

Tips for effective advocacy

Get to know local legislators *and* their staff.

It helps to know local legislators and staff on a first-name basis and to make sure they know you by name. Get to know legislative district office and Capitol staff and understand the role, the importance and the power of legislative staff.

Become familiar with the legislative process, legislative calendar and the makeup of key committees.

Understanding the political process will allow you to schedule activities so as to be most effective in influencing legislative decisions:

www.assembly.ca.gov | www.senate.ca.gov

Legislative Calendar

(Tip: The “ics version” of the Legislative Calendar can be downloaded and added to your email server or other calendar app, which can allow mobile updates on key legislative dates and deadlines).

Key committees:

- » [Senate Education Committee](#)
- » [Assembly Education Committee](#)
- » [Senate Appropriations Committee](#)
- » [Assembly Appropriations Committee](#)
- » [Senate Budget Subcommittee 1 on Education](#)
- » [Assembly Budget Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance](#)

Become familiar with CSBA positions on bills

CSBA takes positions on several pieces of legislation each year and tracks hundreds more. Before calling or meeting with your legislator, it is helpful to know what CSBA’s positions are on any education-related bills authored by your legislator, if applicable. [Governmental Relations](#) staff can provide details on specific bills if needed.

CSBA Positions and Legislative info:

www.csba.org/legislativenews | www.csba.org/positions

Get to know your legislator's interests.

Some legislators have particular areas of interests and are especially appreciative when you can help provide them with information or data about these areas. In addition to knowing what bills your legislator is authoring (see above), research news clips on the legislator’s website or reports from your local media.

Be prepared for meetings with legislators.

Make sure you understand the issues thoroughly, and are prepared to discuss issues and present facts. Also be prepared to respond to concerns raised.

Keep current on legislative issues.

CSBA Action Alerts, eblasts, newsletters, magazines, policy briefs and other publications are a good way to stay on top of legislation impacting education.

Don't be afraid of what you don't know!

Don't hesitate to say, "I don't know, but I will try to find out and get the information to you later." It is better to admit when you don't have an answer than to make it up and potentially give misinformation.

Share information.

You can become a valuable resource to legislators if they know they can turn to you for a truthful answer or objective information about an issue. You can facilitate this process by occasionally providing legislators with news articles, reports or tidbits of information that you think they might be particularly interested in.

Show appreciation for the legislator's service, past votes or current position.

Legislators, like everyone else, get tired of only hearing complaints. Let them know when you support their positions, too. Invite legislators to visit schools. Invite them on-site to see exciting programs in the district's schools, as well as negative conditions. The best time to do this is September through December when the Legislature is generally out of session and legislators are in their district.

Find areas of common agreement.

A good way to foster a positive relationship with a legislator is to identify a common concern or issue and develop a plan to work toward accomplishing it.

Don't allow a disagreement over a position to end in harsh words or personal remarks.

Remember, if there is a disagreement, always oppose the *position*, not the *legislator*.

Keep the visit professional.

Never be abusive or threaten defeat in the next election.

Don't hold a grudge when legislators disagree with your district's position.

The board needs to understand the reason for a legislator's position and continue to work with the legislator on the next issue. Legislators should be assessed based on consistent, long-term support for education issues.