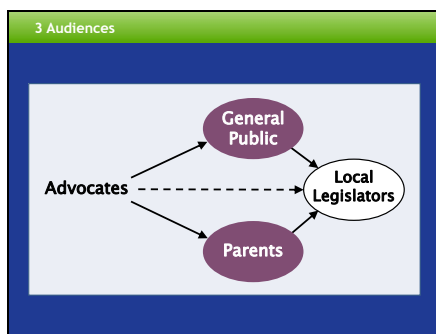


Summary: All Public School Advocacy is Local

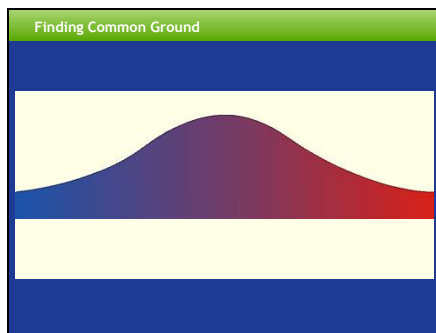


A mother cares a great deal about her child and the K-12 education she receives locally. In this photo, a child has an image painted on his arm by a public school advocate. While the image is being applied, another advocate introduces herself to the parent and explains the need for adequate school funding.



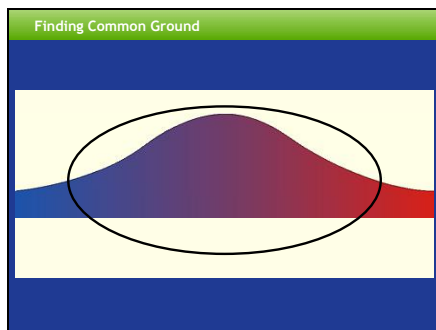
We serve 3 audiences: the general public, parents and local legislators.

We influence the general public and parents so they can influence legislators. We also brief legislators on our positions so that they are informed. We don't expect legislators to change a position solely because of influence from advocates.



This color continuum represents voters.

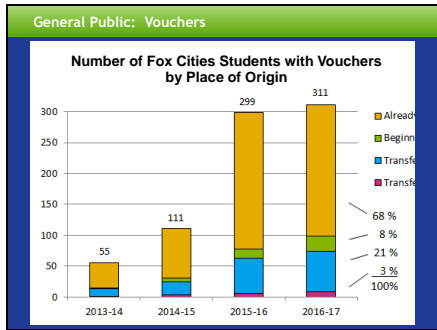
The tendency of voters to lean left is represented by blue in this graphic. The tendency to lean right is represented by red. The middle is represented by mixtures of blue and red or purple. The bell-shaped curve suggests that relatively few voters exist on the far left and far right and a much greater number exist in the middle.



It is nearly impossible to find common ground with all of the voters across the values continuum. But we might find common ground with the purples and they are easily the largest segment.

This group is turned off by "politics". To gain and hold their attention, do not name elected officials or political parties in your messages. Purples don't like pessimism so offer solutions to problems.

The challenge for advocates is to draft messages that resonate with purples while not excluding the solid blues on the left and solid reds on the right.

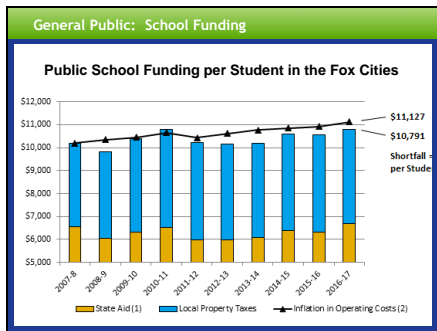


Articles at our website provide data on issues. This one displays a graph showing the number of Fox Cities students with vouchers, by place of origin. The orange segments show the 68% of voucher students who were already enrolled at a private school prior to receiving the voucher.



Data from the article became the basis of a column in the local newspaper with a heading that features the cost of vouchers.

This column is aimed at Fox Cities residents whom we classify as purple. The column focuses on the cost of vouchers and the lack of results (studies show that vouchers do not improve student outcomes). These two facts resonate with purples. The column does not address the conflict between church and state on public funding for religious schools. That issue might turn off the purples.



Another article shows that school funding has not kept pace with inflation in operating costs. The shortfall for the 2016-17 year is \$336 per student.

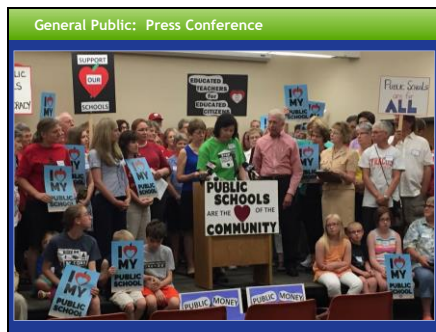
We used this graph at a 2016 forum attended by candidates from both parties running for the state legislature. The data helped to set the stage for questions on the biennial budget posed by the League of Women Voters moderator and the audience.



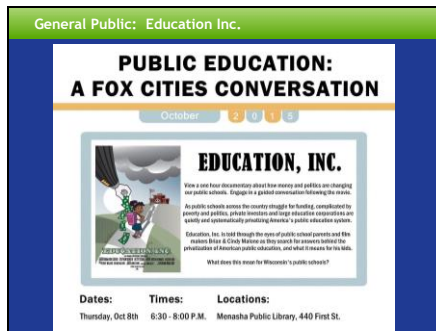
We formed the Writer's Project as a communications tool with community columnists. We convene the six authors once per year in an informal evening conversation. Here, we update four of them on our key activities and ask for their information needs on public education.



Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education partnered with the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women to sponsor candidate forums for the 2014 and 2016 general elections. The sole subject of the 1 ½ hour forum described in this flyer was public education. One hundred residents attended.

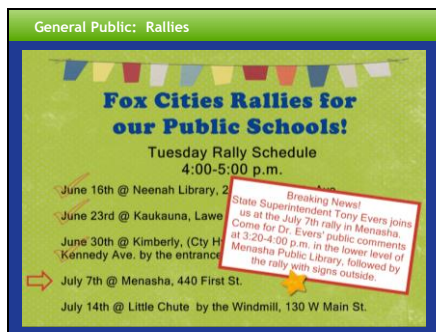


We use press conferences to draw media attention. The objective of this one was to build support for the schools in the biennial budget. It took place at the public library. The signs contain text like, “I love my public schools” and “Educated teachers for educated citizens.” A sign criticizing an elected official or a political party would not be permitted. It would discourage the purples in the media audience.



Education Inc. is a one-hour documentary about how money and politics can affect a school district. The movie combines a story and data. The story describes the struggle of the Douglas County, Colorado school district to fight a voucher program and the story is compelling.

The advocacy group believes that stories with supporting data is a winning combination. A compelling story holds the attention of the audience while data provides the case for change.



We scheduled rallies to build public awareness of the need for school funding in the biennial budget. The rallies took place in five Fox Cities communities and State Superintendent Tony Evers kicked off one of them. This flyer shows the rally schedule.



Other activities engage our 2nd audience, parents. Here you see our tent and display at a summer event called Juneteenth. The event celebrates the ending of slavery in June, 1865 and more generally the emancipation of slaves.

At this event, we try to connect to parents. Families attend so we offer face-painting free to children. While that's going on, we tell our story to the parents.



Our third audience is local legislators. Ten teams of 2-4 advocates formed, met with their assigned legislator and briefed him on our positions. Following the session, we left a set of materials with the legislator.

One advocate, Carol Lenz, coordinates this activity.

Finally, I have four recommendations for school advocacy groups.

1. Do not seek nor permit a full endorsement from a school board. It's OK for the board to endorse a specific event but not the advocacy effort in general. You need independence.
2. Avoid school district operations. If your advocates attend a school event and a parent asks them to intervene in a dispute with an educator, they should politely exit the conversation. The district has a process for handling disputes and it does not involve an outside group.
3. Focus your advocates on the mission – then get out of their way. As long as your volunteers are working in the right direction, give them autonomy to execute the task in their own way.
4. Never surprise the superintendent. She has a great deal on her plate. She can handle a difficult situation but it's easier if she has advance notice. So if the advocacy group plans to take an action that might cause a potential problem for the school district, I give the superintendent advance notice.

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<https://sites.google.com/view/fox-cities-advocates-4-pub-ed>