

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Advocating for Public Schools

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Challenging Times!!

- ▶ World Wide Pandemic
- ▶ Social Distancing / Masks
- ▶ Limited Financial Resources
- ▶ Public Schools in new Normal
- ▶ Immediate Action Required

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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.”
- ▶ Critical to **lobby/advocate/influence** and maintain a voice in a democracy.
- ▶ Requires year round effort and attention.
- ▶ More important than ever!

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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 Conversation with your Legislator:

1. Prepare for the conversation.
2. Conduct the meeting.
3. Discuss state and local priority issues.
4. Ask for a commitment.
5. Summarize and follow up.

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1. Prepare for the Conversation:

- ▶ Do your homework.
- ▶ Know your legislator. (political affiliation, committee assignments, etc.)
- ▶ Contact Legislator to schedule meeting. (ZOOM meeting, phone, masked in person.)
- ▶ Get confirmation.

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2. Conduct the Meeting:

- ▶ Take the lead and set the tone.
- ▶ Get right into your agenda.
- ▶ Introduce all district participants.
- ▶ State your purpose. Be clear and concise.
- ▶ Represent the official views of your local school board.
- ▶ Be respectful and passionate.

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3. Discuss State and Local 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 and/or answer any questions.

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4. Ask for a Commitment:

- ▶ Do not hesitate to ask for a commitment.
- ▶ Be specific and ask, “Will you support us on this issue?” (You want an honest answer one way or another.)
- ▶ Let your Legislator know you will keep the community informed of their support.

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5. Summarize and Follow up:

- ▶ Summarize you key points.
- ▶ If you haven't already, send them a follow up email with your Districts priorities.
- ▶ Thank them for their time.

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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.
- ▶ Follow up with a thank you letter.
- ▶ Keep in touch year round.

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***Find your voice
and inspire others
to find theirs....***

Stephen Covey