

Self Advocacy: How Students Can Influence Education

Have you ever wanted to make a difference in your school? Every day, students are impacted by federal, state, and local policies, making their input as education stakeholders both meaningful and essential. Educators Rising provides students with valuable opportunities to advocate for their educational needs and connect with influential leaders. Given these opportunities, student members can take initiative by speaking up for their peers and for themselves. While attending state Board of Education meetings and contacting policymakers are indeed powerful ways to create change, it is equally important to connect with stakeholders within a school. In essence, if you are passionate about education, and eager to make a difference, don't wait—here are a few ways to become an effective advocate.

Classroom

Above all, self-advocacy starts in the classroom, and it can be as simple as asking for a pair of scissors. By speaking out, students build confidence and learn how to communicate clearly—thereby improving leadership and career-readiness. For instance, students can advocate for themselves by sharing feedback with teachers about projects and assignments, explaining what helps one learn best, or asking for tools like organizers to stay on track.

Student voice truly matters; as a result, the learning experience is enhanced. Additionally, students can take initiative by encouraging classmates to speak up and supporting those who may not feel comfortable sharing their concerns yet. Ultimately, when students advocate for themselves and for their peers, they help create a stronger and more supportive classroom environment for everyone.

School & District

Advocating at the school and district level is not just about raising concerns—it is about offering solutions. First, one should be persuasive starting with gathering evidence, finding supporters who share the goal, identifying the audience, and developing a clear, compelling story. Then, one can reach out to the principal, superintendent, or school board and present an evidence-based argument in a respectful and organized way. In brief, when students come prepared with realistic solutions their message is more likely to be taken seriously, because it shows thoughtful effort rather than frustration alone.

Furthermore, schools can take meaningful steps to increase student input by creating student advisory councils, conducting surveys, organizing focus groups, sharing student-written newsletters, and including student representative positions on the school board. Overall, ensuring that student voice is equitable and inclusive can lead to powerful outcomes, such as increased self-esteem, stronger communication skills, and a positive and supportive school climate.

Beyond

Above all, advocating in the classroom and school is one of the most effective ways to ensure one's educational concerns are recognized. However, your influence does not have to stop at the district level. In fact, Educators Rising provides meaningful opportunities for students to elevate their voices by serving as state officers, national ambassadors, delegates, or national officers. Through these leadership roles, students can advocate for their peers, contribute to important conversations, and influence the future of education beyond one's own school.

Beyond organizational involvement, students can also advocate by keeping the community informed about important issues. Specifically, one should build connections with key stakeholders—namely, parents, alumni, local businesses, and community leaders. By inviting community members and local legislators to attend student council meetings, school board discussions, or school events, they can better understand student experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, when students take initiative and form meaningful relationships, it strengthens their credibility as a student leader and builds a network of support that can help turn ideas into real change.