

Focus Day 2009 Overview – Talking Points

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This doc is to help a local unit leader better explain the concepts to this year's annual advocacy event in Olympia – Focus Day 2009. It is a companion piece to the FD Promo PowerPoint also available on the WSPTA website.

There are big changes this year: we'll be out in the open up front of the Capitol Dome – a noontime Rally On The Steps! It is time to be a part of a visible change, and definitely not a time to leave it up to someone else. This is your time to act with your WSPTA!

The long anticipated Dec. '08 release of the final report by the legislature's Basic Education Finance Joint Task Force (BEF) will make 2009's Focus day different. This is the year we want the media, people of influence and *everyone* to know where WSPTA stands on their mandate.

The Rally features elected officials and guest speakers. Advocacy partners for children's issues and education will join us too. Bracketing the Rally will be member activities in the Columbia Room (basement of the Capitol Dome), where attendees may meet throughout the day.

Here are more details -

1) Advocacy is the core of our PTA existence.....

Like our forbearers, if we were concerned only with what goes on with our just our kids inside our own school building, not linked together towards a collective purpose, WSPTA would not be speaking in the community on behalf of children and education, nor before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children.

So how *is* Focus Day advocacy?

Its role is to:

- visibly highlight WSPTA member's commitment to supporting change,
- visibly highlight the unity and depth of our obligation to advocacy and advocacy partnerships
- and this year in particular, to visibly convey our commitment to the mandate given to the Basic Education Finance Task Force (BEF).

Focus Day's role is to zero-in on becoming effective advocates – to display WSPTA's influence on any issue, as an organization.

Year-round 1-to-1 relationships with your legislators is vitally important - Focus Day is to show others that you are not alone, and you are fully engaged in a collective, public endeavor.

2) Changes to Focus Day's Agenda -- How Participation Will be Easier and More Effective

FD is different because this year is different – there are generational, watershed events occurring, a sea-change in our public ed history -- our organization must adapt too. The following progressions from previous events aim to increase the ease and effectiveness for members:

There is to be a Focus on 1 specific role for Focus Day: Visible advocacy in full view!

There is to be a Focus on 1 Specific Agenda: Concentrate attendance on one genuinely meaningful activity – a 12:00 to 1:00 PM the Rally On The Capitol Steps. Traditional meetings with legislators may be available, but intent is to focus legislators on the rally event -- a group event in mass is better than a mass number of 1-on-1s for this day. Risks will be taken to get a significant crowd in full view - *show up, with lots of friends!*

There is to be a Focus on 1 Message: Our emphasis this year as Washington State PTA is to support the BEF Task Force goals to redefine and fully fund Basic Education -- all WSPTA's Top 5 are about defining and funding basic education.

There is to be a Focus on PTA being 1 of many Partners: Education issues permeate nearly every cause, every constituency -- Focus Day is about demonstrating unified partnerships to fix public education for the long run.

There is to be a Focus on 1 Outcome – Influencing Legislators: In the end, it is about influencing the legislator's perceptions that there is unity and momentum behind supporting the expectation for the Basic Ed Task Force mandates of redefine and fund Basic Ed to have real, viable and durable legislation - for more legislators to cast more votes toward a WSPTA position.

3) What Does 'being effective' Mean?

- Emphasize the pivotal role members contribute to their legislator's focus around the issues.
- Share with many fellow advocates showing up to collaborate and collectively make a difference
- Influence is about visibility and media coverage - leverage the event into ongoing and multiple exposures to a much broader audience

Personally ask your legislator what they support from BEF's work.

4) How It Will be Easier to Build Up Your Community's Overall Participation?

First – all new this year -- an online RSVP form, like for Leg Assembly and Convention. Online registration enables several new capabilities - -

- build up a commitment to the event to help with planning and follow-thru,
- help ID an RSVP to their Region, Legislative District, etc
- help organize carpools or busses,
- keep registered attendees informed, involved, engaged, and supported.
- help tie-in virtual participation to CapWiz and Action Alerts
- help their RLCs and Council LCs with local and current data-

Virtual Participation:

- Participating online through CapWiz, a dead-simple online form to easily send an email to each of your legislators, is a very effective alternative to showing up in the crowd on the Capitol Steps.
- A resounding echo to the 800 folks on the legislator's Capitol doorstep would be 8,000 emails spread across every legislator's in the state inbox

Transportation to Olympia -- this will be a big part of our attendance efforts.

The biggest difference in impact: making it easier to get people from your area to Olympia:

- **Carpools and Charter Buses** - online resources and templates for area leaders to organize -- coordinating local assembly areas, contact info, rates and reservation sheets for Bus companies
- **Arriving at the Capitol** - parking and assembly info, maps, hints & tips, etc
- **Local Intra-Support:** a 'participation' support program - maybe you can't attend, but could you watch your friends' children after school so that he or she may attend?

Focus Day resources on the WSPTA Legislation web page support your year-around advocacy with your legislators and support to a more productive Focus Day in February.

And last but not least, Field Leaders will be recruited to be onsite at the rally -- they'll be visible anchors in the staging process and assist you in getting place for the Rally on the Steps; source of day-of-event info, prepare you with talking points, etc

Thank you for sharing this day, and for all you do every day for your children and communities.