

## Advocacy: How can your PSA Help?

With Education budgets being finalized, and many districts facing uncertainty about staffing levels for next year, along with fears about erosion of our services through increased student ratios and contracting out, the question becomes: “What can I do to advocate for school counselling in my district?” The key word in that sentence is “I”. Advocacy is strongest when it happens at an individual and local level. That is why the BCSCA has created a listserv for our members to be in touch, share concerns and network regarding strategies and resources in this ongoing battle we face. From a provincial standpoint, we can provide you with support and direction, continue to advocate provincially for our role, and create and maintain relationships and links with partner organizations to raise our profile. Locally, here are some things your LSA can do to further advocate for counselling:

- ❑ Form an LSA. This is the single most powerful thing you can do have a voice as school counsellors. Form an executive and appoint someone to be the contact person. Give this name to Angela Slomnicki, our local contacts member at large provincial executive member. Her address is on the back of this newsletter. This information will allow us to contact your LSA when issues arise which might impact directly on you. It also allows for better communication with all our members, and provides us with access to local issues so we can be informed as a provincial executive.
- ❑ Hold regular social/pro d events with your LSA. There are funds available through Angela to have a speaker come in and provide a context for meeting, connecting and supporting one another.
- ❑ Connect with your Local Teacher’s Association. Become involved. Work on a committee; go as a delegate to the BCTF AGM; attend your district AGM’s. It is at this level that policy is created, motions are made and brought to the AGM and dialogue with your School Board Trustees occur. The more voices we have as advocates for School Counselling, the greater the chance that issues affecting us will be decided in our favour.
- ❑ Make a presentation through your LSA or Teacher’s Association regarding School Counselling at a School Board Meeting. Angela Slomnicki will be updating and revising our “Advocacy Package” which contains a template for this to be released as an addition to our Counsellor’s Manual. If you did not attend the 2002 Conference and wish to purchase a manual, they are available through BCTF lesson aids.
- ❑ Write letters to the editor and raise awareness regarding the loss of counselling services in your district and the impacts cuts have had on our work. Raise the issue with parents to let them know how it is impacting their child.
- ❑ Share stories about your advocacy activities with your colleagues by writing an article for the BCSCA newsletter or posting information on the list serv.

Your executive is available for support, information about resources and to help coordinate issues which affect us provincially. While there is no specific funding for outreach locally this year, we are still hoping to create some opportunities to dialogue with you on a regional level. Stay tuned for more details!

