Advocate Academy 201: State & Local Advocacy-GA
Introduction

Field Organizer: Susan Reynolds

- Parent to child with ADHD and Processing Disorder
- Military Family Advocate (in a previous life)
- Adult with 2 diagnosed learning disabilities and ADHD

Georgia Parent Leader: Tiffany White

- Parent Fellow with NCLD
- Enjoys advocating and building partnerships in communities that lead to positive outcomes for students with disabilities/learning and attention issues.
- Calls Tarheel state home!
In the chat, please introduce yourself!

- Your Name
- Why You’re Here
- What You Hope to Learn
- Experiences with Advocacy
Your State:
Georgia
State Government – State Departments of Education and Legislature

Decision Makers:
Secretary of Education
Department Staff
State Representatives
Governor

Influenced By:
U.S. Department of Education
Statewide & Local
Stakeholders & Organizations
Local Government Entities
YOU
Universities - University Governing Boards

Decision Makers:
President of University
Deans

Influenced By:
U.S. Department of Education
State Dept of Education
Statewide & Local Stakeholders
& Organizations
Governor
YOU
Who's Who in the Georgia State Senate:

- Sen. Chuck Payne, Chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Youth
- Sen. Jason Anavitarte, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Youth
- Sen. Blake Tillery, Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Sen. Steve Gooch, Secretary of the Senate Appropriations Committee
Who's Who in the Georgia House of Representatives:

- Appropriations
- Education
- Health & Human Services
- Higher Education
- Industry & Labor
- Juvenile Justice
State Update

Relevant Bills in the General Assembly:

- Dyslexia Screening Bill: [HB 40](#)
- Dyslexia Bill: [SB 48](#)
- Extracurricular Access for Home schooled Students ([HB 87](#))
- Testing Reform Law ([SB 367](#))
- School Voucher Bill ([SB 387](#))
- Mandatory Kindergarten Bill ([HB 414](#))
- Additional Compensation for Teachers Certified in Special Education Bill ([HB 845](#))
- Improving Access to Special Education Programs for Foster Care Students ([HB 855](#))
- School Voucher Bill ([HB 1059](#))
According to the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute:

“The $25.9 billion state budget signed into law by Gov. Brian Kemp for the 2021 fiscal year starting July 1, 2020, represents a $2.2 billion overall decrease in state spending from last year.”

Georgia General Assembly Policy Priorities for 2021:

- COVID-19
- Stable, Fair Tax System
- Healthy Communities
- Strong Workforce
- Accessible Higher Education
- Educated Youth
- Protect the Safety Net
- A Fair Justice System
- A Welcoming Environment for Immigrants
The Policy & Advocacy Process: Turning Problems into Solutions
The Advocacy Process:

Turning Problems into Solutions:

1. Identifying the Issue
2. Research & Data
   a. Research Policy & Decision Makers
   b. Collect Data on the Issue
   c. Finding Allies & Mobilizing Others
3. Your Story
4. Communicating with Others
For Example:

**Issue:** Equitable funding across Georgia is impacting all schools.
- Why? (Understanding why will help with your advocacy process)

**Research & Data Collection:**
- Research: Special education policies and education policies for district and state.
- Who would I speak with about this issue?
  - School board member
  - School District
  - County/City Officials
Example Continued:

- How do I find others going through something similar?
  - Social Media?
  - PTA?

My Story:
- How does my story show impact on the issue?

Communication:
- I will communicate via email with my elected officials.
- I'm going to ask questions in social media groups to find other families going through similar issues.
Plan Your Strategy

Brainstorm Solutions

1. Possible Solution: ________________________________

   Action steps to address the problem: ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   Laws and rules that might be impacted: ________________________________

   ________________________________

   ________________________________

   Possible consequences: ________________________________

   ________________________________
All Advocacy Starts with YOUR Story.
Story of Self: Components of a Story

Characters

Who are the main players in your story?

Plot

What is the purpose of your story?

Challenge

What is the obstacle?

Resolution

What decision did you make?

Theme

What is the takeaway?
For Example:

My Story: Susan's Story

Players in the Story: My son, my family, and local school.

Purpose of my Story: Inform state and local officials about the use of a fictitious special education policy and how using it has discriminated against countless children.

Obstacle: Pushback from the elementary school. Officials have both denied the existence of the “policy” while using the “policy” to deny special education.
Decisions that I Made: After a contentious IEP process, which I am still in the middle of, my husband and I decided to elevate this issue. We are contacting our local elected officials, and state officials. We are also filing an OCR complaint through the US Dept of Education.

Takeaway: My family is not alone. This “policy” has been used against children in our school district for years. The “policy” is not based on any special education law. Our goal is to eliminate the use of this fictional policy and uphold the laws that already exist.
Resources and Linked Information
National Resources

- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Southeast ADA Center
- Partners in Policymaking (Online Course)
- ADA National Network
- The ARC
- The American Academy of Pediatrics
State Resources & Links

➢ Georgia Policy & Budget Institute

➢ Plan Your Advocacy Worksheet

➢ Georgia General Assembly

➢ Find Your Legislator

➢ Learning Disabilities Association of Georgia

➢ Parent to Parent of Georgia

➢ NCLD Parent Advocacy Toolkit
State Resources

➢ Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia

➢ NCLD Georgia Political Landscape Review

➢ Georgia Department of Education

➢ Georgia DOE-Special Education

➢ University System of Georgia

➢ Parent's Guide to Local Advocacy

➢ Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
Please be sure to:

- Follow us on social media:
  - Twitter: @nclldorg and @LD_Advocate
  - Facebook: facebook.com/NCLD.org/
  - Instagram: instagram.com/nclldorg/ and @nclldorg

- For general information questions: info@nclld.org

- For policy questions: policy@nclld.org
Advocate Academies 101: 

- An Introduction to IDEA and Section 504
- Assistive Technology. What is it?
- How to Prepare for an IEP Meeting
- How to Prepare for a 504 Plan Meeting
- Transition Planning
Advocate Academy 201 Series

Advocate Academies 201: In Jan/March 2021

- **State and Local Advocacy**
  (will include how to research, fact check, understand policies, and how to share your personal story)

- **Federal Advocacy**
  (will include how to research, fact check, understand policies, and how to share your personal story)
Thank you!