**Tips for Becoming an Effective Advocate:**

**How to Educate School Boards**

**1. Identify your local school board members**. Review facts about them including involvement in education and with other community organizations and issues of personal importance. Determine which members may support your advocacy goals and those that may be opposed. Furthermore, educate yourself on the jurisdiction the school board has over local policy and budget decisions as this can vary across districts and states.

**2.** **Send your school board members an email to let them know you need their support**. Offer to be a resource on improving school and student outcomes (e.g. the connection between school climate, safety, and learning). Be sure to use your personal email address. When relevant, provide a written summary of research, data, and other information. NASP has a variety of fact sheets, position papers, brochures, and other information available online.

**3.** **Sign up to speak at your school board meetings**. You may team with teachers, parents, other colleagues and school-employed mental health providers (e.g. school counselors and school social workers). This is particularly effective during budget deliberations. Make a brief outline of the points you wish to convey. Be concise and present your points in order of importance. Be prepared to relate at least one quick real-life example illustrating the point you wish to make. To supplement research and data, personal stories tend to have a lasting impact on influential policy makers, such as school board members.

**4.** **Invite school board members, in collaboration with other school personnel, to visit your school(s).** During the visit, be sure to show examples of how your school promotes positive school climate. Share any data you have and point out specific ways that the school could further improve student learning and ask the school board for support.

**5.** **Remember to keep track of your “connections.”** Keep a record of any contacts that you, your family, or friends may have with school board members. These “connections” help personalize the relationship and will help the elected official have a greater interest in your work.