

A BRIEF GUIDE

- TO -

ADVOCACY

BEST PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS

Participating in advocacy allows us to better understand and contribute to the policies and politics that impact our communities. This short guide is intended to help students learn best practices in a variety of advocacy scenarios. These strategies support more effective advocacy, while mitigating the natural confrontation resulting from differing perspectives.



WHEN LEARNING ABOUT AND DISCUSSING POLICIES:

- Be respectful of your peers and accept all perspectives with empathy, regardless of whether you agree or disagree.
- Take time to consider the merits of all arguments, pro and con, and assess the biases of different parties supporting or opposing a policy.
- Provide impartial information to ensure a neutral baseline for discussion.
- Feel comfortable providing your opinions in a respectful manner. Advocating for your viewpoint is an important part of leadership.



WHEN PROVIDING IN-PERSON TESTIMONY BEFORE A PUBLIC BODY:

- If during school time, ask your kumu or club advisor for support in following school rules to attend the meeting.
- Present your testimony and answer questions respectfully. Address the committee members, particularly the Chair and Vice Chair, and keep to any time limit.
- Prepare and practice your talking points in advance or bring a typed script to read. This will help you feel more comfortable and at-ease while giving testimony.
- Focus on the subject matter at-hand. It is okay to voice disapproval but do not make criticism personal.
- Be courteous and quiet when not providing testimony. Everyone deserves to be heard.



WHEN PARTICIPATING IN A MARCH, WALK-OUT, OR NONVIOLENT DIRECT-ACTION EVENT:

- If during school hours, ask your kumu or club advisor for support in following school rules to participate in the event.
- Comply with instructions from local authorities such as members of the fire department, EMS, or the police department.
- Exemplify the integrity, righteousness, and compassion that define good leaders. Combative or aggressive behavior threatens the goals of nonviolent direct-action and puts you and your peers in danger.



IF YOU ENCOUNTER OTHER STUDENTS INCITING AGGRESSIVE, DISRUPTIVE, OR DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR:

- Remind your fellow students that bad behavior hurts your cause and ask them to stop.
- Do not join in their behavior. This could risk your safety, academic record, and standing in the community.
- Exit the situation, locate your chaperone, and inform them of the problem.
- If you feel you are in immediate physical danger, do not hesitate to contact authorities on site (such as police or security), yell for help, or call 911.



WHEN TAKING A POSITION ON A POLICY:

- Present your position respectfully and accept dissenting opinions. Even if a group takes a position by majority vote, every individual is still entitled to take their own position as an individual.
- Remember that you may not represent your position as being an official stance of your school. Your advocacy representing a student group or yourself will carry its own weight.



WHEN MEETING WITH DECISION-MAKERS:

- If during school time, ask your kumu or club advisor for support in following school rules to attend the meeting.
- Do not attend one-on-one meetings with government decision-makers. It is always better to attend meetings with other advocates or a parent.
- Always be courteous and respectful – especially when the decision-maker disagrees with your position. Their opinions and concerns are valid, and it is your job as an effective advocate to try to understand their perspective.
- Prepare and practice your talking points in advance. This will help you feel more comfortable and at-ease in the discussion.



IF YOU ENCOUNTER YELLING OR HARASSMENT AT MEETINGS, HEARINGS, OR EVENTS:

- De-escalate by remaining calm and keeping your voice low and measured.
- Do not yell, engage in tit-for-tat verbal attacks, profanity, or any other confrontational behavior.
- Exit the situation, locate your chaperone, and inform them of the problem.
- If you feel you are in immediate physical danger, do not hesitate to contact authorities on site (such as police or security), yell for help, or call 911.



IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN ANY SITUATION THAT MAKES YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE OR AFRAID FOR YOUR SAFETY:

- Exit the situation, locate your chaperone, and inform them of the problem.
- If you feel you are in immediate physical danger, do not hesitate to contact authorities on site (such as police or security), yell for help, or call 911.

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