

Grassroots Advocacy

Who, me???

Created by

Katy Pugh Smith

katypughsmith@bellsouth.net

Lee Yarborough

lee@propelhr.com

Advocate? Who, *me*?

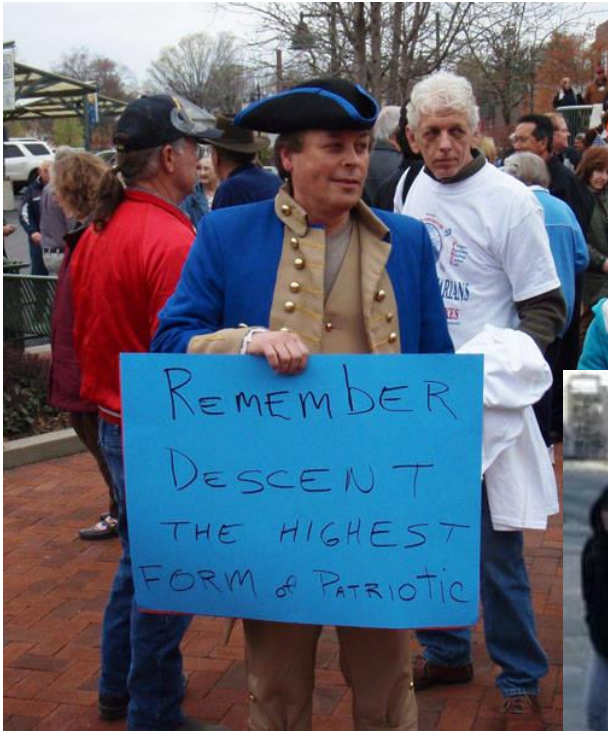


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“I feel awkward asking for something.”



“I don't know enough about the issues.”



NEWS-ACTION

Be Informed. Take Action. Improve Greenville's Public Schools.

Welcome to Public Education Partners' *NEWS-ACTION*—a brief, periodic update on issues affecting Greenville County public schools and actions you can take to help improve our schools.

Today's Topic:

Votes tomorrow on tuition tax credit/school voucher bill

State House and Senate subcommittees are expected to vote on tuition tax credit/school voucher bills on Wednesday. Two identical pieces of legislation, Senate bill [S.414](#) and House bill [H.3407](#), would provide tuition tax credits and school vouchers for families sending their children to private schools. Both bills are called the "South Carolina Educational Opportunity Act." Tomorrow, a debate and vote on the Senate bill will occur in the Senate Education K-12 subcommittee and likewise the House bill in the House Ways and Means General Government subcommittee.

Both bills would provide the following: 1) A tuition tax credit for families sending their children to private schools. After three years, the tax credit would be available to all families regardless of income; 2) A tax credit of \$1,000 per child for families that homeschool their children; and 3) A tax credit for individuals and corporations that donate money to an organization that in turn uses the money to give a school voucher (a "scholarship") for children in low-income households to attend a private school.

The amount of the tuition tax credit and the school voucher are both tied to a certain level of state K-12 funding. For the current year both would be worth \$2,720. Donations by individuals and corporations to a "student scholarship organization" and the value of their tax credits are unlimited.

[Read more.](#)

Public Education Partners opposes tuition tax credit and school voucher legislation. Public Education Partners' opposition is based on the following:

- **Lack of accountability to taxpayers.** Public schools are academically and financially accountable to taxpayers. Under the proposed bills, private schools benefiting from tuition tax credits and school vouchers in this government program would lack similar accountability and transparency.
- **Private schools choose who to admit.** Many, if not most, private schools will not be options for children performing below grade level or with behavioral problems. Lack of transportation and an inability to pay for tuition up front and cover the rest of the cost of tuition is a barrier for students in low-income households.
- **Families with students already in private schools are the primary beneficiaries.**
- **A tuition tax credit and the school voucher program would cost the state millions of dollars.** State revenue would be reduced leaving fewer resources for public schools and other state needs. The tax credit/voucher bill introduced in the last legislative session would result in an estimated net revenue reduction of \$128 million in the first year of full implementation.
- **No gain in student achievement.** Despite twenty years of school voucher programs in different areas of the country and over a decade of tuition tax credit programs in some states, it has not been established that tuition tax credits and school vouchers improve student achievement.

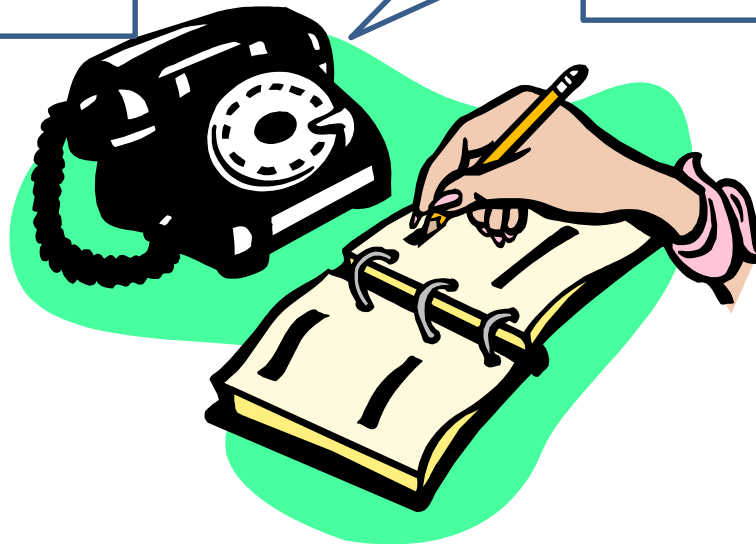
[Read more.](#)

- SCPTA
- National PTA
- SC School Boards Association
- SC Association of School Administrators
- Local advocacy organizations
- Public Education Partners in Greenville or Aiken County*
- Your school district

“They’re too busy to listen to me.”

Vote Yes! Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes

No No
No
No No No
No



“I don’t have enough time to do this.”



Short and sweet advocacy

- Use a script
 - “Hi, this is _____. I wanted to let Sen. ?? to know I am opposed to bill ###.”
- Be concise and polite
- You don’t need to know the answers, but find them out
- You can ask, “Do you know how Sen. ??? is planning to vote?”
- Follow up with a note

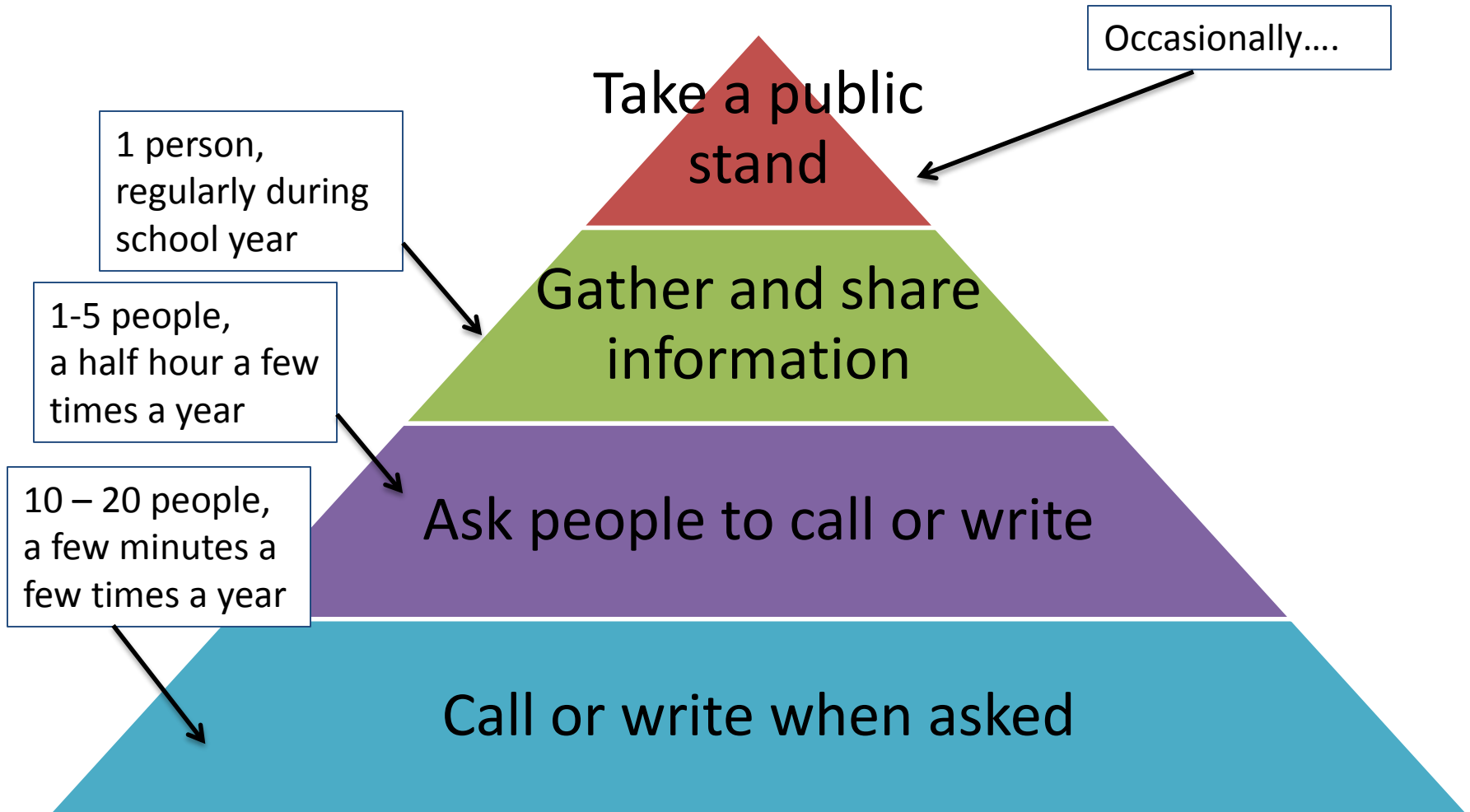
What is a win?

An elected official:

- Pushes your issue
- Votes your way
- *Doesn't push against your issue*
- Does nothing



Sample Advocacy Program



Starting a PTA/SIC Advocacy Program at your school

- Identify a point person
 - Who will follow the issues? Who will lead your program?
- Identify 15 or more advocates willing to make calls
- Conduct an advocacy training at your school
- Set up communication methods
 - Phone/email trees and follow up

Other advocacy activities...

- Letter writing campaigns
- Open house or personal tour of your school
- Visit with elected official in Columbia
- Raise parents' awareness
 - Communicate with parents through newsletter, Facebook, etc.
 - Inform parents during general PTA meetings



Staff person from Sen. Graham's office and SC Rep. Eric Bedingfield at Blythe Report to Community

Get Involved!



Legislative Advocacy Training Video



Resources

- SCPTA @ www.scpta.org
- National PTA @ www.pta.org
- SC School Boards Association @ http://www.scsba.org/advocacy_grassroots.htm
- SC Association of School Administrators @ www.scasa.org
- Public Education Partners of Greenville County @ www.pepgc.org
- Public Education Partners in Aiken County @ <http://publicedpartners.org/>
- www.joy4education.com