

Advocating for Multilingual Learners of English in Uncertain Times

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Introductions

1. My name is...
2. My role as an educator is...
3. What does advocacy mean to me?



Goals of session

1. To discuss the meanings of advocacy
2. To share ways of advocating at the state and national/international levels
3. To invite you to participate in advocacy events with (WI)TESOL or where you are

Setting the context

A quote by Samantha Power is displayed over a dark, atmospheric photograph of a rocky landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of dark blues and greys, with a small, bright orange sun low on the horizon. The foreground is filled with dark, jagged rocks and boulders. The quote is written in a white, sans-serif font.

All advocacy is, at
its core, an
exercise in
empathy.

Samantha Power

BrainyQuote

WITESOL's history of
advocacy/brief summary of
recent efforts



Setting the context

Recent challenges/changes to the landscape

State Advocacy

Advocacy Book Club
Legislative Days
Local Action



Advocacy Book Club



A 2024
Advocacy Book
Club meeting,
featuring
authors and
2025 WITESOL
keynote
speakers
Michelle
Benegas and
Natalia
Benjamin

Advocacy Book Club: Purpose

Learn about Wisconsin's advocacy
landscape and opportunities to engage
Connect with likeminded educators and
community members



Advocacy Book Club: How It Works

Anyone can join (WITESOL member or not)!

We read 2 books each year, selected by book club members.

Meet once a month, read 1-3 chapters per session

Schedule for monthly meetings:

- 15 minutes of advocacy updates

- 1 hour of book discussion





State Legislative Days: Purpose

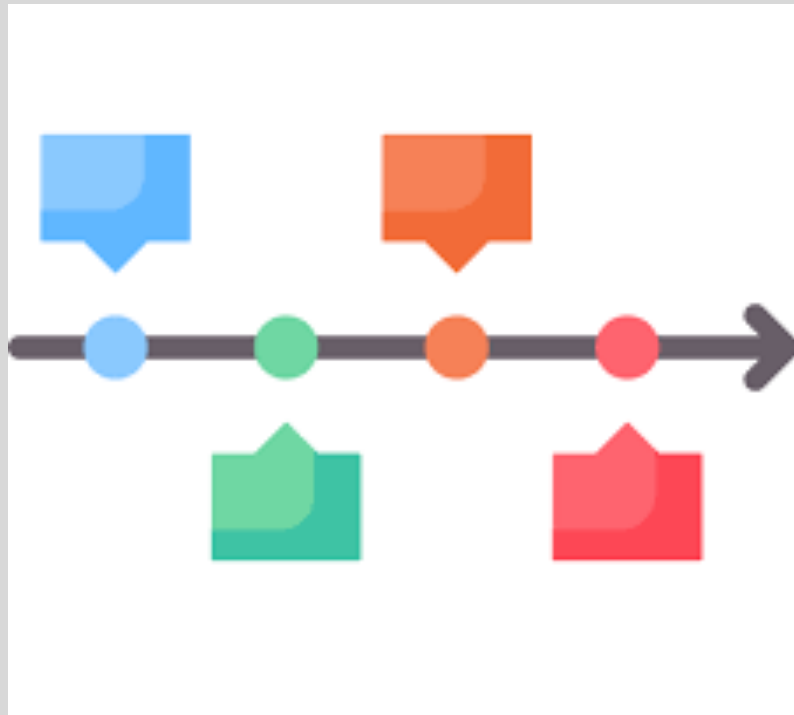
- Events where organizations bring constituents to meet with legislators
 - Emphasize the importance of policy issues
 - Build relationships with legislators
 - Provide information to legislators to help them make decisions
- Advocacy is more effective with a concentrated effort

Legislative Days: How It Works

- Anyone can participate!
- Participants (with ample support from WITESOL) contact representatives
 - A contact template will be provided
 - You can pair up with another participant
 - You speak with the legislators (with a template and support) about chosen issues



Legislative Days: Timeline



- **Now** (Nov. 2025): Decide on topic and asks; establish bipartisan rationale for asks, recruit advocates
- **Dec. 2025:** Create documents, continue recruitment
- **Jan. 2026:** Begin contacting legislators to set meetings
- **Feb. 2-4, 2026:** Meet with legislators
- **Feb.-Mar. 2026:** Follow up with legislators, maintain relationships

Local Action

Advocacy can happen at every level!

Keep an eye on county board, city council, school board, and neighborhood association meetings in your area

Stay up to date on local candidates

Write op-eds for your newspapers

Keep your students and peers informed about the local landscape



Advocacy Best Practices

Tailor your asks to your audience

Be concise

Share expertise without using jargon

For public employees (and many private ones):

- Only engage outside of work hours

- Avoid using any state resources

- This includes email addresses, work devices, work spaces



Why is advocating for changes in legislation important?

1. Because no piece of legislation is perfect.
2. Because MLs are generally not considered very much when drafting legislation.
3. Because educational legislation often increases teachers' already heavy testing burden with additional testing and monitoring requirements.



(Inter)National Advocacy

Advocacy Action Days
Advocacy Action Center

**Advancing Excellence in
English Language Teaching**



TESOL25
Virtual Convention | 21 - 22 NOVEMBER

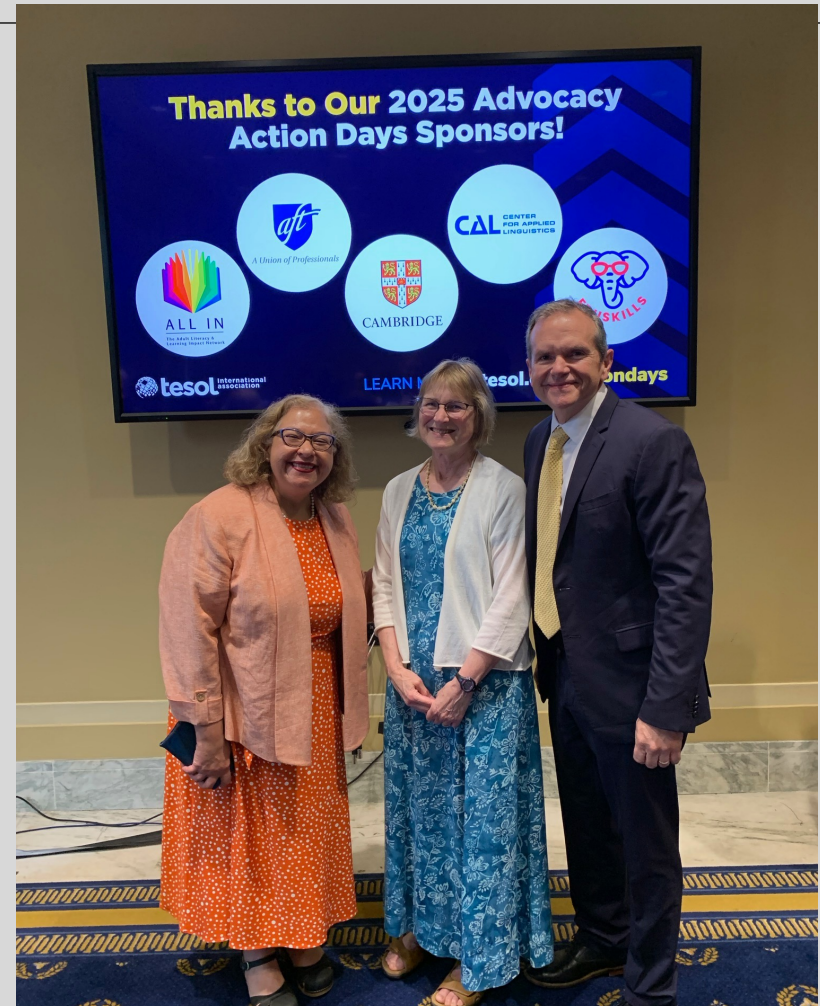


Advocacy Action Days

- At the heart of national level advocacy
- Takes place twice a year, virtually (February) and in person (June)
- Participants come from all over the country.

Advocacy Action Days

- Participants are prepared to meet with their legislators/staffers.
- Participants advocate for USDE appropriations and bills that support MLEs, their families, and teachers.
- Sharing local stories that tell how funding impacts your community are encouraged!





Advocacy Action Center

- Serves as a clearinghouse for advocacy efforts by TESOL
- Provides updates and action alerts for all
 - <https://www.tesol.org/advocacy/advocacy-action-center/>
 - Stay current on issues (go to website)
 - Sign up for action alerts



Advocacy Action Center

- Interactive site
<https://www.tesol.org/advocacy/advocacy-action-center/>
- When you respond, you help your members of Congress understand the importance of federal funding for English learners and all of education!

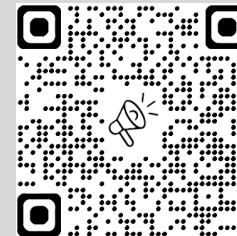
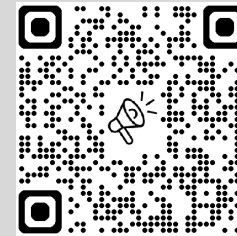
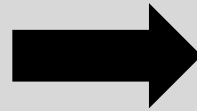
How can you advocate?

- Whether we like it or not, education is political.
- Become informed!
 - Stay current with policy and legislative developments related to education and MLs (e.g., WASB, Legislative Update Blog, <https://wasb.org/legislative-update/>, your local school board, newspaper, DPI)
- Become involved!
 - Talk to your colleagues and ask questions.
 - Stay active in professional organizations (e.g., WITESOL, WIABE, WAFLT, WIDA)
 - Participate in Legislative Days (Feb. 2-4, 2026).
 - Join WITESOL Advocacy Book Club: <https://www.witesol.com/advocacy/advocacy-book-club/>
 - Contact your state legislators with concerns. <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>



Steps you can take right now:

- Bookmark the TESOL Advocacy Center website
 - Sign up for Action Alerts
- Stop by the Advocacy Table to sign up for events
- Find your representatives and write to them to support MLEs:
<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/My-Elected-Officials>



Discussion Questions

- What concerns you in Wisconsin?
- What advocacy efforts are you currently engaged in?
- What are the advocacy spaces where you think your own individual efforts would be most fruitful?
- What is one advocacy step you can commit to doing?



Other Questions





Thank you!

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