EFFECTIVE LOBBYING FOR SCHOOL BOARD LEADERS

Advocating for Public Schools

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Key Roles of School Board Members:

- Vision – Set the vision for education.
- Structure – Establish the structure and environment to implement vision.
- Accountability – Establish standards, formulate strategies and assess progress.
- Advocacy – Actively advocate for public schools and students.
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Advocacy is an Important Key Role:

- Lobbying is a form of advocacy.
- Lobbying is defined in Webster’s dictionary as: “To conduct activities aimed at influencing elected officials.”
- Important to lobby/advocate/influence and maintain a voice in a democracy.
- Requires year round effort and attention.
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School Board Members:

- Serve as the leading advocates for public schools and students.
- Speak out on issues that can advance the community’s local vision of the schools.
- Assure local community members that they are there to help the district succeed.
- Inform the local community of successes.
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Four Steps to Effective Advocacy:

- Knowledge – Know what you are talking about.
- Involvement – Build relationships and actively represent your district.
- Willingness – Respond to calls to action and participate in advocacy events.
- Passion – Share your passion. (If those most invested in our schools success don’t advocate, who will?)
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Five Steps for a Successful Meeting with your Legislator:

1. Prepare for the Meeting.
2. Conduct the Meeting.
3. Discuss Priority Issues.
4. Ask for a Commitment.
5. Close the Meeting.
1. Prepare for the Meeting:

- Do your homework.
- Know your legislator’s political affiliation, years in office, accomplishments, committee assignments, etc.
- Represent the official views of your local school board.
- Be respectful and passionate.
- Schedule the meeting and get confirmation.
2. Conduct the Meeting:

- Introduce each school board member by name and who each of your represents.
- Take the lead and set the tone for the meeting.
- State your purpose.
- Get right into your agenda.
- Expect to spend no more than 15–20 minutes.
3. Discuss Priority Issues:

- Identify 2 – 3 top priority issues.
- Showcase your expertise.
- Share local stories about how students are impacted.
- Offer to provide additional data on specific issues.
4. Ask for a Commitment:

- Do not hesitate to ask for a commitment.
- Ask specifically, “Will you support us on this issue?”
- You want an honest answer one way or another.
- Let your Legislator know you will advise your community of their support.
5. Close the Meeting:

- Summarize what resulted from the meeting.
- Leave a packet of information about your district, legislative priorities, success stories, and/or upcoming events.
- Invite them to visit your local district.
- Thank them for their time.
Meeting Tips:

- Do not be afraid to control the agenda.
- Be respectfully assertive.
- When questioned, don’t guess at answers. State you don’t know but will find out.
- Never be embarrassed to say you need to review or gather additional information before responding.
- Acknowledge your Legislator for the work they have done in your community.
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Requirements for a Successful Meeting:

- Prepare and be on time.
- Know your Legislator.
- Discuss priorities and local impact.
- Summarize your position.
- Ask for a commitment.
- Invite your Legislator to visit your district.
- Follow up your visit with a thank you letter.
- Keep in touch year round with your Legislator.
Find your voice and inspire others to find theirs....

Stephen Covey