use your voice to advocate for others and practice collaboration and group presentation skills.

What is this presentation about?

- After selecting your group members, you will work together to identify a single theme or driving question that investigates an issue of importance to youth.
- Your group is free to define what “important to youth” means, including what your focal population is. For instance, you can focus on what is important to just the people in this class, a subsection of students at school, or a random representation of youth as a whole.
- As you define the driving question, make sure that your question is worded in a way that is compelling and intriguing to an audience, meaning that the question draws us in and is also easy to understand. Your question should also be complex enough to deserve further investigation, which means it will likely be a “how” or “why” question.

How long is the presentation and what should the content include?

- The group presentation will be a total of 20 minutes long, and each person must speak for a total of 5 minutes (each group has 3 or 4 people). You may use notes, although there should be some aspect of spontaneous speaking (don't script it completely).
- Your presentation content must include field research, meaning that you collect information from actual students using methods such as interviewing, podcasting, surveys, or polls. When you present, clearly describe where and how you gathered this information.

- The format of the presentation is up to your group, but it should draw from the content covered in class. For example, you may want to include an issue speech, but you also might show a mock debate about the issue, or even a discussion, mock interview, or simulation involving listening. You also could draw from the templates we will cover on self-advocacy, showing how someone might share another person's experience or advocate for their needs.
- Basically, this assignment requires you to review course content, make clear choices about how you present, and apply our new skills to real-world situations.

When is it due?

- Final presentations will take place during class time on _____. The order will be decided randomly, and will be announced on _____.
- You will spend time brainstorming ideas with your group on _____, designing field research instruments and analyzing data on _____, and deciding on the format and finalizing content on _____.
- On _____, you should be prepared to work on speaking delivery with peers and the teacher who will provide feedback to help you improve.
- The presentations will be graded the same way as all past assignments (rubrics from self, peer, and teacher). It is worth ____% of your grade.

Good luck!



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 16

Advocacy Presentation Rubric

	Questions (To what extent...)	Rating (3: Still developing, 4: Meets standard, 5: Exceeds expectations)
Teamwork & Collaboration (15%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did all group members equally contribute to the presentation? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the presentation clearly build on the ideas from each group member? <input type="checkbox"/> Was it evident that the team practiced and rehearsed together? <input type="checkbox"/> Was the presentation cohesive and were individual presentations made better as a result of the team?	
Content Focus (10%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the content describe a compelling & significant problem using research? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the content present a clear plan to solve this problem? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the content cover an appropriate amount of material?	
Content Effectiveness (20%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the presenters make a convincing case regarding the problem or issue, using credible arguments and evidence? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the presenters make a compelling case for a specific plan of action, using credible arguments and evidence?	
Delivery Intentionality (15%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the group use delivery techniques that were appropriate to advocacy? <input type="checkbox"/> Were there compelling facial expressions and clear eye contact? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the group use clear gestures and strong posture?	
Delivery Effectiveness (25%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the group use delivery techniques that enhanced the power of their message? <input type="checkbox"/> Was there a clear intent to persuade the audience? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the overall performance compel us to think and listen to the issue?	
Advocacy for Others (15%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Did the group demonstrate evidence that someone cares about this issue? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the group use the appropriate format to speak up for others? <input type="checkbox"/> Did the group represent other perspectives ethically and responsibly?	



Notable Elements:	
Areas of Progress (compared to previous performances)	
Areas to Focus On Next:	

Speaker Name:

Grade:

Feedback Person's Name:

Overall Comments:



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 17

Community Change Idea: Youth Councils and Leadership Programs

Youth councils and leadership programs are popular in schools as a way to promote civic engagement and elevate youth voice. While these models have been around for a long time, they have varying degrees of success when it comes to providing a meaningful experience for students to create a lasting impact at their school. Token tasks and roles like creating posters or speaking occasionally when called on by adults miss the opportunity for students to truly lead.

Current models of youth leadership programs also depend heavily on youth identity; that is, they tend to draw students who already think of themselves as leaders. This can result in a limited pool of students from which to recruit and also limits the diversity of the youth perspectives that are represented. Efforts to rethink and reinvent models of youth leadership should start with how to reshape what a “leader” looks like in the minds of students.

Logistics

- ☐ Figure out the frequency of meetings and set specific dates and times.
- ☐ Identify space to hold meetings.
- ☐ Figure out an arrangement for getting snacks and food (i.e. donations from families, Costco run, potluck style, collaboration with an after-school program).
- ☐ Calendar out any major events, either at school or in the community.
- ☐ Calendar out any social team-building events.
- ☐ Arrange for possible advisors, guest speakers, visits to local community organizations.
- ☐ Figure out any help you might need and look into getting a student assistant or parent volunteer to support the program.

Program Design

- ☐ **Identify the specific goal** of the youth leadership program, both for the students and for the school. On which issues will youth voices be most valued? Ask colleagues at your school where youth perspectives would be genuinely appreciated. What specific perspectives are missing? Think beyond diversity for diversity's sake and think deeply about the high-priority issues that need a different kind of solution.
- ☐ **Create a survey to prioritize issues.** Poll students in your class and around the school about the issues and problems they find most important. Ask them: What negatively affects your experience at school? What do you struggle with? What would school look like if you were happy, motivated, and engaged in meaningful work?
- ☐ **Think about the program through a project-based learning lens**—what projects can students take on to exercise their

leadership? Design a year-long experience that starts with students sharing their stories and experiences and then progresses to action projects and public presentations of learning. Be careful about the timing for different milestones and give students enough time to plan, such as:

- ☐ **August-Early September:** Recruitment and team-building
 - ☐ **September:** Establish youth roles, routines, officers, and focal issues for the year
 - ☐ **October:** Share personal stories and experiences about the focal issue, interview peers, conduct research, and plan awareness-building event.
 - ☐ **November:** Design a campaign or hold a public event to raise awareness about the focal issue and prepare youth leaders to speak at the event.
 - ☐ **December:** Identify possibilities for concrete action plans, policy changes, and other recommendations to resolve the focal issue in the spring.
 - ☐ **January:** Help youth leaders find peer and adult mentors that can advise them on the best ways to execute a plan to resolve the focal issue.
 - ☐ **February-March:** These are likely the best events to organize school and community action projects.
 - ☐ **April-May:** Help youth organize an event to showcase the action project(s).
 - ☐ **May-June:** Recruit youth leaders for next year.
- ☐ Figure out if you want to do one big project (which is assumed by the above timeline), or several committees of small student-led projects on a number of concrete issues. The rough flow will likely end up the same, but the scope of the issues will look different.



Recruitment

- ☐ Identify students and ask them personally. Be persistent and make a big deal about why they would be perfect for the role.
- ☐ Be specific about what students would be working on during the year. It isn't enough to just say they would be joining a leadership team -- what does this mean and how would they benefit?
- ☐ Emphasize that they can be involved as a leader and still have time to do their other commitments and interests.
- ☐ In a future year of a program (once you have things down!), involve students in creating campaigns that illustrate what a "leader" is, challenging preconceptions of leadership.

Roles and Routines

- ☐ Give students special titles and responsibilities, such as President, Vice President, Captain, Social Chair, Committee Chair, Planning/Logistics Officer, etc.
- ☐ Incorporate routines that make the program feel like a fun, low-key, and productive environment. Beginning with food and time to catch up is always a good option, followed by a clear agenda designed by students and time to plan and work in committees.
- ☐ Make sure someone takes down minutes and any next steps to revisit.

Public Presence

- ☐ Having a public presence helps youth leaders feel like they are making a difference, while also helping the rest of the school stay up-to-date with important actions and opportunities to get involved.
- ☐ Identify ways for youth leaders to be more public with their work. Options may include: connecting with the school paper, giving updates on the morning announcements, creating a podcast that includes stories and updates, presenting during assemblies or school events, or representing the school at community events and meetings.

Example Survey Questions to Determine Focus Issue

This survey is designed to help youth leaders focus on issues that matter most to students at this school.
Please keep this survey anonymous and answer as honestly as possible.

1. Grade Level:

5. What negatively affects your experience at school?

2. How would you rate the school in serving your academic needs:

- a. Excellent: my needs are served and I have no complaints.
- b. Fine: my experience is not amazing and not horrible.
- c. Inadequate: my needs are not met.
- d. Poor: my academic experience in school is discouraging and hurtful.

3. How would you rate the school in serving your social and emotional needs:

- a. Excellent: My needs are served and I have no complaints.
- b. Fine: My experience is not amazing and not horrible.
- c. Inadequate: My needs are not met.
- d. Poor: My social experience in school is painful and damaging.

4. Check the issues that you think youth leaders should focus on this year:

- ☐ Mental health
- ☐ School safety
- ☐ Making classes more meaningful and useful
- ☐ Internship programs
- ☐ College readiness
- ☐ Career and technical education
- ☐ Bullying
- ☐ Improving digital safety and communication
- ☐ Creating more opportunities for clubs and electives
- ☐ Supporting arts education
- ☐ Challenging racism and prejudice
- ☐ Global issues like environmental concerns and climate change
- ☐ Improving relations with the outside community
- ☐ Increasing parent and family involvement
- ☐ Providing more support services, like counseling and college advisors
- ☐ Other: _____

6. What would school look like if you were happy, motivated, and engaged in meaningful work?



ADVOCACY GUIDE: RESOURCE 18

Project Sketcher

This tool is to help you map out a plan for your public speaking project, beginning with the big picture idea, the anticipated struggles and needs, the milestones and activities, and finally the specific timeline and actions.

I. Overall Description

Summary of Change Idea: What do you want to change through your voice project or activity?

What work is public?

What are your speaking/listening goals
(or required standards)?

II. Skills and Struggles

What communication skills, techniques, or capabilities are the focus of this work?
(while they are all relevant to strong public speaking, choose a few areas for more targeted focus)

Content-Related	Delivery-Related	Process-Related
<input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorming <input type="checkbox"/> Selecting content relevant to audience <input type="checkbox"/> Outlining <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing and sequencing content <input type="checkbox"/> Explaining complex ideas clearly <input type="checkbox"/> Speech writing <input type="checkbox"/> Use of compelling language and memorable phrases <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to be succinct and to-the-point when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Persuasive speech construction <input type="checkbox"/> Story construction <input type="checkbox"/> Slide design <input type="checkbox"/> Spontaneous speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Argumentation skills <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying and using credible sources <input type="checkbox"/> Research skills <input type="checkbox"/> Strong beginnings that capture audience attention <input type="checkbox"/> Strong transitions between ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Strong endings that definitively conclude and leave audience wanting more <input type="checkbox"/> Summarizing or recapping ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Breath support and control <input type="checkbox"/> Strong posture and stance <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to balance being relaxed with being energized <input type="checkbox"/> Using gestures to highlight content <input type="checkbox"/> Volume: Appropriate use and variation <input type="checkbox"/> Using voice to strengthen content (including sounding confident and using the right tone) <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate use of eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Speed: Appropriate use and variation <input type="checkbox"/> Using facial expressions to highlight emotions <input type="checkbox"/> Movement and use of stage <input type="checkbox"/> Correct use of a microphone and/or other sound equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to avoid distracting movements and fiddling <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to avoid distracting filler phrases or words	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety-coping <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Asking clarifying questions <input type="checkbox"/> Asking probing questions <input type="checkbox"/> Note-taking <input type="checkbox"/> Time management <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration with others <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of discussions and/or teamwork <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to be authentic (true to self, style, and beliefs) <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to be connected with the emotions behind the content <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to get “in the zone” and be fully focused on the material <input type="checkbox"/> Adapting to different audiences <input type="checkbox"/> Relating to others <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching others <input type="checkbox"/> Providing constructive feedback



Out of the skills, techniques, and capabilities, what high-priority needs do you anticipate taking longer to address?

III. High-Level Plan

Public Speaking Milestones

Activities to Include

Materials Needed

People Involved and Help Needed

IV. Calendar

The calendar on the following page is intended to be used as a hard copy to be used with small post-its to color code and/or move around different milestones and activities. After mapping out the plan for each month, use any system you usually use for planning out specific daily activities and their timing.

Color Key: (suggested categories: 1) learning new content; 2) preparation day; 3) practice day; 4) performance day; 5) reflection day.

MONTH _____

					MONDAY
					TUESDAY
					WEDNESDAY
					THURSDAY
					FRIDAY



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