



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GUIDE

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS

- Strive for ongoing, regular communication
 - Let your local legislators know how legislative proposals impact your district
 - Use real examples when possible, i.e. – your district's cross-subsidy is ...
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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

- Reach out to legislators early -- before the session or before an issue becomes big -- to talk about the state of your schools.
- Don't assume legislators are education policy or finance experts.
- Communicate regularly during session – ask your legislators which methods of communication they prefer: e-mails, phone calls, meetings in person, school visits during legislative breaks, etc.
- Communicate with your legislators throughout the year. Invite them into your schools to observe innovative programs and activities.

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Do a relationship inventory to determine existing relationships with legislators (especially newly elected ones) and who can help make solid connections.
- Keep social media positive. Always.
- Give legislators a “heads up” on positive (or negative) news before it is released publicly. Legislators should not hear significant school district news in the media.
- Say THANK YOU in a note, in a Tweet, on your school Facebook page or in a letter to the editor.

VISITING THE CAPITOL? LET AMSD KNOW.

AMSD is available to assist superintendents, board members, district staff and parents in testifying on key issues. Local information and perspectives help legislators understand the impact of their decisions.





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COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATORS

- Share the AMSD platform and your local district needs / give local examples.
- Consistent messaging increases effectiveness. Develop consistent message themes for school leadership, school board members, principals and others to deliver to legislators.
- Repeat priorities and needs in different delivery forms (meetings, school tours, e-mails, handouts) and different messengers (superintendent, school board members, leadership staff, parent leaders, etc.)
- If your legislator introduces a bill on your behalf or one your district supports, be available to provide testimony and handouts to support the bill.
- Ask your legislators if they are interested in establishing a regular meeting.



- Add legislators and staff to your newsletter and press release distribution.
- Your concerns and messages will be better received at the end of session during final budget negotiations if you've established an ongoing rapport/relationship.
- Focus on priorities. Provide clear, concise talking points; don't bombard them with too much information.
- Make sure information is relevant and timely.
- Keep interactions positive and clear.



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EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY

- Be clear and concise, try to avoid repeating previous testimony.
- State whether you are testifying in support of or in opposition to legislation. Testimony is typically offered on both sides of an issue with proponents speaking first, followed by opposing testimony.
- Give specific examples when possible.
- Know who your audience is: Review the list of committee members.

COMMITTEE LOGISTICS AND RULES



- Legislative committee staff is responsible for setting committee agendas for each hearing and will establish guidelines for testimony and the speaking order of testifiers.
- Work with AMSD staff if you are asked to testify on a specific piece of legislation. AMSD can help you prepare and submit testimony or handouts.
- Know the allotted time you will have in advance and plan on very brief testimony – often only 2-3 minutes.
- Have your testimony prepared in advance.
- Start your testimony when directed by the chair with “Thank you, Madame/Mr. Chair. For the committee record, my name is X and my title is X.”
- Testimony and Q&A should go through the chair of the committee.
- All committee hearings are open to the public and taped.
- If you are asked a question and you don’t know the answer: DON’T GUESS. It is better to say you will research the issue and provide the information to the committee as soon as possible.



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AMSD RESOURCES



ONLINE RESOURCES

- Session information on our web page helps keep member districts informed about the happenings at the Capitol.
- Legislative Platform
- Position Papers
- Education News and Reports
- Contact Resources and Social Media Lists
- Research & Statistics
- Session Briefs, Bill Summaries, Session Updates and Reviews
- Our Connections newsletter features a member district. Submit a story!



STAY CONNECTED WITH AMSD

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