

Creating healthy schools: Tips & tricks for using grassroots organizing to protect kids from fast food marketing

A. Step 1: Plan a Strategic Campaign

The first step toward ending fast food marketing in your school or community is to plan a strategic campaign. To do so, you'll need to determine your **goal**, powermap your **decision-maker**, and choose your **strategy** and **tactics**.

1. Determine your *Goal*.

Components of a good goal:

- Measurable action (What do you want to accomplish?)
- Decision-maker (Who can make your goal happen?)
- Timeframe (By when do you want to accomplish your goal?)

2. Powermap your *Decision-Maker*

Identify the factors that influence whether your decision-maker will make the decision that you need to accomplish your goal. Ask yourself many questions, and then try to find the answers. For example, if your goal is to change fast food zoning laws in your town, and your decision-maker is an elected official, you may want to answer questions about her such as: Who helped to elect her and who donated to her campaign? What are her previous and current professions? What is her voting record? What committees is she on? What issues does she care about most? What personal connections, hobbies, and passions does she have?

Examples of goals:

- I want the principal of my child's school to prohibit in-school advertising by the beginning of next school year.
- I want my son's second-grade teacher to stop using Oreo math books by next semester.
- I want the PTA to pass a policy that school fundraisers cannot be sponsored by junk food brands by January 1.



3. Choose your *Strategy*:

Your theory for how you will win. 3 main types of strategies: champion, cover, and pressure.

	Decision-maker agrees with you	Decision-maker disagrees with you
Public (the people whose opinions your decision-maker cares about) agrees with you	CHAMPION: Your decision-maker agrees with you, and your job is to encourage her to act. You need to convince her that making the decision that you want will be a positive move for her.	PRESSURE: As it stands, it's not in your decision-maker's self-interest to give you what you want. You need to demonstrate that there will be consequences if she ignores you (e.g. negative publicity, a loss of support from her constituencies, etc.).
Public disagrees with you	COVER: Your decision-maker most likely agrees with you on a personal level, but doesn't feel supported by her constituents to make the decision that you want. You need to show her that supporting your campaign will not be a negative move for her.	Re-consider campaign & decision-maker: If your decision-maker and the public both disagree, it's going to be very difficult to change the situation. Re-think your campaign and decision-maker - see if there's anyone else who also has the authority to make or substantially influence the decision you want, on whom you could focus first.

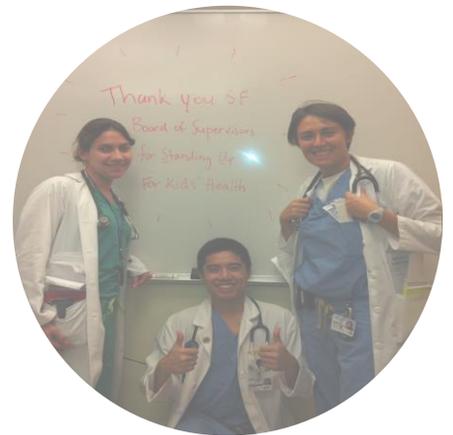
“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure... We are all meant to shine, as children do... As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

-Marianne Williamson

4. Develop your *Tactics*

The specific actions you'll use to accomplish your goal. Choose your tactics based on your strategy:

- **Champion:** Use tactics that build your relationship with your decision-maker and give her positive reinforcement. E.g.: Write letters to the editor showing your support for her; launch a petition with positive language (“We support you in...”)
- **Cover:** Use tactics that make your decision-maker feel supported by her constituents. E.g. Create a letter stating your goal and recruit a broad-based coalition to sign it (e.g. if your decision-maker is the school principal, you could ask parents, teachers, health professionals, local business owners, and students to sign)
- **Pressure:** Use tactics that make your decision-maker feel like there will be consequences, such as a loss of support, if she doesn't make the decision that you want. E.g. Flood her office with phone calls; host a rally



CASE STUDY: **SAN FRANCISCO HEALTHY MEALS INCENTIVE ORDINANCE**

In the fall of 2010, San Francisco passed a groundbreaking ordinance that set nutritional standards for restaurant food accompanied by toys or other youth-focused incentive items. The model ordinance, created by Public Health Law & Policy and pioneered by Santa Clara County, helps localities wanting to take a regulatory stand against unhealthy fast food by encouraging restaurants to develop healthier children's meals. The impact of these ordinances has reverberated well beyond the Bay Area, spurring significant changes in industry practice.

You can read the full case study, with details on the goals, strategies, and tactics that generated this success, on page 26-27 in Corporate Accountability International's report [Slowing Down Fast Food: A Policy Guide for Healthier Kids & Families](#).



B. Step 2: Craft your Campaign Story

After you've made a strategic campaign plan by determining your goal, decision-maker, strategy, and tactics, it's time to figure out how you're going to describe your campaign in a succinct and compelling way. Creating this narrative is essential for a successful campaign because in order for people to want to help you, they need to understand both why your issue is important and why their help will make a difference.

You can tailor your general campaign story to use in many different circumstances, e.g.: in phone calls and emails to recruit volunteers, in press releases and letters to the editor, in a letter or petition that you deliver to your decision-maker, in a statement that you use to educate a group, etc.

One of the best methods we've found for writing a compelling campaign story is called IPSUAP. It's an acronym that means "intro, problem, solution, urgency, action, personal story." You write 1-2 sentences for each section, and then put them together in that order, which provides a succinct and logical explanation of how and why to help your cause.

- **Intro-** *Who are you? Why are you talking to me? Do you represent a group, are you a parent, are you a concerned citizen, etc.?*
- **Problem-** *What's wrong - what's the problem and why does it matter? How does this problem influence your audience's own values and goals?*
- **Solution-** *Why is it feasible that we can fix this problem? How does it affect the audience?*
- **Urgency-** *Why should I act now?*
- **Action-** *What can I do and why will it make a difference? What tangible, specific action can I do and why will it matter?*
- **Personal story:** *Why do you care about this issue? How does your story connect with the person to whom you're talking/writing?*

Example: Statement to read aloud at a PTA meeting. By [KY Healthy Kids](#)

Intro

My name is Casey Hinds and I am a parent. Nearly every day there is a new study showing the harmful effects of sugar sweetened beverages like soda. It's been linked to diabetes, tooth decay, obesity and recently to aggression, attention and social withdrawal problems in children. Many of us want to reduce our children's risk and do not give them soda and sugar sweetened beverages. We appreciate that soda is not sold to students during the day and feel uncomfortable with bringing it into the school for events like Fall Festival. When we see children with soda at the Fall Festival we feel bad about the role of the PTA in making that happen. Part of volunteering is to feel good about how we are helping children, but the sugary drinks take away from that. Some PTAs at other schools have instituted a Water First policy, which means they vote to serve water instead of sugar sweetened drinks. I have seen it work well at other schools and think it is one of the simplest and most effective ways we can support the health of our students. If current trends continue, 1 in 3 U.S. adults will have diabetes by 2050. We can change this if we act now. I propose we adopt a Water First policy that says our PTA will serve water instead of soda and sugar sweetened beverages. With a family history of diabetes, it's important that I teach my children healthy habits to avoid this disease. Please help me by approving this policy.

Problem

Solution

Urgency

Action

Personal story

“We all feel that we’re not enough to make a difference...but how would [we] live if [we] were exactly what’s needed to heal the world?”

-Rachel Naomi Remen

C. Step 3: Recruit a team to help you

Once you’ve created your strategic plan and crafted a compelling campaign narrative, the next step is to recruit people to help you do those tactics. The key to a successful grassroots campaign is *people!*

Principles of Recruitment:

- Always be recruiting: If you’re not growing, you’re shrinking.
- Rule of Halves: Half of the people who say yes to helping with an event will actually follow-through and do it. Do more recruiting than you think you need to reach your ultimate goal.
 - For example: If you want 5 people to show up for your first campaign meeting, you need 10 people to say yes. To get 10 people to say yes, you need to ask 20 people.
- You can recruit people through phone calls, emails, Facebook, posters, giving group announcements, etc. - but phone calls or asking in person is often the most effective way, as it lets you have a personal connection with the person you’re asking.
- Listen: Learn what would motivate the people you’d like to recruit to get involved with your campaign. (Are they passionate about your cause? Looking to make new friends? Eager to learn organizing skills?). Listening carefully not only helps you to recruit them to come initially, it helps you to figure out what role they can play that will be meaningful and enjoyable for them.
- Recruit everyone! Friends, family, parents in your school, and even strangers! If recruiting strangers, first get their contact information (e.g. by asking them to sign a petition for your cause), then follow-up with a phone call and an ask (e.g. Introduce yourself, ask why they signed the petition and what they’re interested in, explain your campaign goal, and then ask them to come to your first campaign meeting).



Recruit everywhere!

Sample script for recruiting wherever you may encounter parents, such as on the playground:

Intro: Hey, how's it going? My name is Rebecca and my son David is in third grade. I'm starting a campaign to stop our school from using classroom materials sponsored by fast food corporations.

Problem: I'm really concerned about this because using branded materials is a type of marketing, and fast food marketing targeted towards children is a major driver of the epidemic of diet-related disease. I think that marketing in schools is one of the worst kinds, because parents can't protect kids from it. And when schools use classroom materials with fast food logos, kids generally can't tell that it's advertising, which is even more dangerous. Here at our school, a lot of classrooms use these materials--David brought home an Oreo-sponsored math book and a McDonald's-branded report card that rewarded good academic achievement with a Happy Meal. Have your kids showed you anything similar?

Solution: It doesn't have to be this way. I've heard of several other schools that have set a precedent and done the same, such as in St. Paul, Minnesota, where the school board passed a policy prohibiting all school-based marketing of junk food brands! Here in our school, Principal Sawyer has the authority to make that decision and ban fast food sponsored classroom materials. If we show a groundswell of support from concerned parents like us, Principal Sawyer will do the right thing.

Urgency: It's May now, and teachers start ordering books for next year in July, so we need to act now to make these changes before the start of the next school year!

Action: The best way you can support this effort is to come to our campaign action meeting on Wednesday night at 8p.m. at my house. We'll make a great plan for how to show Principal Sawyer the support she needs to make this decision and it'll also be a fun way to meet like-minded parents who care about protecting our kids' health.

Personal story: There's nothing more important to me than making sure my kids grow up healthy, and seeing David's Oreo book and McDonald's report card really upsets me. But I know that if we come together, we can make a big impact.

Ask: Will you please come to our campaign action meeting?