



Electing Local Champions for Early Learning in Concord, NH

Beginning with our work in 2015, SCAN has become the recognized leader on early childhood education issues in the Granite State. Our success has stemmed from a four-pronged approach of grassroots mobilization, media engagement, political endorsements, and legislative lobbying. It's a model that has earned praise in New Hampshire, but more importantly our tactics are achieving results for kids.

The decision of whether to provide full-day kindergarten for residents of the Concord School District has been the subject of intense debate for more than a decade. Over this period of time, the surrounding districts of Laconia, Merrimack, Bow, and Hopkinton, all moved forward to expand their kindergarten programs to a full-day. During the Concord school board debate in early 2017, SCAN mobilized supporters to call their school board members, testify at public hearings, and write letters to the editor in support of expanding kindergarten. The strong showing of support made a statement to the school board that voters want full-day kindergarten. But in a final vote on March 29, 2017, Concord's school board members unanimously determined that the district would not offer full-day kindergarten for all students in the fall of 2017.



SCAN viewed the 2017 election, during which three board members who voted against full-day kindergarten would be up for re-election, as an opportunity to elevate the importance of full-day K and elect new champions for early learning.

Board Candidate Recruitment

SCAN researched and identified community leaders who were passionate about early learning to become first-time candidates for two school board seats. SCAN circulated a questionnaire among all candidates for school board asking them about their support for expanding and funding full-day kindergarten and exploring investments in other early learning programs such as pre-K.

Based on these questionnaires, SCAN endorsed first-time candidates Liza Poinier (District B) and Chuck Crush (District C). SCAN's work recruiting and supporting candidates caused incumbents to change their position. Despite the change of heart from some incumbents who had opposed full-day kindergarten in the past and now said they would support it, SCAN remained committed to electing the challengers, who were motivated to get involved because of their dedication to the cause of early childhood education. SCAN's involvement clearly helped elevate the importance of early learning and full-day kindergarten during the race.

“SCAN's endorsement and support during this campaign had a significant impact. As a first-time candidate, it was a comfort to have people who know what they were doing—and who delivered!”

- Liza Poinier, District B

“I was honored to receive SCAN's endorsement, because their mission to ensure that all children in Concord receive high-quality early education aligned with mine. It was vital to have SCAN highlighting the importance of full-day kindergarten and my strong support for that issue on the ground through direct voter contact and letters in the paper.”

- Chuck Crush, District C





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Voter Mobilization

SCAN called upon our network of experienced local Volunteer Leaders, Student Ambassadors, and active supporters. These activists served as the basis for a motivated, organized, and highly effective voter contact effort consisting of both volunteer and paid outreach to voters in the form of phone calls and door knocking. We had a total of 21 active volunteers who knocked on 1,500 doors. We also generated nearly 2,500 calls to voters and had 13 letters to the editor published in the Concord Monitor. In races where the winners received less than 1,000 votes, these efforts made a huge difference.

The Result

Despite the fact that Liza Poinier and Chuck Crush were first-time candidates, their disciplined focus on early learning policy, coupled with SCAN's robust election tactics allowed their message to break through. On November 7, 2017, both Liza Poinier and Chuck Crush were elected to the Concord School Board.



SCAN is now actively working with Poinier and Crush and other school board members to become champions for early learning and assess steps to hold re-elected board members accountable in ensuring that all kids and families in Concord have access to full-day kindergarten.

SCAN's advocacy and political mobilization model in New Hampshire, seizing upon our four tactical pillars to increase the ranks of elected leaders who support early learning, is one that SCAN will continue to use in legislatures and at the local level in states across the country.

By the Numbers

21 volunteers

1,500 doors knocked

2,490 calls made to likely voters in Districts B and C*

13 pieces published in *The Concord Monitor*



*873 by volunteers and 1,617 paid calls

