



**Association of Metropolitan School Districts**

# **EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY**

A guide to establishing relationships with  
legislators to advocate for public education

- Kris Amundson and Lori Grivna -





## **Association of Metropolitan School Districts**

# **ABOUT AMS D**

- The Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMS D) was founded in 1974 and its mission is to advocate for metropolitan school districts and advance legislation that supports student achievement.
- AMS D serves 41 K-12 school districts, 5 intermediate/educational cooperative districts and 2 integration districts that collectively enroll more than half of Minnesota's public school students.
- AMS D's Board of Directors is comprised of the superintendent and one school board member from each district.



**Association of Metropolitan School Districts**

# **ABOUT AMUNDSON STRATEGIES**



**Kris Amundson**

- Amundson Strategies is a public affairs and government relations firm offering its clients high quality services in the areas of strategic communications, legislative advocacy, alliance development and community relations.
- Kris Amundson and Lori Grivna work closely with AMSD and its members to advocate on behalf of public education.



**Lori Grivna**



## - Relationships with Legislators -

### **Don't be a stranger.**

Strive for ongoing, regular communication. Be familiar to them.

### **Be personal.**

Let legislators know how proposals directly impact your district.

### **Be human.**

Use real examples, i.e. your district's special education cross-subsidy is \$XX amount.



## - Establishing Relationships -

### **Be the early bird.**

Reach out to legislators now to talk about the state of your district.

### **Don't assume.**

Legislators may not be experts on education policy or school finance.

### **Communicate on their terms.**

Ask what they prefer: Emails? Calls? Meetings in person? School visits during legislative breaks? All of the above?



- Establishing Relationships -

## **Show, don't just tell.**

Invite legislators into your schools and classrooms to observe and participate in various activities or unique programs.

## **Participate.**

Each year, AMSD member districts meet for a day at the State Capitol.

**DAY** at the **CAPITOL** **Feb. 21**



## - Maintaining Relationships -

### **Relationship inventory.**

Determine existing relationships with legislators — especially new ones. College connections? Board member connections?

### **Social media love.**

Keep your social media positive. Always.

### **Heads up!**

Share significant news about your district — positive or negative — with your legislators before it hits the media.



- Maintaining Relationships -

**Say**  
**THANK YOU**

Whether on social media, a letter to the editor, or a personal note, legislators appreciate hearing how the work they do has impact — and they appreciate you sharing that news with public recognition.





- Communicating with Legislators -

## **Know the AMSD Platform.**

Share it with your legislators. And then provide your local examples.

## **Be consistent.**

Consistency increases effectiveness. Keep themes consistent so that all of your advocates communicate the same message — staff, parents, board members, legislative action coalitions, etc.

## **Repeat. Then repeat.**

Repeat the messages but in different delivery forms (meetings, emails, handouts) and messengers (Supt. board members, parents).



## - Ongoing Communication -

### **Meet regularly.**

Ask legislators if they'd be interested in a regular meeting time. Your concerns will be better received later in the session — during final negotiations — if you have established an ongoing relationship.

### **Stay informed.**

Follow what's happening at the Capitol through AMSD updates.

### **Keep legislators informed.**

Add legislators and staff to your newsletter/press release lists.



- Ongoing Communication -

# **Keep AMSD IN THE LOOP**

Let us know if you are coming to the Capitol, if you are asked to testify, have a legislative interaction or glean information that could be helpful in our advocacy work.



- Ongoing Communication -

## **Prioritize.**

Provide clear, concise talking points. Don't bombard or overwhelm legislators with too much information.

## **Be Relevant.**

Make sure your information is up to date and timely.

## **Be Responsive.**

Always be available for questions or to provide additional information. Know your facts and keep your interactions positive and clear.



- Ongoing Communication -

**Provide**

**TESTIMONY**

If you are asked by your legislator or AMSD to testify on a bill, offering your district's story can make a significant impact. We can help.



## - Committee Testimony Logistics -

### **Learn the guidelines.**

Committee staff is responsible for setting agendas for each hearing and will establish guidelines for testimony and speaking orders.

### **Prepare.**

AMSD can help you prepare your testimony in advance and have testimony handouts ready for the committees.

### **Be brief.**

Know your time — testimony is often limited to 2-3 minutes.



## - Effective Testimony -

### **Be clear, concise, and specific.**

Try to avoid repeating testimony, and give specific examples.

### **Know where you stand on the issues.**

Be clear about whether you are testifying in support or opposed to legislation. Typically there is testimony offered from both sides.

### **Know your audience.**

Review the committee membership, and work with AMSD to anticipate questions.



## Committee Rules and Practices

### **Understand decorum.**

Start your testimony when directed with “Thank you Madame/Mr. Chair,” and state your name and title. Testimony and Q&A should go through the chair of the committee.

### **You are on the record.**

All committee hearings are open to the public and record.

### **Never guess.**

It is better to say you will get the information than to guess an answer.





# Effective Legislative Advocacy

## **ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS**

Reach out now. Be clear and specific. Communicate on their terms.

## **MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS**

Make relevant connections. Meet regularly. Say thank you!

## **ONGOING COMMUNICATION**

Visit the Capitol. Keep messages consistent. Participate.