

# 10 STEPS

## TO LAUNCH A LIFEWISE



## STEP 6: BOARD OF EDUCATION SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

### Instructions

The scripts below are examples of what community members have written and presented to their district Board of Education members. The opportunity to present to board members often takes place during the “public participation” time at the monthly Board of Education meeting. During a meeting you will likely be limited from 3-5 minutes. You may need to reach out to the district office prior to the board meeting in order to sign up to speak. In some districts you must be a resident to speak.

Read through the samples below and **copy and paste relevant sections into a separate document to be edited and personalized**. After making changes, forward it to your Program Coach for final edits and any updated information regarding LifeWise programs.

### Example 1 (Asking the Board to Adopt a Policy)

- ◆ My name is [NAME]. My husband and I have 5 children, 3 of which attend [ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NAME]. I’m here tonight along with several other parents and community members to reinforce why the adoption of this released time religious instruction policy is important to us.
- ◆ Since our presentation around LifeWise Academy, interest from members within our community has continued to grow in support for parents to have the option of moral instruction.
- ◆ There are now more than [COMMUNITY INTEREST LIST #] community members who have signed our area interest list. These individuals include parents, grandparents, church members and business leaders, those who work, worship and live within our area who desire to come alongside our school staff, to help support and reinforce character education through a released time Bible education opportunity.
- ◆ [NOTE: IF APPLICABLE, INCLUDE DETAILS ON PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS.] During the September board meeting, we addressed a number of questions and potential concerns and this evening we would like to provide additional information regarding how released time works and, more specifically, how the LifeWise program operates. If additional questions exist, I would like to make myself available to answer those questions.
- ◆ [NOTE: CONSIDER INCLUDING ANY LOCAL INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER LIFEWISE PROGRAMS – ASK YOUR PROGRAM COACH FOR DETAILS.] Recently, [NEARBY DISTRICT] began offering LifeWise classes to students in their intermediate school. This is the third program to launch in [NEARBY] County and this is in addition to over 130 other schools in the state and around the country currently being served.
- ◆ I thought it might be helpful to know that surrounding schools including [NEARBY SCHOOLS] have LifeWise programs with more than [NUMBER] students enrolled and attending weekly LifeWise classes.
- ◆ My husband and I love [DISTRICT], and we would love the addition of having a Bible-based option for our kids to instill a strong understanding of why it is important to place a high value on their

beliefs and character. In addition to church and the teaching they receive in our home, we value having multiple voices speak truth into their lives.

- ◆ [NOTE: ALWAYS BE RESPECTFUL AND EXCITED ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME ALONGSIDE LOCAL EDUCATORS.] An opportunity like this is not meant to feel as if it is "one more thing" for schools to implement. As a parent-permitted opportunity, we want to work with our school to find the best way to implement this into the day and make sure that prior to launch all parties involved feel comfortable with the details. This is a great opportunity for those in this community who love and support our educators to come alongside and help carry part of the load that so many of us feel today.
- ◆ We believe the long-term investment on our students' lives and their character is greatly benefitted with the addition of released time. Through the [INCLUDE DETAILS IF YOUR STATE HAS A LAW. IF NO STATE LAW, REFERENCE THE FEDERAL RULING], the legality is clear regarding the operations of any released time program. We encourage the board to adopt policy [SPECIFY POLICY] as a way to bring greater clarity around released time in our district.
- ◆ Our family is thankful for and excited about being able to have a Bible-based character education option during the school day.

### **Example 2 (Asking the Board to Adopt a Policy)**

- ◆ My name is [NAME], and I am a parent of two boys currently attending [DISTRICT]. During the levy process, it was communicated that we want to give our children more opportunities, not less, and encourage the positive impact that our schools give to our community and vice versa. I see this opportunity of LifeWise as a released time program and [NOTE: IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO REFERENCE THE "PARENT CHOICE" ASPECT OF RELEASED TIME PROGRAMS] the optional opportunity for parents in our district as one of those endeavors that positively impacts our students with the added benefit of no cost to our district.
- ◆ We live in a wonderful school district with an engaged community, and I am thankful my children have been able to grow up in this environment. I also know that we have children who are in less than ideal home situations. Some are hungry, some may suffer abuse, some families are broken, but together we all need hope that additional positive outlets such as released time can help provide.
- ◆ [NOTE: CONSIDER REFERENCING OTHER CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE DISTRICT AND HOW LIFEWISE CAN ONLY ADD TO THE POSITIVE IMPACT.] While the Positivity Project has been a nice program, I know that LifeWise can further instill lifelong lessons, values and character qualities that give students an opportunity to bond together and make new connections. As others will attest to, this program has already changed lives and inspired so many children in districts around us.
- ◆ Unfortunately, my children will be unable to participate in LifeWise as they will both be middle schoolers next year. My fifth grader has expressed his disappointment in not having this as an option this past school year. It is my hope to see something like this grow and expand into middle school so that he could attend in the future. Although my children won't be able to participate initially, I have always felt that in our small-town community, all of these kids in our district are like our own, so I stand for all of them.
- ◆ I was blessed to be able to be inspired by the wonderful stories of the Bible as a child and it brought such joy to me then and changed my life for the good. I know that the Fellowship of Christian Athletes program is a very popular group for the older students, and we have a Ten Commandments sign on school grounds that would convince me that we are supportive of this. I

strongly ask you to continue to invest in our kids and community through adoption of the released time policy 5223.

### **Example 3 (Asking the Board to Adopt a Policy)**

- ◆ Good evening. My name is [NAME]. I have 2 children who attend [SCHOOL DISTRICT]. [CHILD NAME] is currently a 4th grader at [SCHOOL] and [CHILD NAME] is in 8th grade at [SCHOOL].
- ◆ I am also a third grade teacher for [DISTRICT]. This is my 24th year as a teacher, and I can tell you, I have witnessed a rapid decline in the mental wellness of children over the years. Not until about 10 years ago had I ever heard of a kindergartner being diagnosed with severe anxiety or severe depression. Yes, there are precious, tiny 5-year-olds who have already lost hope in their lives. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is now the 8th leading cause of death in children ages 5-11. Twenty years ago, suicide among this age group was unheard of. The deterioration of our culture, more specifically, the family unit, is definitely having a negative impact on our children.
- ◆ For about 15 years, my district has required a Social Emotional curriculum be taught in our schools. For about 5 years, it has been a mandatory, scheduled time that teachers are expected to adhere to. I have seen SEL lessons help my students navigate social problems such as arguments and disagreements. I even notice my students using the breathing and relaxation techniques when they are frustrated or angry, but these curricula are just not enough to give our students the hope, love and purpose that only Jesus can offer.
- ◆ This coming fall, the community of [COMMUNITY] is currently working with school officials to implement a LifeWise program under the legality of released time religious instruction. This program comes free to the district [NOTE: THIS IS IMPORTANT TO MENTION THAT THERE IS NO COST TO THE DISTRICT] and entirely parent-permitted. I am excited to see the future impact on the students in the district. As a Christian, I pray for my students daily. I love them like Jesus loves us, but I am not allowed to teach all that He, and He alone, can offer. The message of Jesus could truly save some of these children's lives. I wish that someone had taught me more about Jesus when I was a child, and I know that if parents were to sign their students up for LifeWise here in [DISTRICT] it would help to improve our children's mental health, behavior and overall outlook on life. We have nothing to lose and a lot to gain by starting this amazing program in our district.

### **Example 4 (Multiple Community Members Presenting to Board)**

#### **Public School vs. Private School Choice**

- ◆ I want to thank all of you for your service to the students and families in our school district. I know you work very hard to do what is in the best interest of our students. I thank you for that.
- ◆ As a parent who has chosen to live in Hilliard based upon the solid reputation of the schools, I believe released time religious instruction, during the school day, will further enhance the optional offerings and opportunities for families that deem that to be important to their values.
- ◆ Providing this option could make the difference between a family opting for private education or staying in the public school. I value our school, I value this community, I value the opportunity for parental choice to incorporate released time religious instruction during the school day.
- ◆ Communities that have LifeWise programs are seeing the positive impact of additional character education in their schools and homes. I really desire this option for my children and see it as an opportunity to make our schools and community a better place to live. Why would we, as a community, not want to embrace an opportunity to allow this program in our schools?

- ◆ At a time when we are seeing all-time highs among youth depression, anxiety and suicide, we feel now is the time to offer positive character building instruction through our schools to combat negative influences and make better choices for their lives. Please vote yes to allow this optional program in our community. Thank you for your time and consideration.
- ◆ The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that “rates of drug and alcohol abuse have been found to be significantly lower in those who are religious compared to their nonreligious counterparts.” Research is abundantly clear.

### **Importance of Character Education**

- ◆ Released time religious instruction is not a new concept. We are fortunate to have the home office of LifeWise Academy in our own community for the past few years.
- ◆ I, for one, am thankful that this organization exists to share the responsibility of training and educating our youth in this community and beyond. What an opportunity we have before us to embrace an effort to combat the negative influences in our world. Have you tuned in to the global and local news lately? We can't ignore the fact that our world is not saturated with good news.
- ◆ However, I have faith in humanity. Given the right options, people tend to make the right choices. Your vote tonight is all about giving parents an option that we support and feel is right and wholesome for our community.
- ◆ The benefits of this type of programming have a clear and consistent track record, especially in the areas of character development, mental health, academic performance and family/community involvement.
- ◆ Activity can positively affect a student's mental health.
- ◆ Therefore, a released time religious instruction program can be a valuable option to increase support for mental health while placing no additional financial or staffing burdens on the schools.
- ◆ Finally, adopting a released time religious instruction policy is a Win-Win for this community. Please vote yes to allow released time religious instruction. Thank you.

### **LifeWise Comparison**

- ◆ I consider myself to be a bit of a skeptic when new opportunities arise. Honestly, I did not know what to think when I was told released time religious instruction in public schools was legal. Now, I confidently can talk to people and tell them it is legal.
- ◆ The 1952 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Zorach vs. Clauson* determined that the practice of released time religious instruction was constitutional and therefore legal in all 50 states. Ohio has adopted a policy based on the Supreme Court Ruling. Now it is your turn to do the same as a local community.
- ◆ I wondered how the Supreme Court ruling was playing out in communities. As far as I can tell, it is playing out pretty well. LifeWise has been in existence since 2018. Even through the height of the pandemic, communities were willing to take the plunge and put released time religious instruction in their community.
- ◆ Locations near us such as Upper Arlington, Dublin, Grandville, Olentangy, New Albany, Columbus City Schools, Whitehall and other locations throughout Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Iowa have all been given approval to open released time programs.
- ◆ Communities with operating programs have seen results that made my skepticism go away. [ASK COACH FOR CURRENT EDUCATOR & PARENT SURVEY DATA]
- ◆ I am sold. No longer do I have any concern that released time is a valuable addition to our community. For me, the proof lies in the reactions of those that have gone before us. I am convinced released time will bring a valuable option to our children through our schools.

- ◆ I hope you can see the value of released time in our community. I hope you can sense the desire of people to have this in our community. I urge you to support the adoption of the released time policy for our students, community and schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.