Notes from the MLS Listening Tour Stop on Advocacy at the Massachusetts School Library Association Conference in Hyannis on May 7, 2017

Link to Listening Tour-Advocacy libguide: http://guides.masslibsystem.org/advocacy_resources

How does advocacy benefit your library?

- Keeps things interesting and exciting!
- Advocacy also allows us to create a bigger pool of people who might speak up for us when needed
- Access to more resources (increased budget)
- It creates job security as well as a well supported student body and staff who know they can rely on me and on the resources I can provide/ be
- Spreads the word about what we do.
- Advocacy informs people about what you do and how it affects them. It gives people a way to connect our services to their lives
- Involvement, keeps me up to date with current issues, networking
- Keeps the library relevant within the school community
- Positive associations
- It informs those not currently involved
- Students, teachers, and parents FINALLY understand what it is I do!
- Advocacy is more effective when people you've helped start advocating for your causes
- Created a “parents only” section that both parents and students should look at to advocate
- A busy library sells itself with energy and use

What are your obstacles to advocacy?

- Time
- Time. Involvement. Recruiting others to be involved.
- Teachers are so busy that I can enumerate all the ways the library [helps them]
- Lack of community engagement
- Aversion to self promotion
- Learning your school culture....What's the right way to advocate in your specific school/district
- Time, preconceived ideas about what a school library is and does (lack of knowledge @ libraries)
- Few understand what we do and how many ways we can effect student learning.
- The principal's ear, teacher support, freedom to promote, school philosophy that taps into what we do, what they think we do all day
- Not knowing when and where the important decisions are being made.
- Austerity budgets
- Feeling like you’re advocating into a vacuum to people who already know what’s going on
- Advocacy needs to fit into the category of what you’re already doing
- Need to create connections AND marketing
- “Advocacy guilt” - feel guilty for tooting our own horn (promoting & advocating for school libraries, librarians, and services)
- Understanding the difference between advocacy and lobbying
- We need to advocate to let our audience know what we do.
- The best advocacy comes from those who use our services, not from ourselves.
- Having a platform. “If you don’t have a platform, create one.”
- MSLA has helped by giving out awards!
- It’s helpful to present a “state of the library” to school committee.
- Strategies to speak to teachers - teachers are so busy and overwhelmed - how to reach them?
- Hard for high school librarian to have connections with parents - put tab on school library website - for parents/guardians only - publish a weekly update (what’s going on in library)

**How can we communicate with you about advocacy needs?**
- Email, get togethers in various places around the state, advocacy tab on your site; who to reach
- Via email
- Email -- call to action with specific issues and information
- Twitter hashtags
- Social media of all sorts
- Through msla
- Facebook
- “ALA think tank” for MA school librarians
- “5 calls” from MLS
- Who’s “we”? MLS, MLA
- Put out a clear set of criteria about what you need from us - ex: “we need 100 libraries to chip in x # $.” Also, give us options besides $.

**What tool(s) do you need to respond to our call for action?**
- 5calls.org
- App 5 calls
- Talking points
- Provide sample text for contacting lawmakers
- Talking points, who to contact (address, phone #, etc)
● Sample text
● Glossy infographics
● Social events plus advocacy! - at pubs or with popcorns - w/5 calls
● Public and school libraries come together
● Professional Learning Committees (PLCs) present an opportunity for collaborative advocacy. (W. Mass PLC coming up without agenda)

Other discussion notes
● Advocating beyond the classroom = created a “parents only” section that both parents and students should look at
● Advocacy is about making connections not just promotion
● Try to be more adaptable: reach out electronically - get copies of lesson plans, create pathfinders based on lesson plans
● Ground up advocacy - leadership - systemic higher advocacy
● Most important - data driven practice, interface with state, go to municipalities, “here’s what we are achieving, here’s the risk”
● Attendees interested to learn more about Google Analytics
● I advocate to teachers and principals
● Could we set up groups of local communities to network among professionals?