

Fun and Effective Strategies for Frontline Advocacy

Strategies are actions and activities that are the result of clearly understood goals and objectives; and they're the means by which you'll communicate your message. Every frontline advocate needs strategies for talking about the value of his or her library media center (and their value as library staff members), as well as for talking about special library issues and needs.

How are you going to inform or persuade people? What will your actions be? Who will work on your activities? Ask your A Team and others for ideas. Have fun carrying them out! Remember that everything you do should convey your message and let your audience know that your library media center is "Where School is Cool!" and remember, too, that your librarian must be comfortable with any plans you make.

Here are two dozen great ideas to get your brain fired up:

1. Start by creating a positive first impression of the library media center. It's hard to "sell" the idea of a great library if it doesn't look so great.
 - a. Make your library media center visually welcoming: bright, dusted, uncluttered, and with books and other materials neatly returned to their places. When people walk in, have them think, "I like this place!"
 - b. Be sure your library media center signage is attractive, easy to understand and gives users and visitors a sense that this is a place they can navigate.
 - c. Have ample and comfortable seating for everyone and maybe a reading nook with some lamps.
2. Designate 4-5 older computers to be used for catalog-access only so users don't have to wait to look things up. Remember, it's all about making your library media center welcoming and easy to use.
3. Design posters and banners with your library media center's message, such as "Get Rich (in knowledge) Quick in the Media Center," or "The School Library is the Heart of Learning."
4. Encourage student volunteers. They can be very effective frontline advocates as well as helping hands.
5. Ask students to design bookmarks that tell why they love the library, then laminate the bookmarks so they're permanent.
6. Make your own fliers and bookmarks using tools contained in this toolkit: Flier Templates [3.4.e.1] and Bookmark Templates [3.4.e.2]
7. Create a blog or a Facebook or Twitter page for your school library media center, and invite thoughts and comments. Need a crash course in blogging? No problem! Click on [Blogging](#) [3.4.e.3] for a handy guide.
8. Have a student write an article for the school newsletter or community paper that tells why the library media center is important to them, or that addresses a special issue that is important for the library media center to communicate. Note: Be sure you clear this with your school administration before sending anything to a community paper.
9. Ask a student or library staff member to speak at a staff meeting, telling about new materials or

software that have just arrived, or something special that is happening in the library media center.

10. How old is your library media center? Throw it a birthday party!
11. Designate a day when students and staff dress as a character from their favorite book (then count how many Harry Potters or vampires show up).
12. Put a “Media Moment” on the next PTA meeting agenda. Tell parents about the learning that goes on inside your walls. It’s a great way to meet engaged parents who might love the idea of being frontline advocates for their child’s school library media center.
13. Schedule a Library Open House after your next PTA meeting. Invite shoppers from beyond the school community, like your friends, neighbors and relatives. This is a great opportunity for people who don’t normally visit your school to see what a great library media center you have.
14. Hold a book fair in the library media center.
15. Always go “the extra mile” for teachers, students, parents and school staff. Their appreciation of your efforts will encourage their advocacy on behalf of your library media center.
16. Use a colorful bucket and some imagination to create a “wishing well” where students, staff and parents can drop in a slip of paper with something they wish your library media center could have or do.
17. Attend school sporting events other school activities. Take digital pictures and print them (black & white will save money). Then, post them in the library media center.
18. Have a bulletin board in the library with pictures of library media center staff and volunteers. Be sure to include names with the pictures.
19. Encourage displays in the library media center. Create your own, and invite others as well. People love to see their work displayed in public.
20. Design an active Library Media Center page for your school’s website. List helpful sites, such as databases students like best or a list of “banned books” (guaranteed to spark reading interest!) available in the library. Snap pictures of activities that take place in the library media center and post them on the website.
21. Encourage lots of check-out by having an extra check-in station set up for early morning, before regular school check-in and check-out. If your library aide can’t do this, use your student volunteers.
22. Invite students from a nearby high school to read with younger students in your library media center after school, or encourage your high school students to tutor younger students at a nearby elementary school. This is a win-win situation for two schools and a great opportunity for those high schoolers to earn community service credits.
23. If you have a special reading enrichment program, such as ‘Accelerated Reader,’ hang big stars around your library media center with the names of your “star” readers who have reached reading goals.
24. Say “thank you” when others come on board and help spread your message. A sincere thank you does two things: It makes the person feel good, and it inspires them to keep helping.

Now, it’s your turn to list your own strategies. Make your list long as you can! Use the space below to

get started.