

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.

Always keep in mind:

- » **Be informed.** Know the issues, read *California Schools Magazine*, *California Schools News*, CSBA's Weekly Updates, CSBA Action Alerts and your local news.
- » **Build community relationships** to 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 legislators

- » Get to know your legislator. Continue to contact him/her and staff on key issues.
- » 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 staff.
- » Thank legislators and their staff in writing, for any help they have provided.

Write an effective bill 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 stationary.
- » 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.
- » 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 help..
- » Keep CSBA informed. Always list CSBA as a recipient of your letter and copy CSBA when sending the letter for legislative and lobbying purposes.

Visiting your legislator

- » Schedule a meeting by calling the district or capitol office.
- » 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-September each year.
- » Always meet with staff whenever possible! Staff are a very valuable resource, and often are around after a legislator terms out.
- » 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 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 he/she is currently authoring.
- » 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.