

Huntington Union Council PTA's Student Advocacy Program

PTA is the oldest and largest child advocacy association in America. The goal of HUC PTA's Student Advocacy Program is to promote the collaboration and engagement of high school students and policymakers in decisions affecting K-12 education. It is designed to develop informed student advocates who realize their civic responsibility and ability to effect change. This program will give students "real world" advocacy experience in the public sector.

The Student Advocacy Program is an educational experience. The program is open to sophomores, juniors and seniors at HBUHSD schools. Participation will be determined by an application and selection process for all participating high schools relying on PTA Advocacy representatives, school staff and administration to complete the process. Students must submit an application with a short essay on their experiences as well as why they want to advocate on behalf of education. Each applicant will then be selected by a staff/pta panel. In an effort to keep our numbers manageable, a maximum of 8 students from each high school will be selected. The selection process will be completed by the end of January.

Beginning in February, selected students will attend a series of 4 evening meetings with various panels. They will be given information on education, including history, the legislative process, advocacy, funding and biographies of the people they will meet when advocating, e.g., school board members, HBUHSD, HBCSD, FVSD superintendents, and local and state representatives. The four sessions will be held on Wednesday evenings, February 17 & 21 and 28 and March 7, from 6:30-8 pm with a light dinner (e.g., pizza) served. There will be a panel of administrators, HBUHSD board members, principals & teachers at each meeting. The topics will cover education finance in CA, academic issues (incl. STEM/STEAM, Common Core & collaborative learning, career/technical education), student wellness (incl. anxiety, Zero Period & sleep, extracurriculars, & multi-tiered support services). A moderator will facilitate the panel discussion and questions from the students. The fourth session will be dedicated to advocacy and how to be an advocate. Panel speakers may include school superintendents, school board members, HBUHSD principals, counselors, athletic directors, and teachers. The goal of the evening meetings is to educate students on issues affecting education locally and to give them a chance to discuss issues facing their respective schools and formulate their areas of interest to speak about at advocacy opportunities.

Each participant will also be asked to meet independently with a teacher, an administrator or a counselor to discuss issues that are affecting their individual school site. They will then share these issues with the entire student group and discuss them as a whole. We will encourage each student to select a few specific issues that are of interest to him or her and prepare to raise these issues in an advocacy setting (see below). Students will be well-informed and prepared to advocate on behalf of education.

Each students will then attend one or more advocacy forums, e.g., a private meeting with a local state representative, a school site council meeting, or an LCAP community input meeting, where they will advocate on behalf of issues that affect their education. The students will then be asked to write a short report of that experience and present an oral report at a PTA meeting at their school site and to the participating panelists at a final session of the Student Advocacy Program in late Spring.