



Thank you for stepping up to lead a local district rally! There are several members of NJ21United that have political, union, and community organizing experience, and even training from national organizations. This toolkit is designed to collect the best advice, experience, and practices they can offer.

Running a local rally is not actually that difficult, but many times, people are intimidated by the idea. This toolkit contains most everything you'll need to make your rally a success. It's a lot of work, but as people who plan things like this all the time, it's also very rewarding.

Being an organizer is a noble endeavor with a glorious history. Barack Obama was once a community organizer in Chicago. Cesar Chavez changed the lives of farmworkers forever as an organizer. The Civil Rights movement was sustained and built through organizing and mobilizing. You're part of that tradition now.

This document is meant to be shared. Distribute it widely to anyone who could use it.

If you need assistance with anything found in this toolkit, do not hesitate to reach out to NJ21United. We're here to help. You can find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/nj21united>, on Twitter or Instagram @nj21united, or via email at nj21united@gmail.com.

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Section 1: Pre-Rally Preparations



1. Contact your local association and ask for help

Welcome to organizing! Stepping up to plan this rally is empowering and exciting, and thank you for doing it. By taking the initiative, you might find that others are inspired, and self-nominate to help you. If that doesn't happen, or even if it does, a good first step is to reach out to your local association's Legislative Action Committee, which should be keeping up with these events. If you don't know who the Legislative Action Committee is, reach out to your local association president.

Tell them you think your local should be holding a rally. Ask them if they're planning to hold one. If they aren't, let them know you are willing to plan the rally. They should be thrilled to hear that, and many times, they'll offer to support you.

If they don't offer to support you, don't be deterred. You are going to be told "No" a lot as an organizer. All it means is you have to try another way and keep working. In this case, it means you need to find your own help. This means a planning committee.

2. Form a planning committee

Regardless of whether you get help from your Legislative Action Team/Committee or president, it's a good idea to create a small committee of people to oversee the planning. This can be a lot of work, depending on how big the action gets, and besides, having people to help makes it

more enjoyable. Start by asking friends and colleagues you're close to, who you know might help you.

This brings us to one of the most important concepts in organizing: the difference between Notifying and Asking.

a. Notifying Vs. Asking

Notifying means letting people know something is happening. Notifying is posting a flyer, posting something on social media, sending an email to people you know telling them about an event.

Asking is exactly that: asking someone to do something. You notify someone when you send them an email with a flyer about your rally. You ask someone when you directly make a request that they attend the event.

When you're putting together a planning committee for the rally, you'll need to **ask** people to be part of it. This is best done in person, or via a personal phone call. You can use email or social media, but the best way to do this is in person. An email is easy to ignore. A Facebook post is easy to scroll by. It's hard to say no to the person in front of you. Use that to your advantage.

b. Designate someone as the rally "MC"

As the organizer, you will probably be too busy during the rally to actually lead the proceedings. Consider picking someone to fill that role, so you are freed up to do other things while the rally is going on.

3. Choose a date, time, and location

This part is fairly self-explanatory. Pick a location that's public. One of the purposes of this rally is to educate the public, and you can't do that if no one sees you. A bridge or a street corner is a location NJ21United has made use of in our actions. Any busy street or intersection is potentially a location for your action.

4. Do I need a permit?

Maybe.

This is actually a difficult question to answer with a blanket statement. It will depend on your town and its particular laws, and what exactly you're planning on doing. Call your local city hall and ask. If you're just going to stand on a street corner with signs, and you're not going to block traffic or make a sidewalk impassable, it's doubtful you need to get a permit.

Some police departments may try to arrest protestors if they are just standing on a sidewalk, because they consider it loitering. You can solve this problem by continuing to move. March around with your signs, and you cannot be loitering.

5. Create a rally agenda

Self explanatory, but create an agenda for the rally so you've planned it out ahead of time and identified the things that you'll need. Once you know what you'll need, make a list and pick people from the planning committee to secure those items. You'll probably need signs, handouts about Path To Progress and identifying your next action, (maybe) a way to project sound, (maybe) snacks and drinks.

Another excellent idea when making an agenda is to decide on a color for everyone to wear. Most teacher actions are Red for Ed, but you can use your judgement if you want to wear red. It might make sense to wear another color if it represents your district.

6. Rally Inventory List

Rallies are all unique, but they tend to have similar needs. Here's a suggested list of items you'll want to consider having for the event. It's not exhaustive, so add to it as you see fit.

- Water
- Snacks (soft pretzels can be easily bought in bulk from local stores)
- Signs
- Extra poster board for signs
- Markers to make signs
- Sign in sheet
- Pens
- Clipboards (the organizer's best friend)
- A bullhorn or something else to amplify sound (see below)
- Duct tape (to hang signs)
- Talking points - give something to people to take home with them to spread the message after the event

7. Sound amplification options

If you want to make your voice heard, you might want some kind of sound amplification. Whether this is possible, necessary, or a good idea will depend on your specific ideas for the rally.

However, keep in mind that we're teachers. Most every school has a track team, and most track coaches will have a bullhorn. Ask if you can borrow it.

Failing that, you're a teacher. Use your teacher voice and people will hear you.

8. Get the word out

This is maybe the most important part of organizing your rally. If people don't know it exists, they can't possibly attend.

Social media can be incredibly useful here. Facebook events make things difficult because you cannot collect contact information from people who sign up for your rally. It's easy for them to click "Interested" or even "Going" and then forget all about it. Getting their contact info is vital if you want to make sure people show up that day.

Here are some better options than Facebook events:

- Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com>. Click "Create Event" once you're there, and follow the prompts. You'll get a shareable link you can post on social media and send through emails.
- Google Forms: <https://docs.google.com/forms> If you're good with Google Docs, you can create a custom Google Form to create a signup page which collects people's contact info.

Facebook Events

Even using one of those two services above, you'll want to make a public Facebook event and share it on your Wall, because that's a powerful way to notify people about the event. Post the event in groups that you're a part of, and ask people who can't attend to share the event. When you make a Facebook event, there's a way to put your Eventbrite link in there for people to sign up.

As with the rest of this toolkit, you can always reach out to NJ21United for help.

nj21united@gmail.com

Flyers

You'll also want to make a flyer and distribute it to people, particularly in your own school building or local association. Consider making a QR Code with <https://www.the-qr-code-generator.com> that takes people to your Eventbrite link or Google Signup Form. QR codes are those funny-looking black and white squares that people can scan with their smartphones. Like this:



9. Social Media Strategy

a. Hashtags

For your social media savvy people, you'll want to create a hashtag for people to use to promote your rally and when they're posting things during and after the rally. Use the same hashtag. What you use is up to you, but make sure you decide what it is and stick to it. Consider also including these: #RedForEd #NJ21United

Put these on signs to be used at the rally.

b. Don't rely just on social media

Social media is an incredible tool for organizing and mobilizing, but not everyone uses it, not everyone uses the same platform or app, and people are inundated with social media in general.

Don't forget about tried and true methods of getting people to your event: namely, go ask them. Remember the difference between notifying and asking.

Talk to co-workers and colleagues, and directly ask them to attend the rally.

10. Contact the press

Press coverage ensures the message of your rally gets out to a wider audience. It also helps elected officials to know this was a serious event.

Reach out to local press well in advance of your event. Don't forget small, independent news services in your local area. Some of these might be web-only, with no print version of their paper. Don't forget them.

If you are contacting a larger paper or even TV station, and don't know who to contact, go to their website and look for a link for "Contacts," "Submit A Tip," "Newsroom," "Editors," or anything like that. You can usually find email addresses and phone numbers there. You're helping a reporter do their job, so don't be afraid of reaching out to them.

a. Write a press release

Print journalists in particular will usually ask for a press release. Even if they don't, you can increase your chances of getting coverage if you have already written a press release about your event. Instructions for how to do this are all over online, but here's one resource:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-to-write-a-press-release-with-examples/>

Important: Ask your local association to approve the press release and let it be sent out under their name. Include the local association logo, like letterhead. If they say no, don't send it out

from the local. Send it out under your own name, or just “Concerned Educators of [Insert District/Town]”

11. Consider reaching out to parents and other local organizations

Many parents love their local teachers. Many of them hate the idea of laws that makes teaching a less attractive job. Consider reaching out to parents who might be friendly and amenable to the cause. Encourage them to attend the rally and get the word out about it. Kids make great photo ops for journalists, so tell the parents to bring their kids to the rally if they can.

a. Invite local elected officials, *especially* if they do not support teachers

Invite local elected officials to come to your rally and say a few words to the crowd. Do this **EVEN IF YOU KNOW THEY WON'T COME**. If they've already said they support Path To Progress, invite them anyway. When they refuse or ignore you, make a huge deal about it on social media. Tell everyone at the rally that you asked the official to come and they refused. Consider making some kind of cardboard cutout of the official who turned you down, and bring that to the rally. Have the crowd address their concerns to the cutout, and make sure you video record it. Publicly shame the legislator who did not attend.

b. Decide the next step

One action leads to the next action. A rally that fails to build capacity for the next action is a failure. Rallies are great tools to excite, inspire, and galvanize people to mobilize against Path To Progress, but you have to fight the perception that going to a rally is enough.

Plan another action that will occur in the weeks or months after your rally. Promote this action at your rally and sign people up to participate in it. Here's some ideas:

- Postcards to legislators
- Bridge takeovers
- Another rally, somewhere else and bigger
- Legislator office visit
- Door to door canvassing
- Phone banking

Section 2: The Day of the Rally



1. Send an email with all pertinent information to everyone who signed up

The morning of the rally, send an email to everyone who signed up reminding them of all the pertinent information they need. Remind them of the time and location of the event. Advise them as to parking, if necessary. Remind them of the hashtags and remind them to bring their signs.

2. CRUCIAL STEP: Confirm attendance

Remember the difference between notifying and asking? Remember how we said it was crucial that you get everyone's contact information? This is why.

The day of the event, you need to contact everyone who signed up and confirm their attendance. There is no other action you can take that will lower your flake rate (the percentage of people who flake out, or in other words, signed up to attend but then don't show up). There will always be people who back out, but you can reduce that if you call them and talk to them.

Yes, this is annoying, and yes, you shouldn't have to do this, and yes, you're busy and you don't have time to do this. Do it anyway.

One thing you learn as an organizer is that you can either complain about the way people are and watch them not show up, or you can do the work to make sure they do show up. But those are the only choices. It's best to accept that this is necessary, and get it done.

If you have a big event going on, enlist your planning committee to help you with this step.

3. CRUCIAL STEP: Reach back out to the press to confirm

If you spoke to reporters or TV people previously, reach back out to them on the day of the rally to confirm they're coming. This is for exactly the same reason that you confirm your attendees.

If you haven't talked to press, call them anyway on the day of the rally and invite them. Do this early in the morning to increase the chances they'll come out.

4. Rally Time

The rally is often the easiest part of this process. Here's some general advice:

a. Be the first to arrive, along with your "MC"

If at all possible, get there early. Something will go wrong, so give yourself time to deal with it.

b. Livestream the festivities

Use Facebook's "Live" feature to broadcast the event to people who couldn't make it. This is a great way to boost exposure.

c. Get contact info from everyone who attends

One of the cardinal rules of organizing is: if there's no sign in sheet, it didn't happen. Collect everyone's info that you don't already have so you have a network of contacts for your next action. These are people who showed initiative and engagement. Those are the people you want to know.

d. Follow your agenda, but be flexible

As already stated, things will go wrong. Adapt as needed. There will always be a few people who come up and tell you that you should have done something differently. Don't let them get you down. Every organizer goes through this.

e. If press is covering, FIND THEM and talk to them

If press showed up to your event, attach yourself to their hip. They'll want quotes from you. Make sure you get your message out.

f. As the rally concludes, remind everyone of the next step

Remember: rallies are great, but they are a means to an end. They inspire people, mobilize people, show people that they're not alone in their fears and their convictions. But ultimately, they don't matter unless they build capacity for the next action.

So you need to make sure you know what the next action is. To repeat the list of ideas from above:

1. Postcards to legislators
2. Bridge takeovers
3. Another rally, somewhere else and bigger
4. Legislator office visit
5. Door to door canvassing against Path To Progress

6. Phone banking against Path To Progress

Section 3: After the Rally



1. Send an email to thank everyone for attending and remind them of the next action

It helps to keep people engaged if you send them an email thanking them for attending, and reminding them of the next action. Include an event link, like you used for the rally, and keep the momentum going.

2. Thank your planning committee

Organizing is sometimes thankless work. Make sure you don't transmit that to your planning committee. Say thank you to them. Maybe even put together a little get-together to celebrate your success.

3. Follow up with press

a. Thank the reporter who covered your rally

If a reporter covered your event, make sure you contact them to thank them. They are human, and will appreciate it, even if they don't acknowledge it. If you build a relationship with a reporter, they are more likely to cover your future activities.

b. Share any coverage on social media

If there was a newspaper article about the rally, share it everywhere. Send it out in an email to your supporters. If there was TV coverage, you can probably find a clip on the TV station's website. Share that out as well. Press entities like clicks and eyeballs, and if you provide some more of those, you'll increase your chances of being covered next time.

4. Rest and reflect, then get right back to work

By this point, you're probably exhausted. Take some time to rest and reflect on the rally. You probably made some mistakes. That's ok; everyone does. Learn from your experience and do better next time. Take some time for yourself to rest and recuperate. No one sustains maximum engagement indefinitely. Don't burn yourself out by not taking care of yourself. It's ok to rest.

Once you've rested, get back in the fight. You're an organizer now, and we can't get enough of those.