



## Choosing an Issue WS A Statewide Legislative Agenda

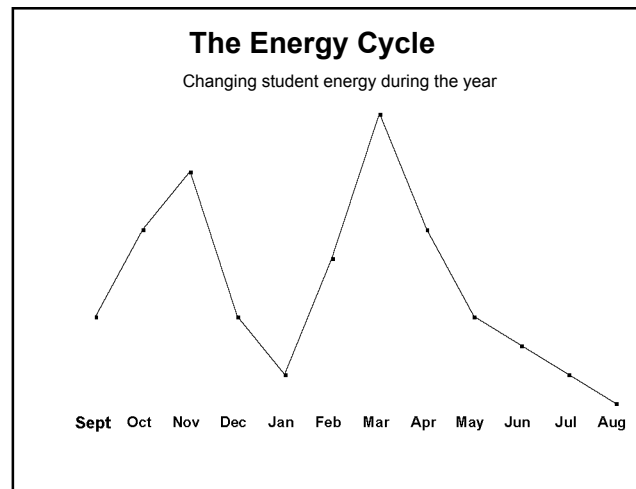
1. **Win Real Victories That Improve People's Lives.**
2. **Make People Aware Of Their Own Power.**
3. **Alter The Relations Of Power By Building Permanent and Strong Organizations.**

THE FIRST THREE ARE THE THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES  
OF DIRECT ACTION ORGANIZING.

4. **It Must Be Worthwhile.** Students have to feel that the victory is really worth the effort that it takes to win.
5. **It Must Be Winnable.**
6. **Widely Felt.** Many people agree and feel strongly enough to at least sign a petition although they may not do more. This is what we mean when we say majority issue.
7. **Deeply Felt.** Enough people feel it deeply enough to come to events, and join in the work of the campaign and get the people among whom it is widely felt to sign the petition. Sometimes there needs to be a period of education or consciousness raising before an issue campaign can be won. Often we tie consciousness raising into an attempt to win a specific solution, so that we have a way to measure just how far consciousness has been raised (e.g. last year we only got 10 votes, this year we got 25.)
8. **Easy To Understand.** The test - you can explain the issue in one paragraph on a leaflet. You can explain it quickly to someone who has very little interest. Even the most complex issue can be made easy to understand if you fully understand it yourself.
9. **Have A Clear Target.**
  - More than one is better
  - A target or decision maker is the person who can give you what you want. A target is always a person. It is never an institution such as a board, an elected body, etc. We personalize the target because individual people are the weakest link in the power of any institution. Individuals have their own ambitions, dislikes, rivalries, and misdeeds that are separate from those of the institution of which they are a part. The problems we face don't just happen. They happen because other people with power are making decisions about our lives. We need to find those people, name them, and make them accountable to us. That is why we don't say, "The State Legislators." We name them, and we look for individual ways of getting at them. They are strongest when we treat them as a united faceless group.
10. **A Clear and Realistic Time Frame.** An issue campaign is like a novel, it has a beginning, middle and end. Part of what makes an issue more winnable is that the critical times in the campaign come when you can mobilize the most strength. If the trustees' vote is coming in mid July, it may not be the best time for your organization.
  - Explain that every issue campaign has two time frames internal and external.
    - o The internal time frame is made up of events the scheduling of which you can determine and set for times in the year when you can get the most participation. Meetings, organizational building, and tactics are all parts of an internal time frame,
    - o The external time frame is made up of the events that others schedule. It includes public hearings, elections, and votes by legislative bodies, etc. Sometimes it is crucial to get these dates changed to allow your group to participate or respond.

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- o In addition to internal and external timelines, organizations need to consider the campus Energy Cycle. (Put the energy cycle graph on the board.) It maps out when students will put the most effort into issue organizing, and it is somewhat different for every campus, community and constituency. Unlike the other two timelines, this relates more to people's personal lives as they are influenced by local situations. Holidays, community events, and times of the year that are known to be particularly busy or relaxed are all a part of the Energy Cycle. Organizers should be aware of the Energy Cycles of their constituents.



- 11. Non-Divisive.** Look down the road a year or so and consider who you may need to be working with as allies. Look for unifying issues. Avoid issues that divide people who should be working together. Keep in mind the principle of the majority strategy.
  - Give an example from your own experience of an issue that divided people who should have been working together
- 12. Builds leadership.**
  - Most issues build leadership if you frame them right and create visible roles for many people. An issue that must be won in court often fails to build leadership because the lawyer becomes the leader and other people learn to depend on lawyers. An issue that results in getting one person added to an administration controlled committee who is then co-opted, doesn't build leadership. Setting up a Student Watchdog Panel to observe that same committee would build leadership, and accomplish as much as having one student on the committee.
- 13. Sets You Up For The Next Issue.** Issue campaigns are like playing pool, each shot has to set you up for the next one.
- 14. Has A Pocketbook Angle:** Issues that help individual people financially often have great impact.
- 15. Able To Raise Money for It:** A good reality check on any issue is whether people will give money to help win it.
- 16. Consistent With Your Vision and Values.** For example, yes we do want more money for education, but do we want it to come from private corporations that can then control what we are taught?