

Significant Differences Between Outreach and Advocacy

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Outreach And Advocacy Are Not Synonymous.

Through outreach we provide exposure and awareness. At a publicized event the students and their work are cherished, rewarded with certificates; their teachers are recognized, and everyone is pleased. However, such an exhibit can result in viewers thinking "what talented children" rather than "what a talented teacher to get that out of kids." To reach toward advocacy requires that we also teach the public what students have learned in the process of creating the works. In the exhibit itself, wall text should state the goals of the lesson, informing and reminding others that the works provide evidence of understanding. Viewers should realize that the works did not just happen because supplies were handed out.

Thus, as we do in our classrooms, we provide "nurture." But we must also present "challenge."

To be effective we must advocate for that which we have defined and can make explicit to others. We must use our skills at motivating others to examine and concur with the arguments we put forth for our view of what art education means in students' lives. We must use our skills at organizing and managing to help develop practical approaches to make our art programs healthy. Decision makers ultimately base decisions on the value they ascribe to a request. These decisions are based on a philosophical determination of worthiness balanced with other social, political and economic considerations.

Therefore, strategies to encourage support must be well planned. We must present our specific goals clearly in a common language to the target audience to be convinced. First, we need to decide specifically what we will advocate for, to whom and how the message will be presented, the context in which we will present it, and how we will judge whether our goal has been achieved.

Advocacy At The Local Level

As a professional art educator, which one of the following pairs of statements would you be most proud of making?

- "I do exhibits of students' work often. The quality speaks for itself."

or

- "I provide wall text that underlines the goals of each lesson through which the works were produced. Viewers have criteria by which to judge the quality of instruction rather than just enjoying works by students they assume are "talented."

- "I never know if or how people react to our shows."

or

- "We develop a 'student assessment team,' with badges and tape recorders, who interview those attending using protocol questions we have developed with the students."

- "I tried to get publicity for this event but none of the media came."
- or**
- "We develop specific events that are 'news' so that the media will cover them. We develop 'student media liaisons' who greet the media people, escort them and clearly present what they learned in doing the event."

- "In our district our program is secure; we do not need to worry."
- or**
- "We provide support for colleagues K-12 to ensure that our program is clearly worthwhile. We publicize it and develop support before it may be threatened."

- "My work as an artist is still important to me, but some people do not realize I am an artist as well as an art teacher."
- or**
- "We do district-wide shows of our art teachers' works. Sometimes it is a 'small works' show (or whatever topic we've chosen). We include artists' statements as wall text."

- "I have little money for supplies so my program is limited."
- or**
- "I develop lessons using found, scrounged and promoted materials while making a case for specific needs, finding donors if necessary. We send letters of thanks with estimated value of the donation so they can use the contribution for tax purposes."

- "Colleagues are always asking me to make scenery or something for their projects and it takes up all our class time."
- or**
- "I do school projects as a school service but not as part of the art curriculum which has specific goals and objectives to be met in the limited class time."

- "My colleagues do not appreciate what I do."
- or**
- "I am continually teaching my colleagues about what students learn in art, not just through exhibit wall text and presentations alone, but through helping them to integrate visual language into their subject areas."

**Start today to search for and enlist allies.
Make plans. Do not give up!**

Advocacy is always directed towards a defined and explicit goal and requires planning strategies and tactics for sequential and cumulative sustained efforts.