

# **Sign Making 101**

## **Choose your board wisely**

Poster board can easily be rolled up to transport, although this may give the board a curve so it's less likely to stay flat when you want it to. That roll-ability also means it's more prone to flopping over. To bolster the less sturdy material, you can glue or tape flat wooden paint stirrers to the corners.

Foamcore is sturdier and more weather-resistant. A foam sign will stay upright more easily, without the edges flopping over. Because of this stiffness, however, it can be awkward to transport from place to place.

## **Get spacey**

Your message won't do much good if people can't see it. In order to get noticed, you have to plan.

First, sketch out your words in pencil, using a ruler to keep your lines straight and ensure even spacing. Make sure that everything fits and is centered before you follow up with marker or paint. You can also play around with size and framing.

What is it you want to say? Make sure that word speaks loudly; it's got to be the biggest. Framing something helps your eye land in the center.

To make your words visible from a distance, letters should be large and boldly marked. If you're working up close to the sign, say at a table, visibility can be difficult to determine. You may want to stand back some distance and see if your message will still be easily readable.

For maximum effect, use stencils, or draw bubble letters and then fill them in.

## **Colour me visible**

When you choose your materials, make sure to take colour into consideration. White and black is good contrast, but if you can get a colour that stands out for example neon green, hot pink etc., the eye normally will go to that.

Bright colors, shimmering or glittering materials, even poster lights can draw more attention to your sign. But if the colours of your letters don't contrast with the colour of your board, your words will be harder to see.

For example, using rainbow colours for your letters might be eye-catching, but if one of those colours is yellow, it will disappear against a white poster.

## Have your say

By making your own sign, you can give voice to your ideas and personalize your message. Here are some tips for crafting your message:

1. **Figure out what you want to say.** If you feel like you have a million things to say, pick one message that you feel really passionate about. There should only be one message per sign.
2. **Practice brevity when writing message.** Compose a short, clear statement to represent your message. In terms of brevity, you are best sticking to a statement of seven words or less, since it can be hard to fit long text on a protest sign. You can say a lot in seven words!
3. **Make your message personal.** Protests often have popular slogans and statements that are repeated on many signs. To stand out from the crowd, you should personalize your statement! You are teachers, talk about how these cuts are affecting your ability to teach. What do you see in your classroom? You are the experts. You are the frontlines of education. Manitobans trust you, so tell them about the realities of the education cuts.
4. **Spelling is important.** Make sure to proof read your message – this is especially important for an educator rally!
5. **Get creative.** Think about things that are typically associated with the teaching profession and schools. For example, make a report card for the Manitoba government on education.
6. **Get peer feedback.** After composing your statement, but prior to writing it on the sign, you may want to get some feedback from friends. They could give you really helpful advice. If you get critical feedback, try rewriting the message to improve whatever is missing, such as clarity, brevity, wit, force or personal resonance.
  - a. If you are protesting with friends, you could also ask whether your statement goes well with the signs they will be carrying.
  - b. People often read signs in relation to one another, especially when protestors stand next to one another.

## **Examples for signs**

- Manitoba's future is in my classroom
- Education is an investment
- Our schools; Our kids; Our future
- Kids matter; Teachers care; Kids not cuts!
- Support our public schools
- Don't forget, we vote!
- Support our future. Fund our schools!
- Our kids are worth it
- Say yes to public education
- Manitobans value public education.

## **What's happening in your classroom/school?**

A few examples:

- 7 fewer teachers – Lord Selkirk School Division
- 2,000 more students, 100 less teachers – this doesn't add up