



2020-2021 SWAT Draft Organizing Tool Kit

You have joined the fight for high quality education for your child and for all the children in your community. You want to organize a rally to hold elected officials and educational administrators accountable, here's how you do it.

Why you're doing it

Know what you are organizing about. Be educated and informed about the issue you are organizing around. Ensure that the participants that will be joining you know the issue and are ready to take unified action to achieve your goal.

What action will you take?

There are many actions you can take to get your point across. One of the most common and effective is to hold a rally in a strategic location at a date and time that will give you the maximum visibility you need and the access to those you intend to influence. During the current pandemic this can still be an effective way to raise your voice and draw attention to your issue as long as you take the appropriate precautions to ensure everyone is safe and your rally does not turn into a super spreader event.

Know Your Rights

There are certain things you need to know when you have made the decision to speak out and express your right to free speech.

- It's important to know what the constitution of your state and what the laws and regulations of the state and the municipality you are planning on expressing your rights in are and how they impact your right to express yourself.
- When and where do you need a permit?
- Who do you obtain a permit from in the case that you need one?
- What you can and can't say, what you can do and can't do.
- What are the limits placed on when or where you can hold a rally?

If you have questions about what your rights are in your state a useful place to get information is from the local state office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The ACLU would have information on what your rights are under the United States constitution and laws and regulations specific to the state that you live in.

Something important that all should take into consideration. Police response to your event can depend on where you are and who is in attendance. Unfortunately, police are often more respectful of white protesters than people of color. A mitigating factor to prevent any unwarranted attention from police is to establish a point of contact with them and to have an identified person from your team who is your point of contact for the police. An officer in a leadership position who may be at your event or whose name and position will be known to officers that may be in attendance can be extremely helpful. Likewise, it's important that the police in turn know who they can go to if there are any concerns or potential issues. Have the phone number of the police point of contact and make sure they have the number of your events point of contact.

Where will you have it?

It's critical to select a location that will give you visibility, allow you to make your point and ensure you are heard by the powers that be. It's important that the location is large enough to accommodate parents and children, allowing them to keep a safe physical distance to prevent the spread of COVID 19 and is outside. Good locations to hold rally's include the following:

- City or Town Hall
- Local Municipal Headquarters Buildings
- Office of the Board of Education
- Major area of commerce
- City park located in a visible well traveled location

A key element to consider, especially if you are planning on having parents with children at your event, is to know where accessible bathrooms are! If need be, arrange to have portable toilets available.

When will you have it?

The date and time of your event can be as critical as the location and should be taken into account. You want to plan it for a date/time that is the most convenient for your participants and will ensure you bring the crowd you want to attract. It's important to give parents ample time to plan to attend, at least 5 to 7 days.

Timing can also coincide with an activity that will bring many of the people you want to influence to one location, such as a school board or city council meeting. As many meetings are taking place virtually now and the attendees you are trying to influence

will not be physically gathering it's still a good idea to hold a rally close to the meeting time and can be beneficial to choose a location that is symbolic to your issue and/or the community (City Hall, Board of Education Building, etc.). Ultimately the key consideration to the date, time and location of your rally is maximum visibility and exposure for your group and the issue you are advocating for.

Establish the Program

Create an agenda for your rally. If you are addressing an educational related issue, like safely reopening schools or improving virtual learning, it's critical to have parents speak.

- Identify what the message is and who your speakers are.
- Identify at least three parents that can bring the message and speak to the importance of the issue from their own life experience.
- If there are people in your community who speak languages other than English, make sure they are represented either by a speaker or there is someone there that can translate what others are saying into their language.
- Have the agenda and your message translated into the languages spoken in your community and make them available to the parents that speak those languages.
- Send out a press release letting the media and the community know about your event, including media in the languages that are spoken in your community.

Outreach, Turning Supporters Out

A rally or event can only draw attention if you've got people there. To make an impact and make change you need to turn supporters of the issue you intend to rally about out. This establishes a presence, helps to draw attention to your cause and can bring more people into your movement. Nowadays much of the outreach is done using social media posts and sharing them strategically to create a buzz and get people interested in what you're doing. While this is extremely important do not disregard the old tried and true method of calling people on the phone. People are more likely to turn up if they feel a connection and have made a personal commitment to be there than if they give a "thumbs up" or "like" your social media post.

If you're organizing around issues that affect your child's schooling the best people to turn out are other parents from your child's school. Use your school's parent directory to reach people. Keep in mind that many people do not answer the phone if they don't recognize the number calling them. It would be helpful to compose a general text message introducing yourself and why you are calling that you can personalize when sending it to different individual parents.

Once you've established contact you can arrange a time to speak by phone to gain their support. Set up a phone/text tree with your team, assign team members a list of people to contact and follow up with when doing your outreach. Keep a list of who you've called, when you called them and what their response was. Follow up with them several times to remind them of the event and let them know why it's important for them to be there. Rallying around a cause and making a movement are about personal connections and building power. Doing your outreach is how you lay the groundwork to build your movement upon.

How it will be done, the Logistics

Under normal circumstances marches and rallies are as much about logistics, preparation and planning as they are about the event itself. During a pandemic there are additional considerations to take into account to ensure everyone is safe and the rally doesn't contribute to the spread of the COVID 19 virus.

Safety First!!

Educate yourself and the rally participants about how the COVID 19 virus spreads. Take the precautions recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and ensure all rally participants do the same. It's critical to follow these basic principles of prevention:

- Wear a mask!
- Maintain a distance of six feet between yourself and people who you don't live with
- Carry hand sanitizer and/or antibacterial wipes and use them often when in a crowd
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

More information on how to prevent the spread of COVID 19 can be found at the following link from the CDC.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

You need a team to make your rally a success! Rallies, marches and other events are as much about the people involved as they are about the issue you are addressing. The rally can be a helpful tool that can be a catalyst that not only ensures you successfully bring attention to the issue you are addressing but is a great opportunity to build the team that will propel your advocacy efforts to achieve your goal. Assign roles and responsibilities and establish a set time to follow up with one another to make sure things are getting done and to troubleshoot any issues that come up ahead of time.

Below is an example of a team structure you can use to plan and conduct your rally.

- Lead Organizers (the conductor):
 - Best if it's one person. Everyone involved needs to know who this person is. They are the hub in the center of the wheel, the person that others report to. Depending on the size of your event this could be someone that speaks at the rally but it would be helpful if not.
 - Liaison to local government/school district/etc...
 - Check on permit requirements and attain them if needed.
 - Manages the agenda and speakers at the rally.

- Media Liaison:
 - Identify a focal point that speaks to the press. You should not have a free for all as far as messaging is concerned. This is where many events lose their way. The media can help your cause or hurt it. As much as possible you need to control the messaging coming from your event. Having an identified Media Liaison that everybody knows is key.

- Social Media Coordinator:
 - In this day and age of virtual everything, your event didn't happen if it's not on social media. It's extremely important to have someone manage this before, during and after your event. Social media is likely the way most people will know about your event, are following it and are promoting it. You need to have your social media game tight! This can be the difference between starting a movement and having a one-off event that flames out.

- Head Monitor:
 - Point person in charge of ensuring the safety and directing the flow of the event.
 - Key task is keeping everybody focused on why they are there and minimizing outside interference. In addition to controlling the messaging you need to know who is with your group and who isn't. Don't let people that are not part of your event cause a disruption or distract from your message.
 - Point of contact with law enforcement if needed.

- Monitors:

- Report to the Head Monitor, the worker bees of the event.
 - Set-up and clean-up crew.
 - Maintain a good attitude and a welcoming demeanor.
 - Responsible for keeping the flow, keeping people focused, eyes on the prize, minimizing distractions.
 - Keeping people physically distanced, ensuring masks are on and hand sanitizer and extra masks are available.
- Participants (the symphony)
 - The most important part of the event! They bring the energy and the power that fuels the message.
 - They need to understand what sheet of music you are playing from. Make sure people know the message and know their part!

Additional steps to take and considerations to ensuring a safe and successful rally:

- As a group
 - Prepare flyers ahead of time and have them ready to hand out. People will want to know what your rally is about. A flyer with concise messaging that contains the appropriate links and images can make the difference in gaining a new supporter.
 - You will often encounter counter-protesters or people just trying to cause a disruption. It's best not to engage and to prepare your participants not to either. They will not be convinced and could be there specifically to cause stress and detract from your message. Focus on galvanizing the people that do care, highlight your issue and present an opportunity for people to feel empowered to make their voices heard.
 - Social Media, Social Media, Social Media!!! It is highly critical to document your event. Task someone do it on Facebook Live or Instagram so others can feel they are part of the event. Share pictures and anecdotes about the event far and wide. In this day and age of virtual communication don't forget your community on social media that may not be able to join. Give them the opportunity to be inspired and feel part of the movement!
- As an individual
 - Carry your ID.
 - Carry a backpack to keep extra clothes, food and supplies
 - Dress appropriately.
 - Comfortable shoes and socks that you can walk in and stand on for long periods.

- Dress for the weather and be ready in case it changes. It's good to dress in layers.
- Warm clothes for cold weather, umbrellas and raincoats for rain, a hat and sunscreen during the daytime. Covering your head and taking care of your skin is so important when you are planning on being out for an extended period. Don't let sunburn or sunstroke ruin your event!
- Bring water and snacks that will give you energy (bananas, granola bars, tacos!). Remember you have to carry it, so don't bring too much!
- Rallies are about establishing relationships, building power and getting more people involved with the work. Talk to people, get to know them, make friends, grow your movement.
- Make sure your phone and other devices are fully charged and ready to go. If you can bring an external battery. If your phone battery gets low, turn it off and save power in case of an emergency.
- Bring cash in small bills. This will be useful if you need to get something hot to drink, some more water, additional snacks, use the restroom or make a phone call. In some cases, the only available restroom will be at a store if you make a purchase, be ready for that.

Hopefully the information and guidance provided in this tool kit can help you have a successful event and to achieve your goals in advocating for what's best for your children. Good luck!!