Advocate Academy 201:
State & Local Advocacy-TX
Introduction

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NCLD Field Organizer

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

Amy Traynor, OTR, M.A., ATP
Texas Parent Leader

- Occupational therapist & assistive technology professional
- Parenting a child with SLD & Dyslexia
- Contributing writer for a quarterly dyslexia newsletter
In the chat, please introduce yourself!

- Your Name
- Why You’re Here
- What You Hope to Learn
- Experiences with Advocacy
Your State:
Texas
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 Texas State Senate:

- **Senator Larry Taylor**, *Chair of the Senate Committee on Education*
- **Senator Eddie Lucio Jr.**, *Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Education*
- **Senator Jane Nelson**, *Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance*
- **Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa**, *Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance*
Interim List of Committee Charges:

- Appropriations
- Business and Industry
- Higher Education
- Human Services
- Juvenile Justice and Family Issues
- Public Education
- Public Health
Relevant Bills, previous or proposed:

- School Finance Bill (HB 3)
- School Mental Health Bill (HB 18)
- School Assessment Bill (HB 3906)
- School Safety Bill (SB 11)
- Dyslexia Bill (HB 3244)
- Trauma-informed Care Bill (HB 2368)
- Teacher Certification and Development Bill (HB 116)
- Report on Dyslexia and Literacy Support for People who are Incarcerated (HB 2540)
- Special Education Interventions Bill (HB 1632)
- Statute of Limitation Extension Bill (HB 1252)
The Texas State Legislature meets EVERY two years. 2021 is a legislative year!

This primer is from the TX Comptroller's Office about the TX state budget.

“At the beginning of the legislative session, the Comptroller's office issues its biennial revenue estimate (BRE), a careful estimate of the funds likely to be available from taxes and other revenue sources over the next two years.”

Texas Governor has the ability to use a "line-item veto," which allows the governor to “trim individual spending items from the bill as he or she sees fit.”
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:** Texas Education Agency not following IDEA.
- Why? (Understanding why will help with your advocacy process)

**Research & Data Collection:**
- Research: How many other families were and continue to be impacted?
- Who would I speak with about this issue?
  - School board member
  - School District
  - County/City Officials
  - State/Federal 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 impacted.
Plan Your Strategy

Understand the Problem: Research/Insights/Personal Stories
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: Amy’s Story

Players in the Story: My daughter, my family, local school, district, and state education agency (TEA)

Purpose of my Story: To inform state and local officials about continued violation of Child Find and FAPE, as well as compliance with corrective action items for TEA. (initial monitoring findings)

Obstacle: TEA not completing the corrective action items required by DOE/OSEP. (October 2020 letter)
Decisions that I Made:

- Advocated with local school for eventual identification and special education services
- Dispute Resolution
- Due Process
- Advocating/Educating Board of Education members
- Working with state advocacy groups,
- DOE/OSEP state monitoring division
**Takeaway:** My family is not alone. Texas had an illegal cap on special education which resulted in Child Find violations. Children across the state were harmed by the cap on services.

The DOE/OSER have issued multiple letters and corrective action requirements, and still compliance is lacking.

The goal is to collaborate with parents, advocacy groups, and DOE to illustrate the ongoing violations until this issue is resolved.
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

➢ Southwest ADA Center

➢ Partners in Policymaking (Online Course)

➢ ADA National Network

➢ The ARC

➢ The American Academy of Pediatrics
State Resources & Links

➢ Texas Legislative Budget Board

➢ Texas Tribune Budget Article

➢ Texas State Legislature

➢ Find Your TX Legislator

➢ Plan Your Advocacy Worksheet

➢ Community College Association of TX Trustees
State Resources

➢ Texas Education Agency

➢ Texas State Board of Education

➢ Texas Special Education

➢ List of TX Colleges & Universities

➢ NCLD Parent Advocacy Toolkit

➢ Parent's Guide to Local Advocacy
Please be sure to:

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

- For general information questions: info@nclld.org
- For policy questions: policy@nclld.org
Upcoming Advocate Academies

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 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!