

# TED Advocacy

Useful resources to help support advocacy work



Advocacy Brief #2, Summer 2024

## Incorporating Advocacy in Higher Education

### Did you know...

TED members advocate for a policy agenda that is centered on best practices as they relate to the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers and other educators who work with individuals with exceptionalities. This includes preparing our pre-service teachers and leaders for advocating for students with disabilities at local, state, and national levels. In this Advocacy Brief, we identify skills needed for advocacy, offer ideas for how to support those skills, and share resources for course preparation.

## Alignment with National Accreditation Standards



Preparing pre-service teachers and leaders to become an advocate aligns with a number of accreditation standards, including: CAEP R1.4 Professional Responsibility; AAQEP Standard 2 Completer Professional Competence & Growth; and CEC Initial Preparation Standards 6.5 and Advanced Preparation Standards 5.4 and 5.5.

## Advocacy Skills



**Skill 1: Build Relationships.** The field needs teachers, administrators, and scholars who are well-versed in special education policy and advocacy. Thus, while it is critical for teachers and leaders to ensure compliance with special education law and policy, it is vital for everyone to develop advocacy skills to influence policy, and in turn, practice. Advocacy work centers on developing relationships with policymakers and other groups.



**Skill 2: Stay Informed- Context Matters.** Skills needed include a critical understanding of the historical, social, political, ethical, and legal contexts that shaped and continue to shape the research, policies, and practices in special education. Developing deep understandings around these ideas is critical to navigate the persistent dilemmas facing special education.



**Skill 3: Collaborate.** Essential to this work is learning to collaborate with a variety of groups including parents, teachers, students, and community members to understand and advocate for the needs of the school community. Partnering with stakeholders is critical for educational change to take root. Thus, special education teachers and leaders need to learn how to be advocates in the policy arena and use their agency to influence policy development and implementation to improve teaching and learning.



**Skill 4: Get involved.** Doing something- even the small things- can make a difference. This skill may be the one that keeps most people out of advocacy work- "I don't know what to do or where to start." For change to occur, pre-service educators need to understand how to engage in the work and do so in a way without repercussions. Getting involved with organizations like TED and CEC who sponsor advocacy events is critical to our collective voice and provides a buffer from individual scrutiny.



**Skill 5: Communicate.** The ability to communicate these ideas to policy makers at all levels (e.g., local, state, national) is the foundation of advocacy. It is important to tailor the content and format to the audience. For example, talking with state representatives will address state policies and local stories of impact. There are numerous ways to communicate as an advocate including letter writing, phone calls, in person meetings, and via social media. Sharing ideas in a concise, accurate and accessible manner is incredibly important for effective advocacy.

## IDEAS

There are numerous ways to address each skill individually or as a group of skills. Here are just a few ideas for what students (PhD to pre-service teachers) could do in your coursework.



Write a summary of their volunteer advocacy work with groups for educational organizations (e.g., CEC, TED, ACRES, HECSE).



Participate in HECSE and AACTE short courses or the CEC/CASE [Special Education Legislative Summit](#) held annually devoted to developing policy and advocacy skills.



Advocacy Drive: Join an organization Policy and Advocacy Committee. Sign up [here](#) to be part of TED Policy and Advocacy Group.



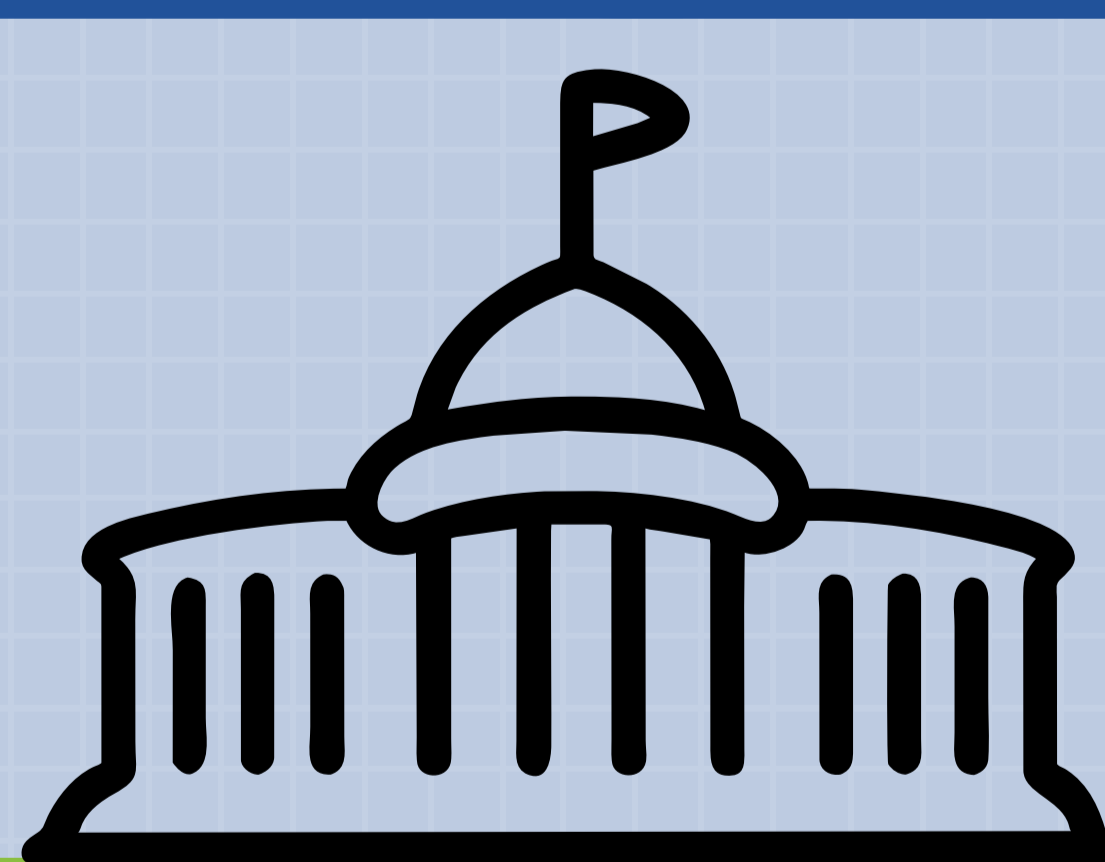
Write questions before a guest speaker or reflections after listening to the guest speakers on the topic of advocacy or policy.



Write a letter to the editor or a board advocating for change with the issue, reasons/evidence for the change, and actionable steps to make the change happen.



Develop policy briefs on topics related to special education to share with local, state, and national policy stakeholders.



## Additional Resources Available

- Book: *Advocating for the Common Good: People, Politics, Process, and Policy on Capitol Hill* by Dr. Jane West
- Book: *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* by Judith Heumann
- Film: *Crip Camp* by Nicole Newnham and James Lebrecht
- TED Policy and Advocacy webpage- <https://tedcec.org/policy-and-advocacy-portal>
- CEC Policy and Advocacy webpage - <https://exceptionalchildren.org/policy-and-advocacy>
- Advisor: Dr. Kaitlyn Brennan, Policy Advisor for TED and HECSE; [kbrennan@kbstrategies.org](mailto:kbrennan@kbstrategies.org)
- OSEP Center: The PROGRESS Center offers a number of web-based modules for students to complete, as well as instructional practice briefs and tip sheets. Modules related to advocacy include the *Introduction to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* and *IDEA and the IEP: From Compliance to PROGRESS*. <https://promotingprogress.org/>
- Online Resources: Here are some ideas about how to write a good letter to the editor:
  - [NAEYC \(early childhood\) recommendations](#)
  - [University of Kansas recommendations](#)

### Spread the Word!

Follow the Teacher Education Division of CEC page on Facebook! Prefer Twitter? Make sure to follow @TED\_CEC for updates, news, and more! Visit the CEC Legislative Action Center to send a message to your Congress members (<https://exceptionalchildren.org/takeaction>).

### Attend the Virtual Washington Update

TED members are encouraged to join Dr. Brennan to hear what's happening in DC. These informal meetings provide opportunities for TED members to hear about Dr. Brennan's activities in the halls of Congress, to ask questions, and get more involved. Visit the TED website to register.

### Sign up to be Involved

Looking for additional opportunities to get involved? Have a story to share about shortages, retention, or workforce conditions? Have a question about policymaking, the budget process, or advocacy? Share it with the Policy Committee! Complete the Google Form ([HERE](#)) to tell us all about it!