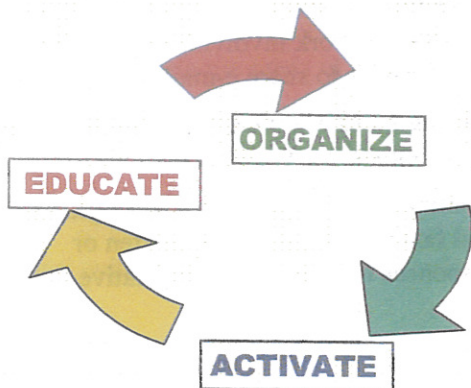


ACTIVATION

We can activate our Advocacy Plans by:

1. Implementing a letter-writing booth at our state conference or provide samples for participants to take and mail.
2. Implementing a letter writing, phone, or e-mail campaign.
3. Establishing a phone or e-mail network for calls to members and friends.
4. Encouraging councils to invite key officials to their schools.
5. Making personal visits to legislators.
6. Giving testimony or information to the ISBE.
7. Inviting legislative officials to speak at our conferences.
8. Honoring an official at a district or state function.
9. Holding informal meetings at our conference to allow members to visit with the legislators.
10. Utilizing all media sources to provide information to the public.
11. Suggesting and encouraging our members of Congress and state legislators to read to students.
12. Encouraging all members to join the IRA Legislative Action Team (LAT)



To Order Materials:

International



Reading Association

800 Barksdale Road, Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-1839
www.reading.org

For questions or further information contact
IRC's Legislative Committee:

Mike Ellerman
305 Maple Street
Augusta, IL 62311
mellerm@adams.net

Helen Bryant
9028 South Creiger Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617
Hebryant5@sbcglobal.net

Kathy Merz
506 Cambridge Dr.
DeSoto, IL 62924
kmmerz@hotmail.com

Richard Long
Governmental Relations Committee
444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 630
Washington, DC 20001
irawash@reading.org

Become An Advocate For Literacy



IRC Legislative Committee
1210 Fort Jesse Road, Suite B2
Normal, IL 61761
irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org

It is Important to Become an Advocate for Literacy Education.

As members of the International Reading Association and the Illinois Reading Council, you have knowledge of what is needed to ensure the best education for our children. You have a message to deliver to the U.S. Congress, the legislators, the administration, the media, and your local community. As educators, you are in a position to influence state and national public policy decisions that affect your school district.

Advocacy is So Important.

There is a vital need to deliver our message. The education of our children must become a top priority of our nation's policy makers. Our leaders in the U.S. Congress and the Senate, and in our state legislatures must understand that education is too important an investment to be continually blocked and cut. Federal laws and regulations placing unreasonable mandates on local school districts increase the need for advocacy. This alone makes it necessary to get involved.

There are many activities that you can use in becoming an effective advocate. This brochure contains information on how to make your voice heard in Washington and at the state level. It would be advantageous for you to order IRA's Advocacy Manual and Brochures.

You Really Can Have an Impact.

Members of Congress listen to the constituents back home. You are on the front lines of education and can explain the real impact of federal policy decisions. As an advocate, you can be persuasive, as a leader in your community you can impact federal policy decisions.*

You Can Be An Effective Legislative Advocate.

The most useful tips for success in being an advocate are: be polite, remember you are representing IRA, not your employer; never argue; stick with the agreed upon message points and script; do not stay more than fifteen minutes; remember to leave the information packet; write down with whom you met, the position, and your impressions; and obtain their business card and leave yours. (A copy of the script you may want to use for the meeting is available.)

We in Illinois can affect Educational Policy and Legislation through Advocacy in three ways.

EDUCATION

We can educate our members by:

1. Printing articles in our state and local newsletters.
2. Sending action alerts to members.
3. Presenting conference sessions on legislative issues.
4. Presenting skill-building workshops to members, the first one at the IRC Leadership.
5. Sending e-mail updates to council chairs.
6. Developing and distributing resource packets.
7. Sending and receiving advocacy faxes and e-mail messages.
8. Developing and maintaining a web page.
9. Attending the state legislative sessions.
10. Writing letters to editors and media press releases concerning funding issues.

11. Having a State Department of Education liaison that will report on the latest legislative issues and how the state is reacting.
12. Presenting advocacy programs to civic and council meetings.
13. Providing our members with information on legislation that has passed, courtesy of the State Board of Education.
14. Providing our members and others with our advocacy brochure.
15. Providing our members with a year-round advocacy strategy—how to make your voice heard on Capitol Hill, how to call your members of Congress, and how to set up a personal visit with a representative in your district.

ORGANIZATION

We can organize by:

1. Building a network within our state organizations, developing a year-round advocacy plan and by having each local council appoint or elect a legislative chair to network with the state chairs.
2. Participating in a coalition with other organizations.
3. Establishing a procedure for sharing and spreading information to members through national network involving all the state IRA coordinators to share e-mails.
4. Having a Legislative Committee attend the IRA Legislative Workshop.
5. Continuing to respond to Washington's call and faxes for letters to be written or responses to be made on legislative issues.

* (Some statements reprinted from the IRA Advocacy Manual, courtesy of IRA and Richard Long, Washington Representative.)