

Advocacy and Outreach Overview

Below are some outreach tips to help you better engage your elected officials, their staff and policymakers in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., on behalf of CSBA. School governance leaders are encouraged to work with their local CSBA Governmental Relations Chairs and Federal Governmental Relations Chairs to advance the education agenda and to maintain support for our public schools.

Keep in Mind

- Be informed. Know the issues, read *California Schools Magazine*, *California Schools News*, CSBA's Wednesday Updates, CSBA Action Alerts and your local newspaper.
- Build community relationships. Gain support for your issues.
- Be persistent. Some issues resurface, while others take years to resolve.
- Be consistent. Make personal contact on a regular basis a priority.
- Keep CSBA informed of any action you take.

Work with Your Legislator

- Get to know your legislator. Continue to contact him/her and staff on key issues in their district offices.
- Invite your legislator on a tour of your district and facilities.
- Inform your legislator. Send your legislator's district office news releases and customer newsletters.
- Become familiar. Attend district town hall meetings convened by the legislator or his/her staff.
- Thank legislators and their staff in writing, for any help they have provided.

How to Write an Effective Letter

- Include proper salutation. Use standard form for addressing elected or appointed officials.
- Use district letterhead for board adopted resolutions and positions only. This tells the legislator that you have the weight of your board behind it. Remember: when advocating without the direction of the board be sure to use personal stationery.
- State letter subject. List the bill number and your board's position.
- Discuss one bill per letter. Constituent letters are filed by bill number.
- Provide examples. Always provide specific examples of the bill's impact on your district.
- Discuss the facts. Be sure to support your argument with facts.
- Be concise. Make sure writing is clear and concise.
- Always sign your letter. Include yourself or a designated staff person as a resource for more information. Follow up. If the issue is particularly volatile, a visit to your legislator's office may be in your best interest.

- Keep CSBA informed. Always list CSBA as a recipient of your letter and cc CSBA for legislative and lobbying purposes.

Visiting Your Legislator

- Schedule a meeting.
- Which office? Determine if the legislator will be in the district or capitol office. Typically, they are in their district offices later Thursday afternoons and all day Friday when the legislature is in session from January-April each year.
- If the legislator is not available, meet with the staff - they are a valuable resource.
- Make introductions. Introduce yourself to the legislator's staff and provide business cards.

Communicating with Your Legislator

- Be patient. Legislators' schedules are busy and unpredictable.
- Serve as a local expert. Be a legislator's education expert.
- Explain yourself. Explain your district's role, its students, and legislative issues of concern.
- Be prepared for a meeting. Have one-page talking points or a fact sheet to keep on message.
- Provide leave-behind material. Keep material brief and to-the-point.
- Include a thank you. Always thank the legislator for his/her time and send a thank you note.
- Keep in touch. Contact your legislator and staff several times per year.

Be Savvy

- Research your legislator. Study his/her background, interests, accomplishments and legislation.
- Be a resource. You know education issues, let your legislator know it.
- Pay attention to staff. Staff can be your advocate.
- Support your legislator. Offer public support on legislation your agency favors.

Media Relations

- Your local media can be a resource for communicating your message.
- The board should issue official news releases, and board spokespersons should hold press conferences or make frequent calls to your local education reporter to keep them informed of education issues.
- Legislators rely on the media for information and public perceptions.
- Provide copies of board letters and resolutions to legislators and to your local media.
- Treat the media as a friend. Reporters have a job to do, help them do it right.