

# Ten Action Steps for Frontline School Advocacy

Everyone who is a frontline staff member of your school library media center can follow the Ten Action Steps below. Don't stop there! Urge parents, teachers and administrative personnel to get on the bandwagon too.

## 1. **Involve**

Build an army of advocates – your front line! Form an advocacy team. Look for untapped resources (civic groups, local businesses, librarians who work for other kinds of libraries). Bring parents, student volunteers, teachers and administrative staff on too. Brainstorm with each group about how they can be effective advocates for your school library, then write up their ideas in an action plan. When you involve others in the process, they become invested in it and feel ownership.

## 2. **Teach**

Work with your advocacy team to create a simple, compelling and convincing message that is easy to say and deliver. Be sure your advocacy team understands reason(s) for the message. Teach them how they can deliver the message effectively and how to respond to questions about the resources that your library media center has to offer.

## 3. **Inform**

Get creative! Help your advocacy team make book marks, stickers, cards and other freebies to hand out, and give them to everyone at school. Address advocacy issues at every staff meeting. Create Q&A scenarios that will help other members of your school's staff understand the library's message and work to help spread it. Have someone on your advocacy team write a letter or short article for your community newspaper.

## 4. **Illustrate**

Design a badge or button with your library media center's message and have frontline workers and your advocacy team wear them. Have staff use screensavers and banners to highlight special messages on their computers, especially those that others can see. Keep the library website fresh and current with the library's message. Model best practices by ensuring a clean, lively, interactive, resource-rich learning environment for students.

## 5. **Encourage**

Tell staff to talk! Talk! Talk! Challenge them to deliver the library media center's message to three people every day – at the check-out desk, the grocery store, staff lounge, meetings, the post office, on a walk with their dog. Encourage them to think of and portray the library as the “happening place” in your school...the place where life-long learning and exploration is happening.

## 6. **Enlist**

Get school staff and others to help build your network by establishing and nurturing relationships with key staff in other schools.

## 7. **Listen**

Encourage school staff to listen and collect stories, especially stories about how the library and media center staff has helped someone. Save these stories and communicate them to decision makers at strategic times.

## 8. **Brainstorm**

The brain is a wonderful thing – use it! Constantly brainstorm innovative strategies for reaching different groups that the library media center serves. Take the lead and inspire other frontline staff with your energy, passion and enthusiasm. Be positive with staff about solutions and partnerships. Be creative about funding and spending.

## 9. **Welcome**

Be sure your library media center is welcoming 100% of the time. Ask yourself: Is it friendly? Clean? Well lit? Uncluttered? Comfortable? A place you can count on for help?

## 10. **Thank, thank, thank!**

It's sometimes overlooked in our multi-tasking, sound bite world but it's appreciated more for its rarity: the simple act of sincerely saying "thank you." It's more than just, "thanks," however. Take the time to thank the person for what he or she did and tell them why it matters. And here's the really cool bonus: When you acknowledge an individual's help with spreading your school library's advocacy message, you don't just make that person feel good, you inspire him or her to keep helping.