

ECE Advocacy

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Advocacy: Embracing the Work You are Already Doing and Taking it Further
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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| About the Author | 4 |
| Part I. Main Body | |
| 1. Advocacy: Embracing the Work You are Already Doing and Taking it Further | 5 |
| Appendix | 31 |



Welcome to Leadership in Early Care and Education – Advocacy Module! We hope you find this text helpful, thought provoking, and affirming. We created this text to support learning in a couple of

different. This text can be used from start to finish, or as modules that you (the instructor or the student) select based on your learning outcomes.

We created this text with these principles in mind:

- Anyone can be a leader at any time. Leadership is not title specific and the field of Early Care and Education needs leaders from diverse background, experiences, and expertise.
- Leadership has an inherent set of responsibilities and leaders need to understand what those are and how to navigate them.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important topics and leadership should be grounded in them.
- Reflection is a key part of professional practice and should be encouraged and supported at all levels.
- It is important to represent a variety of contexts, individuals and scenarios.
- White space is important. How we interact with learning materials is important. We hope you will find our design effective.

Leaders in Early Childhood Education and K-12 Education exist at levels and take many different paths to leadership. Some receive formal education and while many find themselves in leadership roles because they have the most tenure. Most become leaders through a combination of education and experience – and all are woefully underprepared for what they experience.

These modules were designed to empower leaders at all levels and in any educational context. We realize that is a lofty goal and we felt it was important to aspire to ensure that all leaders could see themselves in the scenarios and strategies we share. We have been in leadership roles and know how challenging and complex leadership in education can be.

We created these modules with the understanding of the importance of several key leadership influences. We felt it was critical that the topic of leadership be intertwined with the topic of

Ethics. Leaders set the tone and provide opportunities for ethical behavior to thrive or to be silenced. We also developed this course material with an emphasis for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is essential that leaders represent the stakeholders, families, and communities they serve. It is equally important that leaders are culturally responsive and tackle topics such as bias and systemic racism.

These modules are developed to celebrate the diverse leaders in the world of education and to empower new and existing leaders. Leadership can happen any place, in any position, and at any time. We are excited to support all students; wherever they may be on the leadership journey!

This text is part of a collaborative process and we want to encourage continued collaboration from our colleagues, students, and stakeholders. If you have information that you think is important to include please contact Tammy Marino at tammy.marino@socc.edu. Let's have a conversation!

Dr. Sally Guyon, Dr. Tammy Marino, Taya Noland, and Dr. Maidie Rosengarden

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About the Author



Dr. Sally Guyon

Dr. Sally Guyon earned her Education Doctorate at Portland State University in 2019. She has been working in the field of Early Childhood Care & Education for 15 years, specializing in children age 0-47 months. She is a Lecturer at Cal Poly Pomona, is the Early Childhood Education Coordinator at Umpqua Community College and teaches at Portland State University in the Early Childhood master's program. Dr. Guyon has spoken at both national and international conferences. Her research interests are in promoting leadership in Early Childhood Care & Education, creating antiracist learning environments, and amplifying the voices of children, families, and educators in creating ECCE policy.

I.



Advocacy: Embracing the Work You
are Already Doing and Taking it

Learning Objectives

Objective 1: Describe role of an Advocate.

Objective 2: Articulate the role of Advocacy in Early Childhood Care & Education (ECE).

Objective 3: Identify the elements of culture, bias, and beliefs that need to be considered when creating an Advocacy Plan.

Objective 4: Design an Advocacy Plan for an issue or topic in ECE.

What does it mean to be an advocate?

Simply defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, an advocate is “someone who publicly supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group.” The role of an advocate in early childhood care and education is to support or promote the interests of children, families, and community.

As an early childhood care and education (ECE) professional you are in a unique and powerful position in influencing the lives of children and families. You are also in a unique and powerful position in understanding the issues that affect many families and children. You see the day-to-day struggles that families face, the barriers that keep children from succeeding to their full potential, and the missteps of policy creation that hold families back. You are an expert on these issues. Your thoughts, experiences and ideas are valuable, and your voice needs to be heard.

Don't believe me? Then watch the two following YouTube videos. The first is a TedTalk titled “Every Kid needs a Champion” given by

Rita Pierson. Ms. Pierson passed away in 2013 but her message is still just as important today.

Every Kid needs a Champion

The second is a TedxPortland talk titled “The Power of Advocacy” given by Xiomara Torres, a Multnomah County judge who shares her journey which began with just one person who believed in her and stood beside her when she was just a child.

The Power of Advocacy

These videos show the positive power that one single person can have over the life of a child or an entire group of children. You can be that person—in fact, you probably already are.

The Big A and Little a of Advocacy

What comes to mind when you hear the word Advocacy? Does it make you think about sticking your foot in doors to keep them open? Protesting in the street? Standing in a courtroom, board meeting, or other stakeholder gathering to make your case known and speak your mind? How do these scenarios make you feel? Are you palms sweaty, your heart racing, or your temperature rising?

If so, you are not alone. Many people, especially those of us working in early childhood care and education, feel uncomfortable in situations in which we put ourselves out there or even considering putting ourselves out there.

When I think about advocacy in early childhood care and education, I like to think about “little a” advocacy and “Big A” advocacy. Advocacy can take many forms. It can be the heroic big-impact actions that we see in the movies and on television. Such as participating or planning and leading a protest about an issue that you care about, meeting with policy creators, or presenting at board

meetings. The Big A's are the thoughts many people have about advocacy that can make palms sweat and hearts race.



However, there is also the equally powerful “little a” advocacy. Little a advocacy consists of the actions you choose to do for children and their families every day. Such as speaking your mind about what you know, from your experiences and/or education

in early childhood. This may be when:

- You partner with a family about the best way to support their child as they learn to use a toilet.
- When you talk to your program director or supervisor about a vegetarian option for families who do not eat meat.
- Perhaps you have questioned a policy or procedure that does not align with what you know to be culturally responsive best practice for the people who live in the community.

Each of these, along with many more, are examples of how you are already an advocate.

You may not have realized that you were an advocate in these situations. You might, even now, be thinking, “That isn’t advocacy, that is just doing my job.” Well, yes, it is part of your job. Part of your job in working with children is, in fact, the advocacy in which you are already taking action. This is true no matter what position of power you hold in your classroom, in the program where you work, or your participation in early childhood associations. You are already an advocate for children.

The fact that you are an advocate may feel uncomfortable to you, or perhaps you know you are an advocate but want to take your

work forward to the next level. Perhaps you want to do more, and maybe feel a bit guilty for not being more involved, or you might just not know where to start. Maybe you have found yourself thinking “someone should do something about this situation” and wondering if that someone should be you.

No matter where you are in the advocacy part of your leadership journey, this module was created to support and empower you in your advocacy work and to help you organize a sustainable strategy for performing actions of advocacy that fuel your passions and keep you from feeling overwhelmed or burnt out.



To take the first step, let's do a reflection about the advocacy work you are already doing. Reflection is a key component to being an effective leader. Your ability to reflect on your experiences and beliefs has a direct effect on your capability to learn from these experiences and grow.

Throughout this module, you will be called to reflect on your experiences. Plan to spend 10-15 minutes on each reflection. Clear your mind of any distractions. Read the reflection prompt through to the end. Depending on your learning style, you can write, web, draw, or do any other means of expression for your reflection.

Think about a time when you felt the need to stand up for another person or idea. What was the issue? Why was it important to you? What steps, if any, did you take to prepare yourself? How did you do it? What was the end result? How did you feel before, during, and after the situation? Would you classify this as Big A advocacy or little a advocacy?

If you did not do anything, what were the reasons at the time that made you make that decision? If faced with a similar situation today, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?

Connecting your identities in advocacy. Why your voice matters in early childhood policy creation.

For most early childhood care and education professionals, our comfort and natural tendencies may be in little a advocacy. Those things we do each and every day that make a positive change in the lives of children and families. Your role as an ECE professional gives you a unique insight to the challenges being faced by teachers, children, and families in your community that make it necessary for you to step into the Big A advocacy role. Guyon, (2019) writes:

The field of early childhood education is complex and varied. From outside of the tangled web of home based, commercial, corporate, and publicly funded early childhood education and care programs, it can seem chaotic, but it is within this complexity that we find the uniqueness of early childhood education. Not every early childhood education program works for every family in all communities. Many early childhood education programs offer unique aspects that support the children and families they serve, focusing on the ever-changing needs and rights of the community around them (p. 117).

This is why it is so important for you, no matter what your role is in the classroom or early childhood program, to see yourself as a leader and an advocate for the children and families in your community. You have relationships and an understanding of the children and families in your program that no one else can have. You know what works and you know what does not work. You have had

times in your career when decision makers have got it completely wrong, and you have had to find ways in which to work around policy and required practice that does not support the children in the classroom.

Stop for a moment and take a deep breath or two. Re-read this paragraph and let it sink into your heart. Do you believe these sentences to be true for you? If not, can you say why?

Let me share a short, yet true, story. While working at a very large early childhood program, I was attending a professional development in-service day with my colleagues. During one of the sessions, the presenter, who was a supervisor in the program, was sharing the different Boardmaker® tools that were available to support children's language development, and encouraging us to share resources if needed. During this presentation, he declared that all Boardmaker® tools should be laminated and have Velcro on the back so we could hang them where needed. In this declaration he stated, "I am just going to make an executive policy that the fuzzy side of the Velcro goes on the back of the laminated tools." Now, if you have ever worked in an early childhood care and education program, you are rolling your eyes as much as we were. Why? Because you know that felt boards, and the back of early childhood furniture are soft. Which means that for items to stick to them, they need the scratchy side of the Velcro stuck to the back.

This was not a huge issue, and after a week of having to peel off soft Velcro to re-stick scratchy Velcro someone finally spoke to him about his decision. However, it does show how policy and practice decisions can be easily made in ways that do not support the actual work we do. Nevertheless, it demonstrates why it is so important for

each person working in a classroom to have a say in the policy that informs their practice.



You may have noticed in the story above that it took a week before someone advocated on the behalf of the teachers and spoke up to the supervisor about their Velcro decision. Why do you think no one spoke up during the in-service session? What aspects might have been in play that gave someone the opportunity or the confidence to speak up to the

supervisor? In a similar situation, would you feel comfortable speaking up to your own supervisor? Why or why not? What would the conditions need to be for you to be comfortable to speak up? What do you think would be the results of your advocacy?

At this point, you may have connected to this story and are seeing the ways in which you are doing little a advocacy every day. You may also be thinking that Big A advocacy is too scary, too hard, or maybe you feel you are in a unique situation that prevents you from doing more than the tasks assigned to you in your role or job. This can be understandable, and although both Big A and little a advocacy require that you take a chance, Big A advocacy is on a much larger scale. Taking chances on a larger stage can be scary:

- What if you make someone mad?
- What if you are wrong?
- Or even worse, what if you are right and expected to take the lead?

Participating in Big A advocacy does not have to feel scary or isolating. If we rethink our ideas about what Big A advocacy really is, can be, or how it is implemented, what changes could we make collectively? How might your role in Big A advocacy look if you were involved with a group of people rather than just being on your own?

Rethinking our idea of Big A advocacy—Collective Advocacy

“It’s up to each of us to create a better world for our children.” —Dr.

Benjamin Spock

Collective advocacy allows a group of people, and the wider community with shared interests, to represent their views, preferences, and experiences. A collective voice can be more powerful than a single voice and can help policy makers, strategic planners, and service providers know what is working well, where gaps are, and how best to target resources. Being part of a collective advocacy group can help to reduce an individual’s sense of isolation when raising a difficult issue.

Collective advocacy rethinks the way advocacy can look in ECE. Instead of the traditional idea of funders, policy makers, and decision makers creating policy to be implemented into ECE programs and classrooms, Collective advocacy is a process of creating and connecting individuals and groups in the community that share common needs and concerns to learn from each other. In collective advocacy, these individuals and groups work together towards making positive long-lasting change.

Collective advocacy empowers a group of people to share their views, ideas, and experiences about shared interests. It offers opportunities for the voices and stakeholders who are often not at the table to be heard. It creates a platform in which all perspectives are considered, and a deeper sense of understanding is obtained. Collective advocacy can allow individuals who may be unsure or uncomfortable speaking up on their own a community of support in which to address an issue. In collective advocacy, leadership and decision making are shared by all.

Traditional advocacy is what most people know and see—think about figures in history who have led big change or called attention to big issues, such as Rosa Parks, Malala Yousafzai, and David Hogg. Traditional advocacy is led by a few and followed by many with

those at the top making the decisions. It can be dependent on leadership and dissolve quickly when leadership falters or changes.

Traditional Advocacy vs Collective Advocacy

“Listening requires that you quiet your own experience to make room for another’s.” –Zikiea Gardner

The table below serves as a quick reference to the differences of what might be seen as traditional advocacy and collective advocacy.

| | Traditional Advocacy | Collective Advocacy |
|-------------|--|---|
| Structure | Charismatic Leader(s) | Stakeholders are at equal levels of power. |
| Dec. Making | Executive Committee / Leadership | Decision making involves working through problems, sharing ideas, & decision making with the community. |
| Assumptions | Leaders know best. Force/power makes change | Family & community engagement will create lasting change |
| Beliefs | Working for change to a community | Working with families & community for lasting change |

Let us look at each of the elements of traditional and collective advocacy in turn:

Structure:

- Traditional advocacy structure usually has one or a few charismatic leaders at the top. They are the ones who begin the idea, set the goal, and have some sort of plan about what steps to take to get their idea out to others to make a change. They can get people fired up and their voices amplify their

cause and get their ideas out.

- In collective advocacy structures, a number of people connect over an issue or an idea. They meet with each other to create a set of goals and a plan in which to move forward. In collective advocacy structures, many people take on many different leadership roles to amplify their cause and get their ideas out.

Decision Making:

- In traditional advocacy, decisions are made by the one or few charismatic leaders at the top. It is their idea, their goals, and their plans that others follow. Other members of the advocacy project may contribute ideas or thoughts, but ultimately the end decision falls on the shoulders of the leader, or on a larger stage, with an executive committee.
- In collective advocacy, decision making is a process of understanding and working through problems, sharing ideas, and involving the community affected in the decision-making process.

Assumptions:

- With traditional advocacy, it is assumed that the leaders know what is best for the community. Their perspectives, ideas, goals, and plans lead the force for change.
- With collective advocacy, the assumption is that all voices and perspectives will be heard to create ideas, goals, and plans that engage the community and make for lasting change.

Beliefs:

- In traditional advocacy models, change is being made for a community to support the community in a beneficial way.
- In collective advocacy models, change is being made with the community to better understand the needs and desires of the community and help the community accomplish their goals.

How Traditional & Collective Advocacy can look in ECE:

To consider how traditional and collective advocacy can play out in ECE, let us take a real-life issue that comes up in most ECE programs: special diets and food allergies.

Scenario

The program in which you work provides two snacks and a lunch for the children each day as part of the tuition families pay. There is a strict policy that children cannot bring food into the classroom from home. You have 20 children in your classroom with the following allergies and/or special diets:

- 3 children who are allergic to dairy
- 2 children who are gluten free
- 1 child that is vegan
- 1 child that is vegetarian
- 1 child that is allergic to melon
- 12 children who have no food allergies or special diets

Currently, your program caters to each child's dietary needs. However, doing so means following almost 50 different diet plans and has become too expensive to maintain. The program needs to find a way in which to support all children but keep costs down. The stakeholders in this decision are parents, children, administration/

management, and teachers, each with their own ideas and wanting a voice of how to make this work. How would the decision-making process look using a traditional advocacy model?

| | Traditional Advocacy | What it looks like: |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Structure | <p>A parent whose child has special dietary needs would advocate to meet with the director.</p> <p>(For this scenario let's say the family practices a vegetarian lifestyle.)</p> | In this meeting the parent voices their beliefs about being a vegetarian and why having a vegetarian option is essential. The director listens and expresses the cost situation of the center to the parent. The director might extend an invitation to the parent to meet with the executive committee to be part of the decision making process. |
| Decision Making | The parent makes a suggestion to the executive committee, gives a strong argument in how the suggestion meets the needs of the center, and the suggestion is moved forward as the proposed change. | The suggestion is that all the food offered could be vegetarian. The parent offers to work with the committee to create well balanced vegetarian menus. The executive committee is excited about what seems like an easy solution and passes the suggestion. |
| Assumptions | It is assumed that the advocating parent's perspective is the only concern about the menu changes. | Everyone in the meeting thinks, "Yay! That was so much easier that we thought it would be!" |
| Beliefs | Decision makers believe that if other stakeholders cared, they would have said so. | "There will be no issues with the menu changes." |
| Likely Consequences | Not all of the needs of the community are heard and/or addressed. Many stakeholders are left out of the decision making process and do not feel heard. | The parents of children who are vegan, or have other special dietary needs and/or allergies are angry and frustrated with the changes. Chaos reigns. |

Now let's take a look at how this might play out using a Collective Advocacy approach.

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| | Collective Advocacy | What it looks like: |
| Structure | A group of parents, administration members, teachers, children, and other stakeholders meet to discuss the upcoming menu changes. | A small group or individual reaches out to the director about building a committee to discuss the reason for the menu changes. An invitation is sent to all stakeholders to be part of the solution process. This includes parents, teachers, administration members, children, and others. |
| Decision Making | Each group is allowed an equal opportunity to share their needs and opinions. Each is discussed, problems are addressed, and possible solutions are offered. Solutions are voted on by the group. | After much consideration and debate, it is decided that the center would offer two menus, a vegan menu and a regular menu. Parents would choose to have their child eat one menu or another. It is also decided that children with special dietary needs would be allowed to bring in substitutions for items their children could not eat (such as berries for children allergic to melon, gluten free bread for children on a gluten free diet, etc.) |
| Assumptions | The group as a whole is working towards a solution that will benefit all involved. | "Our work has just begun." |
| Beliefs | We will do our best to make this work for everyone. | "This is a good start, but needs to be continually addressed over time to make sure we are meeting the needs of our community as it changes and grows." |
| Likely Consequences | The needs of the overall community are met, although they may look different for some families than for others. | Everyone feels as if their voices were heard and that they had the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process. They know that as issues come up, they will continue to have opportunities to work with the community to address the issues and make needed changes. |

Pros & Cons of Each:

- Traditional advocacy models can start quickly, spark a fire, and draw attention around an issue. Charismatic leaders inspire others to join in and traditional advocacy models can become a nationwide focus very quickly. Having a single voice directing goals and plans makes it easy for others to join even if those goals do not always align with the larger needs of the community. Involvement in traditional advocacy models can be long or short term, people who join can move in and out of their roles easily. Traditional advocacy movements can fizzle out quickly, especially if the leaders who began the movement leave or are involved in a scandal of some type, or slowly once the initial goals are met.
- Collective advocacy models can be slower to start and take more time to get going. Collective advocacy models focus on bringing many different groups and many different perspectives that are concerned about a certain issue to the table. In collective advocacy models, each voice has an equal opportunity to be heard and is equally valued. Because of this, setting goals and plans takes time, commitment, and a willingness to understand and find common ground. Collective advocacy models focus on a series of both long-term and short-term goals that work with families and the community for long-lasting change.



Think of a time when something was done for you that did not quite meet your needs. This can be in your professional life, such as a policy that was implemented, or your personal life, such as someone doing something for you to be kind or helpful. How did their involvement help and hinder the issue? How did it make you feel? What was your

response?

Now think of a time that you were involved in the decision-making process. Again, this can be either in your professional life or your personal life. What was it like for you to be involved in the process? How did it make you feel? How did this compare and contrast to when you were not involved in the decision-making process?

"I raise my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard." —Malala Yousafzai

Think briefly about the reflection you just did in this module about the difference between when something was done for you and when you were involved in the decision making process. Which scenario created a better result? When creating an advocacy plan it is important to remember to have a focus of advocating with, rather than advocating for. Each of us carries our own thoughts, beliefs, values, and bias. These come from our experience, our education, from our culture, and the way in which we were raised. As humans, we all look for connections and can sometimes incorrectly assume that others have the same thoughts, beliefs, values, and bias as us.

Some questions for consideration are:

- How is my positionality affecting my perspective about this issue?
- How do I make sure the perspectives of all stakeholders are represented and have the opportunity to be involved in this advocacy plan?

- How can I keep my bias from silencing other voices?
- Who do I need to contact to hear other perspectives about this idea or issue?
- What am I missing?

Moving the Work You are Already Doing and Taking it Further.

“Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me.” – Fred Rogers

Most of us want to see, and be a part of, positive change in our programs and communities for a variety of reasons. Taking the first steps can be intimidating, it may be difficult to know where to start. You may be wondering:

- How do I know what is important to me?
- What if I don't know enough?
- What if people think I am a trouble-maker?
- What if I offend someone?
- What if I make it worse than it already is?

These worries are common and worthy of addressing. When you take the first steps from little a advocacy to Big A advocacy it can be helpful to identify one or two people you can rely on to help you address your concerns. This can be anyone: a co-worker, supervisor, colleague, partner, teacher, classmate, etc.

There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed in the field of ECE and it can be hard to narrow down where to hone your focus. Remember you are not alone! Many associations focused on early childhood have wonderful links and resources in which you can connect and explore different levels and types of advocacy.

ZERO TO THREE <https://www.zerotothree.org/policy-and-advocacy>

ZERO TO THREE Mission Statement: Our mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. At ZERO TO THREE, we envision a society that has the knowledge and will to support all infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential.

National Association for the Education of Young Children <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy>

NAEYC Mission Statement: NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age eight, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Let's get started!

"To take a first step forward, you have to lose your balance a little."

—3-year-old child in Reggio Emilia, Italy

There are also some wonderful tools to help you get started on your advocacy journey. For this module, we are going to use the You Have What It Takes! Zero to Three Advocacy tool. This tool was designed by ZERO TO THREE to help early childhood care & education professionals use their abilities, skills, knowledge and experience towards advocacy.

Let's walk through this tool together.

1. The first thing you will need to do is print the Advocacy Tool. You can use the link above or you can copy the pages out of this module.

Once you have copied or printed the Advocacy Tool pages, list out the ECE issues that you are interested in working as an advocate.



Take 10-15 minutes to free write about your thoughts around issues in ECE. If you have never done a free write, this is a good place to start. Simply place your pen or pencil on a piece of paper and write whatever comes to mind about this subject. Here are a couple of ideas to consider:

Think about the little a advocacy you do. What are the bigger issues connected to this work? Are you aware of any state or federal policies that are related to this in your classroom?

How would you imagine early childhood education and care at it's very best? What are the aspects you would see in classrooms, programs, or in your community? What are the barriers that might get in your way of achieving this image?

Once you have finished your free write, reread it and highlight three areas that mean the most to you, Write them down in the space provided on the Advocacy Tool Form.

1. For the next step, identify the skills that you already possess that make you a strong advocate. Consider each carefully, and rate yourself honestly. Remember that this form is to help you see where your advocacy skills can be put to use. Be honest, there are no wrong answers.
2. Now, use the Matching Skills chart to illustrate how your skills connect to different advocacy strategies. Fill in your scores on

the Matching Skills to Advocacy Skills Chart.

When you have completed this chart, see where your strongest skills align with the Advocacy Strategies. You may be surprised at what you see, but don't let that intimidate you, you might have advocacy skills you haven't even considered yet!

The first time I completed this section of the Advocacy Tool, I wrote the ratings on top of the boxes, then I looked at where I saw the highest percentages. As someone who considered themselves an introvert, I was surprised to see that many of my skills aligned with public speaking (Testifying, Organizing Meetings, Recruiting Others, etc.). I reflected on this with a few of my colleagues and discovered that they fully agreed with the Advocacy Skills that I had identified in using this tool and mentioned several times that I had done each of these things in little a advocacy ways. Both the tool and the conversations helped me to see myself a bit differently than I had before.

You are now ready for your next step.

1. Build your Advocacy Plan and identify some achievable goals! Use the Advocacy Strategies that you checked off on the Matching Skills sheet. In the first column, list three of the Advocacy Strategies in which you had a high rating.
2. Next, visit the ZERO TO THREE Policy & Advocacy page. Also take a look at the NAEYC Advocacy page. Browse through the different topics and tools. What do you see that align with the

three issues you identified at the beginning of this assignment available on this page that align with those issues? Do not get worried if you have to dig around a bit. You want to make sure that both the issue and plan align with what you feel is valuable and you are passionate about. In the second column, write down the first step you will take to work towards your advocacy strategy.

3. Identify your resources. You do not have to do this work alone! This section of the Advocacy Tool helps you to identify who you can collaborate with, how you can get connected, and how it will help you grow in your Big A advocacy work. Let's break this section down to the three columns.

- **Individual or Organization**—Who do you know is already



involved in this work? Who do you know is passionate about this issue? Consider different professional development sessions you have had around the issue, who led those sessions? Think about your break room or playground conversations: who has expressed similar hopes or frustrations? What organizations are leading this work?

- **Connecting to Resources**—How are you going to connect with the individuals and/or organizations that you have identified? For individuals, an email or phone call is a great place to start, followed by an invitation to meet either in person or virtually. Organizations often have a plethora of resources on their websites and connecting to organizations can be as simple as visiting the website and becoming a member or joining the email list.
- **How this resource can support your advocacy plan**—It is very easy to get lost in a conversation or go down the rabbit hole of information on a website and lose your focus on your original intent. Be sure to complete this third and final column of the Advocacy Tool and consider it as the beginning of your road map on your advocacy journey.

CONGRATULATIONS! You now have an Advocacy Plan!



Even with your plan, you may be still feeling a little nervous or not quite sure where to start. To learn how to begin your advocacy journey, watch the Tedx talk by Joseph R. Campbell as he describes five steps you can take to become an advocate.

Five Steps to becoming an Advocate

As you listen to his talk, write down how you might see yourself following these steps to support your own advocacy plan.

- *Lock down your motivation—what is your sense of purpose?*
- *Establish role models or become one yourself—who else has done similar work?*
- *Understand your historical context and the histories of people*

around you—how do your intentions align with these contexts?

- *Focus all those benefits, beliefs, and observations to push a way forward—are you looking at all the different perspectives? Who else do you need to connect with to learn more?*
- *Find a way forward—how can you take a step in, take a few steps back, and then step up?*

Conclusion

As an early childhood care and education professional, you are in a unique and powerful position in influencing the lives of children and families. The work you do each day supports children in becoming healthy and happy adults. The way you speak to and speak about children can change the way families understand and support their children.

You are also in a unique and powerful position in understanding the issues that affect many families and children. You see the day-to-day struggles that families face, the barriers that keep children from succeeding to their full potential, and the missteps of policy creation that hold families back. You are an expert on these issues.

Embracing your role as both a “little a” advocate and a “Big A” advocate is an important part of the work you do with children and families. Hopefully, this module has provided you with tools, support, and motivation to continue and expand on this work. You do not have to do this alone. Partner with other ECE professionals in your program or center, connect with associations that support children and families, and find ways in which you can listen to the perspectives of the children and families in your care and invite them to get involved.

Most importantly, remember that your thoughts, experiences, and ideas are valuable, and your voice needs to be heard.

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This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.