

## **Building community support for education**

Some state and federal issues are of such fundamental importance to children that school board members need to expand their personal advocacy efforts in order to mobilize entire communities. By engaging local businesses, parents, seniors, service clubs, neighborhood groups, taxpayer groups, churches, law enforcement, local government, local associations, and others in your advocacy efforts, school boards can more forcefully impact education policies.

### **Focus on mobilizing broad-based support or opposition on key issues.**

Various groups and individuals will be more willing to get involved if you prioritize your issues and only ask them to help on two or three of the most significant ones each legislative session – this also helps to sharpen the focus of your message.

### **Get the word out about important education issues.**

Board members can share important news about education in many ways, such as speaking to local groups, writing guest editorials, providing news and updates for newsletters. The more you are able to keep people informed about education issues, the more they will come to understand the issues and feel comfortable contacting legislators.

### **Encourage individuals to write or call legislators in support of your board's position.**

Encourage the people in your community to mention whether they are parents, local business owners, members of neighborhood task forces, seniors, etc., when they contact legislators. This reinforces the notion that education is a community interest that concerns all citizens.

### **Engage the local media.**

Legislators read their local newspapers. They care about what is being said on local radio and television shows. By developing positive relationships with reporters and sharing information about education, board members can heighten the community's awareness of critical issues and, in turn, have an influence on the development of state and federal education policies.