

Legislative Action Team

Educate. Engage. Advocate.

Build understanding. Build relationships. Take action.

EDUCATE

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

Today's Conversation

A quick roadmap for how STMA built and sustains its Legislative Action Team.

1

Why We Created a LAT

One voice is not enough. Build an informed, empowered team.

2

How We Built It

Structure, mission, goals, and norms.

3

What the LAT Does

Educate. Engage. Advocate.

4

What We've Learned

Momentum, challenges, partnerships, and things to consider.

Educate • Engage • Advocate

Why We Created a LAT

We needed advocacy to be informed, personal, and broader than one voice.

Local Impact

State decisions directly impact students, staff, programs, families, and taxpayers.

Complex Funding

Minnesota school finance is complex, and people need to understand why it matters locally.

Collective Voice

One voice is not enough. We wanted an informed, empowered team advocating together for kids.

The goal: build an informed, empowered community that advocates together for students.

LAT Structure

STMA uses a steering team and general membership model.

Steering Team

- Core group meets regularly to plan activities focused on education, engagement, and advocacy.
- School board member on team.
- Students, staff, parents, senior citizens, and community members.
- Members take on roles including communication, community engagement, education, student liaison, social media, etc.

LAT General Membership

- Keeps informed by receiving emails.
- Visits the Capitol and attends forums and events.
- Emails or calls legislators and the Governor.
- Assists with action team activities.

Structure matters: clear roles and multiple ways to participate.

Mission & Charge

The LAT's work is grounded in an adopted purpose statement.

Mission

- Actively advocate for legislation that supports high-quality education for all Minnesota students with a focus on issues specific to the STMA School District.
- Inform our community of legislative activities that pertain to public education.

Charge

- **Advocate** locally and at the Capitol while building relationships with legislators and state leaders.
- **Educate** and **engage** stakeholders in the district's priorities and legislative process to build support and advocacy capacity for STMA Schools.

LAT Goals: Educate, Engage, Advocate

A practical action cycle: understand, participate, and act.

Educate

Understand

- Educate the community on school funding and how it impacts children, district legislative priorities, and the legislative process.

Engage

Participate

- Engage stakeholders on legislative bills and how they personally impact children, staff, families, and the community.

Advocate

Act

- Advocate with legislators by sharing individual personal stories on how school funding and legislation impacts our children and staff.

Norms We Review Regularly

The norms protect the culture when advocacy gets political or tense.

Be kind.

**Use respectful
dialogue.**

**Presume
positive
intentions.**

**Practice direct
communication.**

**Be mindful of
time.**

- Review norms, mission, and charge regularly—not just once at the beginning of the year.
- Use the norms to redirect the conversation when politics or frustration pull the team off mission.

From Understanding to Action

So, What Does the LAT Do?

Educate. Engage. Advocate.

Turn understanding into relationships—and relationships into action.

EDUCATE

Build
Understanding

ENGAGE

Build Relationships
and a Coalition

ADVOCATE

Take Action

Educate

Translate school funding and legislative decisions into personal and local impact.

Purpose

- Make school finance and policy understandable.
- Connect legislation to students, classrooms, staff, programs, and taxpayers.
- Build awareness before an urgent advocacy ask.

Communication Channels

- Family and staff newsletters.
- Community newsletters.
- District website and social media platforms.
- Join Our Team recruitment messaging.

Community Presentations

- Present to city councils, county commissioners, and civic organizations.
- Connect with PTOs, parent advisory teams, union partners, and community groups.
- Share information and tools so others can advocate.

Education creates the foundation for meaningful engagement and advocacy.

Amplify Voices: Build the Network

Create a broader network of informed advocates who can carry the message forward.

District & Regional Partners

- Invite nearby and regional districts to advocacy events.
- Share tools, ideas, and effective practices.
- Partner with professional organizations such as MASA, AMSD, MSBA, MASSP, MESPA, and SAFF.

Local & Civic Leaders

- Build relationships with unions, city councils, mayors, county commissioners, PTOs, and community organizations.
- Help civic and community leaders understand local school funding impact.

Advocacy Capacity

- Hosted Legislative Advocacy 101.
- Hosted Saturday “How to Host a Legislative Forum” session.
- Provide information, talking points, and tools so partners can advocate.

One district can raise an issue. Many voices can amplify it.

Engage & Advocate

Turn informed relationships into action for students, staff, and schools.

Legislative Forums

- Center the conversation on students, district impact, and solutions.
- Students, staff, and parents share personal stories.
- Invite local, state, and federal elected officials, civic leaders, neighboring districts, staff, families, and community.

Capitol & Association Events

- Participate in advocacy days and professional association events, including MSBA, MASA, SAFF, MAPP, MASSP, and MESPA.
- Bring students, staff, and parents to share personal stories.
- Help LAT members see the process firsthand and build confidence.

Ongoing Relationships

- Meet with legislators locally and at the Capitol.
- Invite elected officials into schools to see learning in action.
- Stay connected outside the session; relationships matter.
- Follow up with information, stories, and appreciation.

Engagement is not a one-time event—it is a year-round relationship strategy.

Keep Momentum + Celebrate Successes + Navigate Challenges

Advocacy is powerful—and strong leadership helps keep it focused and effective.

Keep Momentum Alive

- Recruit through social media, staff/family newsletter, community newsletter, in-person invitations.
- Communicate impact and recognize participation.
- Show how their advocacy made a difference—create and celebrate wins.

Successes

- Broader community understanding of school funding and why we face challenges.
- Created a strong team who can advocate beyond district leadership.
- Stronger relationships with legislators, partners, and neighboring districts.

Challenges

- Politics can enter the room even when the goal is student-centered advocacy.
- Legislators from across the aisle may direct partisan comments at one another.
- Some members may want to move beyond the adopted priorities; return to mission, norms, and school board priorities.

Considerations for Building a Strong LAT

- **Empower the Team:** Advocacy is not about one person or one voice. It is about an informed, empowered team working together with students at the center.
- **Amplify Voice:** Build a team that includes voices beyond administration. Include KIDS!
- **Create Structure:** Define the structure so people have clear roles and multiple ways to participate.
- **Build Shared Ownership:** Collaboratively adopt and regularly review the mission, charge, goals, and norms.
- **Build Partnerships:** Partner with unions, city councils, county commissioners, PTOs, community groups, neighboring districts, and professional organizations.
- **Educate Year-Round:** Do not wait for a legislative crisis or the session to build understanding.
- **Invest in Relationships:** Build and sustain relationships with local legislators and state and federal education leaders.
- **Stay Grounded:** Remain anchored in respectful dialogue, factual information, school board priorities, and student impact.

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THANK YOU

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