



EMPOWER TOOL: Advocacy 101

What is advocacy? It's using your voice to make change happen. Whether you want a robotics team at your school, better STEAM resources, or more support for student projects, advocacy is how you make it real. This toolkit shows you how to start.

What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy means speaking up for something you believe in and working to make it happen. It's not complaining. It's identifying a problem and taking action to solve it.

4 Types of Advocacy

1. Individual Advocacy

Speaking up for yourself. Example: Asking your teacher if you can start a coding club.

2. Peer Advocacy

Speaking up for other students. Example: Convincing your principal that more students would join STEAM programs if they had access to equipment.

3. Community Advocacy

Working with others to create change. Example: Organizing a group of students to petition for a makerspace at your school.

4. Policy Advocacy

Trying to change rules or systems. Example: Proposing that your school add STEAM electives to the curriculum.



Your First Steps

Step 1: Identify the problem

What do you want to change? Be specific. Instead of 'We need more STEAM,' say 'We need a robotics club that meets twice a week after school.'

Step 2: Do your research

Why does this problem exist? Who has the power to fix it? What solutions have worked at other schools? Look at what nearby schools are doing and talk to students who've done similar things.

Step 3: Find your people

Who else cares about this? Teachers, classmates, parents? You're stronger together. Start by talking to 3 to 5 people who might support you.

Step 4: Make a plan

What are you asking for? Who do you need to convince? What's your timeline? Write down the steps you need to take and when you'll do them.

Step 5: Take action

Start small. Send an email. Schedule a meeting. Gather signatures. Just start. The hardest part is taking the first step.



Common Obstacles (And How to Handle Them)

Obstacle: 'Nobody cares about this but me'

Solution: You haven't found your people yet. Survey 10 students. Post on social media. Ask around. They're out there.

Obstacle: 'Adults keep saying no'

Solution: Ask why. Their concerns might be valid. Address them. Be willing to compromise. Find a different adult who will say yes.

Obstacle: 'I don't know where to start'

Solution: Start with research. Google '[your idea] + middle school' or '[your idea] + how to start.' Someone has done this before.

Obstacle: 'I'm afraid of public speaking'

Solution: Start with email. Then small conversations. Work your way up. You don't have to give a speech to advocate.

Quick Wins to Build Momentum

- Get 5 students to sign a petition or interest form
- Find one teacher who will listen to your idea
- Research 3 examples of your idea working at other schools
- Send one email to a decision maker
- Post about your idea on social media and get 10 people to engage



Your Advocacy Action Plan

Fill this out to get started:

The issue I care about most:

Who has the power to make this change:

Three people who might help me:

One small action I can take this week:

My goal for the next month:

Next Steps

Ready to keep going? Check out these other STEAMvocate toolkits:

- Finding Your People: Build your support team
- Talking to Teachers: Pitch your idea to school leaders
- Project Action Plan: Turn your idea into concrete steps