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The PEAL Center

"Sharing Your Story"

Parent Training Session

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# Re-Framing Agendas: From the Personal to the Policy Level

Adapted from PCL by PACER and University  
of Vermont

# Strategies for Turning a Personal Story (elevator speech) Into a Policy Story



1. Identify your personal story and concerns.
2. Think about how your concern relates to others.
3. Gather relevant information and resources.
4. Re-frame your story as a policy story.
5. Identify policy partners who are in a position to support you.
6. Tell your “policy story.”
7. Make a specific request about your desired outcomes.
8. Follow-up on your visit and your request.
9. Evaluate your outcomes.
10. Keep trying!

# #1 Identify your personal story and concerns



- Identify your greatest concerns for your child and your family.
- Of these concerns, identify issues that may be of concern to other children, youth, and families.
- Choose an issue that you want to work on at the policy level. This issue should be:
  - Of concern to you and others
  - Something that you believe can be changed

## #2 Think about how your concern relates to others



- Identify your potential “allies” (e.g., others who may share similar concerns).
- Think about how your allies’ personal concerns can be combined with your personal concerns to broaden the issue.

# #3 Gather relevant information and resources



- At the local level, gather as much information as you can about your issue.
- Expand your information base by going to other resources, such as: list serves, action alert networks, press releases, newsletters, practices and policies in other districts and states, conferences and training opportunities.
- Contact individuals with knowledge of this topic.

# #4 Re-frame your story as a policy story



- Use the information you gathered in step three to re-state your story as a policy statement.
- Use the following guidelines to create an effective policy story that can be shared with others:
  - State your concern in one or two sentences that describe **what** the problem is and **who** is affected by it.
  - Provide an additional statement or two that includes data related to the problem.
  - Include some “policy options” that could help to address the issue. These should include your own suggestions for policy changes and examples of policies and practices you have heard about that have had previous success.

# #5 Identify people in policy positions who should hear your story



- Think about who is in a position to make the kind of change you desire.
- Examples: If you want to change a school policy, talk to a superintendent. To change a law, you will need to have access to a legislator.
- Contact your allies and others who may be able to help you gain access to the person you have identified as being in an administrative or policy position.
- Use a variety of strategies (e.g., letters, phone calls, emails) to get on that person's agenda for a face to face interaction.

# #6 Tell your “policy story”



- Consider these suggestions as you tell the policy story you developed earlier (see slide #6)
  - Start by telling your story in a way that gets to the other person’s heart
  - After you’ve gone to the person’s heart, go to their head
  - Explain how your story can be generalized to other situations. Use the data you have gathered to support your opinions.
  - “Translate” your story into various policy options
  - Talk about similar successes related to your proposed option(s)
  - Request a specific action
  - Thank the person, and follow-up with more thanks



# #7 Make a specific request about your desired outcomes



- The requests that you make of people in policy positions should help to further your cause without appearing too demanding.
- Think about a small step that the person could take for you that will 1) help the person gain a better understanding of the problem, and/or 2) help to bring your concern into a wider public conversation.
- Examples include:
  - Asking the person to attend an informational meeting.
  - Asking the person if you can bring your story to a school board, legislative committee, etc.
  - Asking the person if they know another person or forum in which to tell your story.

# #8 Follow-up on your visit and your request



- Send a note or make a telephone call shortly after your visit to thank the person for listening to your story.
- Follow-up on the specific request you made to see whether or not the person has had a chance to carry out the request.
- Contact your allies to go to this person and others to tell a similar policy story.

# #9 Evaluate your outcomes



- Form a strategy for keeping track of your contacts with allies, people in policy positions and others. Note when you have had opportunities to tell your policy story and make specific requests.
- Keep a record of the outcomes you have achieved, and re-visit these frequently to see if your strategies are working.

# #10 Keep trying!



- Remember that policy changes are a process, not an event!
- Stay connected to your allies, because the more policy makers hear the same story from diverse voices, the more likely they are to pay attention to the needs for change.
- This is hard work. Remember that you may need to keep advocating at the individual level for your child while you are waiting for changes in policy.

# Checking My Progress



- Where are you at on the 10 steps?
- What is your next step?
- Stand and deliver, have your voice heard.