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STUDENT ADVOCACY GUIDE



A ZINE
FOR MAKING
CHANGE

While some politicians are using schools to advance their own agendas, young Texans across the state are fighting back to make sure schools do right by their students.

We made this zine to help you do the same.

Even if you've never spoken up before...

Even if you haven't seen someone who looks like you advocate in your community...

Even if you don't know much about school regulations...

You are still an expert on being a student. You know what's working well in your education and what isn't.

That's all the expertise you need.



FIRST THINGS FIRST: TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

Know Your Rights: You have the right to free speech and the right to freedom of information (including the books in your school library). As you're hearing controversy around banning certain books, know that the Supreme Court ruled school boards can't remove books from school libraries just because board members disagree with the ideas in those books.

Protect Your Energy:

It's tough to be a student and an advocate at the same time. To avoid burnout and recharge, develop strategies to protect your mental health.



Prepare for Backlash: This can happen! The good news is that you can prepare by identifying your support network and checking out guides on how to respond.

We identified resources to help you know your rights, protect your energy, and prepare for backlash. Follow the QR code to access them.



KNOW YOUR STORY

Your story isn't just your most powerful tool. It's also your 'why' for speaking up—and convincing others to do the same.

When you know your story (story of **self**)—and really know it—you can activate allies in your community. When your community knows its story (story of **us**), you can come together towards a common goal (story of **now**). In other words: you can make your leaders feel your collective power and the urgency of your goal.

Here are some questions to help shape your story:

What are your values and vision? Remind your audience you share the same values.

What is the harm? Define the problem by pointing to real-world harms in your school and life.

What is your ask? End on a specific action your audience must take to address the harm and help you reach your goal.



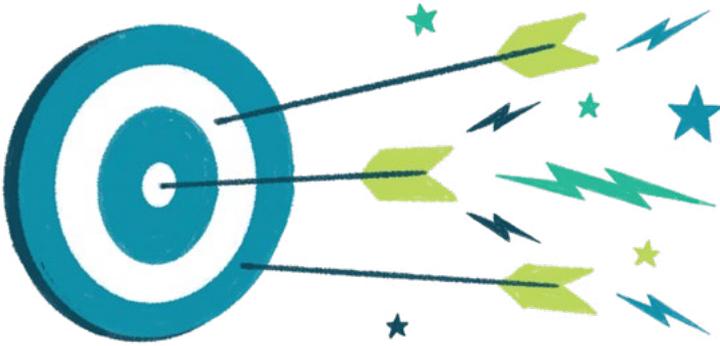


**STUDENTS
WANT
THE
FREEDOM
TO
LEARN!**

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Once you know your story, you'll need a plan.

Craft your goal: Start by dreaming of the future you want to build. What needs to happen to get there? Return to the present. What's the best, most effective thing that can happen right now to move towards that future? This is your goal.



Identify your target: Think about who has the authority to make that change. Who's the ultimate decision maker? Visit our online guide for a breakdown of the most important decision makers in Texas education.



Decide on the right tactic(s): Consider the time, resources, and support you have to convince your target to take action. Ultimately it comes down to what makes sense for you and your community. See our online guide for some options like delivering a petition, testifying to your school board, or holding a public event.



children's
defense fund
texas



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WANT MORE RESOURCES?



There are plenty of resources for young people who want to speak up for the freedom to learn. Reach out to **Children's Defense Fund-Texas** directly if you need additional support!