

Working with Your Legislator

“The time to make friends is *before* you need them.”

~Lyndon Johnson



The Principal . . .

Is the expert on the school and its students.

Is a prominent and influential community member.

It's important for principals to:

Build personal relationships with legislators.

Take advantage of nonpolitical settings to advocate for education and tell the community about your school.

If they don't get information from you,
they'll get it from someone else.

Most people remember schools as
they were *back in the day*.

If individual legislators understand
how schools really function, including
successes and challenges, they are
better equipped to handle
educational issues in the legislature.

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If the *first* time a legislator hears from you is just prior to a critical vote, your message is much less powerful than if that legislator knows *you* and knows about *your school*.

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Most legislators want feedback on issues they know will be debated.

Your legislator finds it helpful to know your opinion and the reasoning behind your point of view.

Developing Positive Relationships with Legislators

Be present at community functions.

Introduce yourself and identify your school.

Send news clippings of your school's successes and copies of your newsletter.

Send a congratulatory note when they are elected or re-elected.

Send thank-you notes for their support on issues.

Guidelines for Communicating

You will probably talk to a staff person.
Legislative aides often know more about a subject than legislators themselves.

Share views *before* a vote is taken,
preferably before a committee vote.

Clearly identify the issue.

Know the bill number and refer to it.

TEPSA provides bill numbers and talking points via Legislative Alerts and Updates.

Guidelines For Communicating

Clearly state whether you favor or oppose the issue and why.

Explain how a bill will affect your school and student achievement.

Be brief. Focus on one or two issues.

Know the facts and present them without exaggeration.

Ask your school community to contact the legislator.

“When I feel the heat, I see the light.”

~Former Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R-IL)

One of a legislator's prime motivations is re-election.

Sometimes it only takes a few calls or letters to make a big difference.

Tap into TEPESA's Resources

Join the Legislative Update
Wednesdays at 1 PM Central.

Act on Legislative Network
email updates and alerts.

**“The price of freedom is
eternal vigilance.”**

~Thomas Jefferson

