

PSBA'S ADVOCACY GUIDE



BUILDING

IMPACT!





Founded in 1895, PSBA is the voice for public education and the work of strong local school boards in the halls of the Capitol. The association is committed to supporting an effective child-centered public education that is adequately and equitably funded.



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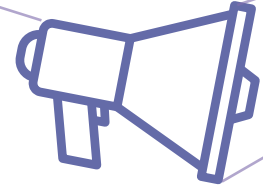
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Introduction



One of the most important jobs you accept as a school director is to provide the students in your district access to a high-quality education that prepares them for continued success after graduation.

One of the most critical ways to accomplish this task is to be an advocate for public education.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) works for you to be a powerful voice with the General Assembly, governor's office and state agencies in Harrisburg. Using PSBA's Legislative Platform as a guide, the association speaks out for the issues and needs important to your schools, students and communities. But our work is not done alone – it is a grassroots partnership that succeeds with many voices, including yours.

This guide is designed as a resource for your advocacy efforts. Here, you'll find information on why your voice is important, how to get started and strategies on how to effectively develop meaningful relationships with your legislators. The guide also explains how PSBA works for school boards at the Capitol and the resources PSBA provides to help members as education advocates.

What happens in Harrisburg affects your school district and your decisions as a school board director. You have the power to raise awareness, build the relationships and gain support for public schools. Tell your stories of success and of need. Share your knowledge and passion for public education.

Thank you for speaking for the children and the communities you were elected to serve. Your role as an advocate is important. Are you ready?

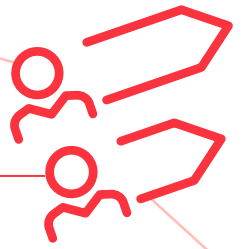
Together, we can make an impact!





You are the connection between your schools and the policymakers whose decisions reach from the halls of the Capitol to the classrooms in your districts.

Section 1: Be an advocate, get involved!



Why does advocacy matter?

Standing up for your school district and speaking out in support of public education is critical in your role as a school director. You know that many issues impacting your district are decided or influenced by others – issues affecting students and learning in regular and special education classrooms, school operations and governance, state funding, personnel, and more. Without your involvement, lawmakers will make decisions without the critical information you can provide.

As a school director, you might think that legislators understand how public education works. The truth is that legislators come from all sorts of backgrounds and differing levels of understanding about how schools work. Some may have no understanding or a preconceived position on an issue. You have an opportunity to educate and set the record straight. Be the voice for your public schools and students.

Advocacy matters because it is not just about voicing support or opposition to one specific issue at a moment in time. The role of advocacy is broader; it is about creating relationships and positioning your expertise to draw continuing support for public education. You are the connection between your schools and the policymakers whose decisions reach from the halls of the Capitol to the classrooms in your districts. What you have to say can be impactful.

The power of engagement and influencing policy

Some citizens wonder whether grassroots advocacy has value. Studies at the national level have examined that question. According to a [July 2016 Rasmussen survey](#)¹, only 11% of the voters surveyed thought the average member of Congress listens to the constituents he or she represents. A [report issued in 2017 by The Congressional Management Foundation](#)², comprised of 12 years of research drawn from the feedback of congressional staffers, showed that constituents remain significant factors to legislators' decision-making. According to the research:

- Direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies.
- Congress places a high value on groups and citizens who have built relationships with the legislator and staff.

1 Boyer, Alex. "What America Thinks: Can You Talk to Congress?" Rasmussen Reports, 11 July 2016, www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/videos/2016_07/what_america_thinks_can_you_talk_to_congress.

2 Fitch, Bradford, et al. "Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement." Congressional Management Foundation, 13 Feb. 2017, www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/cmf-citizen-centric-advocacy.pdf.





**Legislators place
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- Citizen advocates are more influential and contribute to better public policy when they provide personalized and local information to Congress.
- Citizens have significant potential to enhance their advocacy skills and influence Congress.

This report illustrates the power of grassroots advocacy and is relevant to our efforts at the state level with the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It also provides lessons for organizations such as PSBA by emphasizing that members should be integrated into the heart of their advocacy efforts. While organizations remain the professional advocates that provide valuable information to legislators, it is the constituent members who provide the impact of proposed policies at a personal level.

Further, organizations have a responsibility to help their members understand their important role in advocacy. PSBA believes this begins with giving our members an understanding of what their association does to represent the school board viewpoint with legislators, and how it helps school directors to become effective advocates.



Section 2: PSBA working for you

PSBA's advocacy work

Your membership with PSBA gives you means to a credible and powerful voice as the leading advocate for public education. Our proactive advocacy agenda is based on the legislative platform that is adopted each year by our membership. Working for you, PSBA's advocacy work includes:

- Meeting with legislators and their staff on a regular basis to communicate PSBA's position on key issues.
- Drafting bills and amendments to support the needs and concerns of public schools.
- Conducting research and providing information and data on the state and local impact of education topics and bills.
- Connecting school directors with legislators to help them build relationships and become effective advocates for public education.
- Providing comprehensive legislative updates, reports and other information to members to increase their awareness of the issues and help them in their local advocacy efforts.
- Using social media to promote awareness of our advocacy agenda, share the successes of our public schools, recognize legislative efforts and acknowledge legislators who support public education.

The success of PSBA's advocacy program also includes our partnerships with you and other school leaders. Through our direct lobbying efforts and through the actions taken at the local level, we reach out to legislators to influence public policy. PSBA works to connect legislators with their local school boards, administrators and students to help them develop good relationships. The goal is to help legislators more fully understand districts' successes, challenges and needs so that they can work with them to ensure that students have access to a high-quality education.



The legislative platform

PSBA's Legislative Platform is our official record of positions on key issues, and it is the primary guide for our advocacy efforts. PSBA staff will support or oppose legislation that aligns with platform positions and will draft legislation that corresponds with platform statements.

Our membership provides direct input and ownership of the platform. Your board is encouraged to be part of the platform adoption process:

- Spring (submit proposals) – The process begins in the spring when PSBA invites school boards to submit proposals to be considered for the association's legislative platform for the coming year. From March through the end of June, boards may submit new items, draft changes or suggest deletions to current platform items.



- Summer (initial review) – In late July or early August, PSBA’s Platform Committee reviews what has been submitted along with the items in the current platform. Items approved by the Platform Committee become the recommendations for the platform for the coming year.
- Fall (final vote) – The next step occurs in the early fall when the Delegate Assembly meets to consider the recommendations of the Platform Committee and vote on the items that will become the final platform for the coming year. This meeting, which is held at the conclusion of the School Leadership Conference, includes voting delegates from all PSBA’s member school districts, intermediate units, and career and technical centers.

Grassroots teamwork: You + PSBA

Grassroots advocacy generates political currency with elected officials and injects a human aspect to our efforts, which leads to ongoing familiarity and invaluable long-lasting relationships. PSBA’s grassroots work includes school directors and administrators joined together to raise its collective voice.

PSBA staff is your best resource to assist you in your advocacy role. We connect with you directly, providing information through our legislative reports, alerts and other means. Our staff is always available to answer questions or provide additional information and assistance to you. Here are some other ways we help you succeed as an advocate:

Ambassadors – Our efforts are also led by PSBA’s Advocacy Ambassadors who act as a liaison between school directors and lawmakers. The ambassadors work with boards in designated areas of the state to ignite regional grassroots efforts, especially when critical votes are about to occur. The ambassadors also help to bring legislators and school leaders together through school district visits. The ambassadors will help coordinate those local visits as part of PSBA’s “Show Them What It Takes” campaign (see Section 6 for details). More information about the ambassadors, including who they are, the areas they serve and how to contact them, is posted on PSBA’s website at www.psba.org/advocacy-and-news/advocacy-ambassadors/.

Advocacy Day – PSBA also hosts an annual Advocacy Day in the spring for school leaders to come to the Capitol in Harrisburg to meet with legislators to discuss selected priority issues. We make appointments for members to meet in small groups with their legislators, provide talking points for your use and materials for you to leave with legislators. The day begins with a briefing for all attendees, with the bulk of the day allotted to the meetings with legislators. The event also includes a rally/news conference.

PSBA advocacy resources

Your role as a successful advocate begins with having the knowledge and tools as a base to do the job. PSBA provides the necessary information to help members become strong grassroots advocates for public education:

Legislative Report: The *Legislative Report* is a digital newsletter distributed during legislative session weeks that provides updates on the activity of the General Assembly on issues affecting education. Look for additional special reports during times of high activity, such as adoption of the state budget or end of session.

Legislative Alert (calls to action): A *Legislative Alert* is sent via email when a critical issue is moving and it's time to ask school officials to take action. The alert explains the issue and includes talking points and a sample letter that you can automatically send to your legislators with the click of a button. We may also ask you to make phone calls or take other action to draw support or opposition to the issue (adopt a resolution, provide information to the media, etc.).

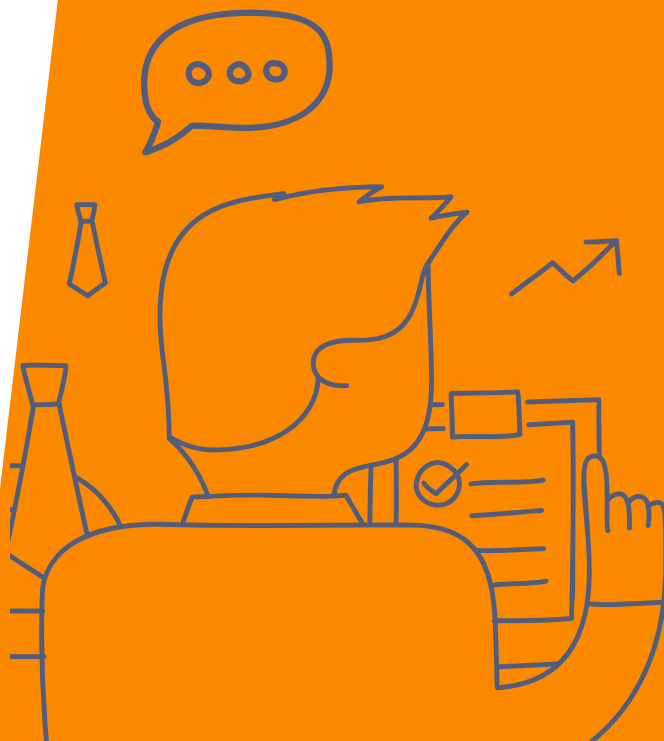
Daily EDition: Delivered to inboxes each morning, this digital newsletter a timely digital snapshot of the education-related news in Pennsylvania and nationally as reported in various publications.

Website: Our website at www.psba.org features news articles, research and program information. The “Advocacy & News” section contains more in-depth information on specific legislative issues, access to PSBA’s Legislative Platform, position papers and testimony, and a place to take action on key bills.

Social media: We use social media to promote public school successes, advocate for legislative positions, and acknowledge legislators who vote in support of public education. Follow our regular updates on Twitter (@PSBA), Instagram (paschoolboards) and Facebook (PA School Boards Association). You are encouraged to follow PSBA on social media and use your own social media for advocacy purposes to build interest on an issue.

State of Education report: This annual report provides a comprehensive look at Pennsylvania education data and offers statistical insights on the public education landscape. This information is valuable for advocates to use year-round.

PSBA is your
best
resource
to assist you in your
advocacy role.



Effective advocacy
is a year-round job.
It helps create
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Section 3: Getting started

Effective advocacy is a year-round job. It helps create awareness and support for your schools and students. To have a real impact on policy decisions made in Harrisburg, advocacy must become a habit. Your goal is to create successful relationships with your legislators so that they know you by name and school district. They trust what you have to say and may even reach out to you to ask your thoughts on an issue. Be prepared and show enthusiasm!

But what if you have never worked in an advocacy role – how do you get started? Following are some basic tips you need to begin.

Know your legislators: You can find who your legislators are on the General Assembly’s website at www.legis.state.pa. To find your senator, click on the “Senate” tab at the top of the page and then click “Find Your Legislator.” To find contact information under the “Senate” tab, select “Senators” and “Contact Your Senator” to access websites, email addresses and social media links. To find your member of the House of Representatives, click on the “House” tab at the top of the page and follow the same procedures. The site also includes information on committee rosters, bills, scheduled meetings, voting records and much more.

Personal information: Knowing some personal tidbits about your legislators can help you establish ties. Did they attend public school in your district? Are they a former school board member? Do they have a background in education? Do they have children in school? Do they attend public or private school? Any information you can gather may help you establish a relationship.

Committee assignments: Find out what committees your legislators serve on. This is especially important if they are on a committee that regularly deals with education issues. Even if their committee assignments don’t directly impact education issues, their votes do. Remember that they may not be as well-versed on education-related issues. Get to know the legislative staff member who deals with education issues, and make sure he or she gets to know you by name. Establishing a good relationship with them is your foot in the door.

Voting records: Find out how your legislators voted on earlier education issues. This can help you anticipate where they are likely to stand on upcoming issues and will help you shape your message.

Know the issues, use PSBA resources: As an advocate for public education, you provide support for or against public policies that impact your district’s students, parents, staff and taxpayers. It’s important that you know and understand what issues are on the General Assembly’s legislative agenda. Make sure you receive and read the *Legislative Report* and any other updates and materials offered by PSBA. You’ll also need a basic understanding of the legislative process (described in the next section).



Make advocacy a regular part of your board discussions and activities: Include time at your board meetings to review current legislative issues. Discuss their impact on the district and the board's position and response. Know bill numbers and the most recent status of the bill. Many boards use PSBA's *Legislative Report* as a guide for discussion.

Respond to PSBA's *Legislative Alerts* and calls to action: When PSBA launches an alert, the issue is time-sensitive and needs your quick response to be most effective. Know where your board stands and feel free to use PSBA's sample messages and talking points to help you respond.

Tell your story: Storytelling is a powerful tool for advocacy because it creates a connection between people. Stories, used in conjunction with your district data, help legislators understand the issue at the local level and can have the power to persuade them to support your position.

Remember that your silence can speak volumes: No response can be perceived as a response by your legislator. It can say you don't care, or that you don't have any opinions or concerns with the bill or issue. For example, your legislator could think that you support a bill that would actually hurt your schools.

Use the media to communicate your position: Don't forget that the media can help shape public opinion and can be one of the most influential advocacy tools. Take full advantage of all the media outlets that serve your local area, including newspapers, television stations and radio stations. You can create an effective media strategy to promote your board's position on an issue. A positive viewpoint article, editorial or story that supports your position will be seen and heard by the community and your legislators.



Section 4: The legislative process

In order to effectively influence legislators, it is important to have a basic knowledge of the structure of the General Assembly and the legislative process. This will also help you more fully understand the communications and materials that PSBA provides on key legislative issues.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly includes 203 members in the House of Representatives and 50 members in the Senate. Their terms of office and re-election information is below.

| | PA HOUSE | PA SENATE |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Total members | 203 | 50 |
| Term of office | 2 years | 4 years |
| Re-election | All seats up for re-election at the same time | Odd- and even-numbered seats contested on a rotating basis |
| Legislative districts | House and Senate legislative districts are reapportioned every 10 years after the federal census is taken | |

The General Assembly meets in two-year cycles, called a “legislative session,” to introduce and act on proposals called bills. A bill proposes to create new law, amend or repeal existing law, appropriate money, or take other action. Any bill not passed during the session time frame dies and must be re-introduced if a legislator wants that issue to be available for potential consideration in the new session. During an average session there are literally thousands of bills introduced, but only a small percentage of them are actively considered and an even smaller percentage make it to the governor’s desk and become law.

There are 27 committees in the House that are the first stopping place for House bills, and 22 committees in the Senate. Committee chairmen largely determine when a committee will meet, and which bills will be considered. Amendments may be offered to bills at certain stages of the legislative process.





The mile-high look at the legislative process is simple. A bill is introduced, approved by a committee, moves to the floor where it must be considered on three separate days before taking a vote on final passage. If the bill is passed, it goes to the other chamber where the process is repeated. Once it is passed by both chambers, it goes to the governor.

Moving bills through the General Assembly

A proposed piece of legislation is introduced by a legislator and co-sponsors in the Senate or House. Bills have a printer's number; each time a bill is amended it is reprinted and gets a new printer's number. Bills remain active during the two-year session, which means they can be brought up at the will of committee chairmen, or House or Senate leadership.

The mile-high look at the legislative process is simple. A bill is introduced, approved by a committee, moves to the floor where it must be considered on three separate days before taking a vote on final passage. If the bill is passed, it goes to the other chamber where the process is repeated. Once it is passed by both chambers, it goes to the governor.

Amendments change the language, and quite often, the path of a bill. Amendments may be added by a committee or on the floor of the chamber. It is very rare for a bill to pass clean – without any changes – as it moves through the House and Senate. The addition of amendments can cause a bill to go back and forth between the two chambers.

A bill can be amended numerous times and there must be agreement on the language before a bill can receive final passage and go to the governor's desk. For example, if the House amends a Senate bill, the bill returns to the Senate for a concurrence vote. The Senate could amend the bill further or take out the House amendments, and then the bill would have to go back to the House. Once a bill is passed by both chambers, it goes to the governor, who has 10 days to sign, veto or let the bill become law without his signature.

The addition of amendments can be either good news or bad news for advocates because there are many opportunities for amendments to be added. That means there are opportunities for you, as well as those who take a position opposite of yours, to influence the language or movement of a bill.

Once a bill gets to the full chamber for consideration, a majority vote is needed to pass it. It takes 102 votes to pass in the House and 26 votes in the Senate. If there is an attempt to override a governor's veto of a bill, a two-thirds vote is needed on each side – that's 135 votes in the House and 34 in the Senate.





Section 5: Ways to be an effective advocate



Tips for effective advocacy

School board members need to establish and maintain good working relationships with their legislators and staff. These relationships are developed over time and should be nurtured carefully. Legislators quickly learn which constituents contact them only in times of need and which ones never say thanks for a job well done. Here are some general communication tips:

- **Know where your board stands.** Keep in mind that you are advocating for your board, and the board should stand united. If you find yourself talking about your individual views, make sure legislators know you are not speaking on behalf of the board.
- **Keep it simple.** Legislators value clear, concise and informative communication.
- **Be direct.** Explain your view on the bill and the rationale for your position. Ask how he or she will vote.
- **Do your homework.** Know the issue and know key facts and data about your district.
- **Never mislead a legislator** about the facts of an issue or its importance. If you don't know the answer to a question, say you don't have that information at hand and promise to respond as soon as you have the information. Then do so.
- **Tell your stories!** State the positive when you can; give examples of how an issue helps or hurts your students, parents or taxpayers. Using your statistics and presenting the issues from your perspective can help legislators understand the local impact.
- **Always thank your legislators** for their time and their vote (hopefully), and don't forget to thank their staffers who may have helped you.
- **Be polite and recognize that there will be times when a legislator does not agree with your position.** If he or she has decided to oppose your position, don't engage in a debate. You'll be asking the same legislator for support on other issues in the future, so don't alienate him or her now.

Methods of advocacy

How can you make your voice heard? You can focus your advocacy efforts in several different ways, depending on the issue and how much time there is to contact your legislators. In most instances, you can use more than one forum to deliver your message:

- Personal visits are the most effective if time permits.
- Phone calls are the fastest means of contact, but you may not get through when officials are in session. Ask for their cell phone number.
- Emails and texts are also fast and provide a record of your position.
- Letters provide written documentation of your positions and facts as a reference, but mailing is the slowest communication.



- Have your board adopt a resolution stating your position on an issue.
- The best solution is a mix of advocacy methods.
- Be timely. Contacting legislators after a vote has been taken or a decision made is too late, but it can be equally ineffective to contact legislators too early. Your job is to build a relationship with them over time so that when an issue does come up, your specific ask is a “no brainer.”

Personal visits – Face-to-face meetings are the best way to develop and maintain a positive relationship with your legislators. Don’t forget that staff members have a great deal of influence and can be instrumental in conveying the significance of an issue to the legislator. Establish rapport with legislative staff; these relationships will be valuable to you.

- Make an appointment in advance but be prepared to reschedule if necessary. Also remember that meeting with the legislator’s education staffer can be valuable.
- Get to your point quickly and stay focused on your message. Most meetings last 15 to 20 minutes, so don’t waste a lot of time on small talk or get sidetracked to another issue.
- Be clear on what your position is and what you want the legislator to do.
- Give specific examples of how the issue affects your district. Leave written materials to reinforce your position. Offer to provide further information if necessary.
- Follow-up the meeting with a thank-you note to the legislator and his or her staff.

Phone calls – Phone calls are a fast and effective way to communicate with your legislators, especially when a critical vote is expected to occur. Sometimes you may be able to talk directly with your legislator, but if the legislator is unavailable, ask to speak to the key staff person working on the issue.

- Think about what you want to say before placing the call. Make notes for your reference, such as the bill number, status of the bill, your position and talking points.
- Identify yourself by name, position and school district.
- Focus on the issue, using the bill number. Briefly explain your position and be prepared to provide more information if asked.
- Ask for your legislator’s position on the bill.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time and follow through with a short thank-you note which restates the reason for your call.

Emails and texts – Email is another quick form of communication, and it allows you to copy several people at the same time. Make sure to mention that you are a constituent and a school board member. Legislators may get hundreds of emails a day and referencing your identity will help them recognize the importance of the email. If you have your legislator’s cell phone number and an issue is time-sensitive, a brief text message can be very effective.

Letters – Sending a letter provides an opportunity for you to state a position and rationale on an issue in a format that can easily be retained and shared by others. Focus on the issue, identify the bill by name and number, and keep it brief. Supporting material and statistics should be attached so that the message can be passed on to the legislator’s staff or to others who may want to read it.

Board resolutions – Adopting a resolution on a critical issue and/or specific piece of legislation is another powerful way to advocate. A resolution is a formal document adopted by the board that states the board’s position about an issue/problem and contains an action. Boards send their resolutions to their legislators, the governor’s office, and often share them with other school boards as well as the media. Follow these general steps to write a resolution:

- Begin with a title that briefly states your board’s position on the issue generally or the specific bill.
- Follow with a series of statements that begin with “Whereas” that set the tone for the resolution and provide rationale for the board’s position. The statements should contain facts, funding data, etc., that support the position.
- These statements are followed by a “Resolved” statement that clearly states the board’s position on the issue and what action should be taken by the General Assembly to address it.
- The resolution should include the date of adoption, and the signatures of the board president and board secretary.
- The resolution should be sent to legislators. You may also want to share the resolution with other districts by posting on PennLink or sharing with the public and media (include a news statement explaining the resolution).

Community outreach – Include contact with students, parents, the community and the media as part of your advocacy strategies. These audiences may not fully understand the impacts of areas including state funding, mandates and major cost drivers to district budgets such as charter school tuition or pensions, for example. Use your networks to explain legislative issues and build support for your positions. You can accomplish this in a variety of ways.

- Use your various district communications outlets to create awareness of the issues, provide the district perspective, concerns and calls for action. This includes your website, social media, parent emails, community newsletters and other formats.
- Discuss issues at your board meetings and provide updates when appropriate.
- Ask the public to join you in your support or concern for the issue by contacting their legislators, signing petitions, writing letters to the editor, etc.
- Talk to your local media about issues, telling your story from different perspectives.
- Don’t forget to share successes and offer thanks when it’s earned.



More about telling your story

Real-life stories are a valuable advocacy tool. Effective storytelling will raise awareness of the issue and make the abstract concrete. Stories have the power to engage your legislators and the public on a deeper level. Telling your story in a concise way that is connected to the issue is the key to advocacy success. It can change minds and influence votes.

- Consider how to frame your story. What support, results or reforms are you seeking, and what is your “ask” of legislators? The answers to these questions will help you frame your story.
- Explain how the issue is a help or concern and how it will impact the district and the people who are affected. Explain how the “ask” will provide a benefit. Why is it important and how does it help or hurt students, families, taxpayers? Be specific with examples.
- Do your homework and be armed with plenty of evidence to prove your point. But make your points easy to understand and don’t get weighed down with too much jargon.
- National and state data provides a backdrop, but local legislators will want to hear the local impact, the local data. Present current and compelling information that demonstrates the need.
- Remember, every legislator wants to help his or her own district and constituents. Include a human element that will cause your story to resonate with legislators.

Digital advocacy: Using social media

Social media is a powerful tool that is changing the way people absorb information and raise awareness about issue campaigns. The use of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are an effective way to get your message in front of thousands of people, including legislators and the media. You can use social media in your advocacy role to highlight successes in your schools, explain your position on key legislative issues to build interest, and thank legislators and others who support your positions.

Key findings from a 2015 survey by The Congressional Management Foundation³ of congressional staff showed:

- Legislators are more inclined to use social media than they were in the past.
- Staff generally feel social media has improved relationships between constituents and legislators.

³ Fitch, Bradford, et al. “Report - #SocialCongress 2015.” Congressional Management Foundation, 14 Oct. 2015, www.congressfoundation.org/projects/communicating-with-congress/social-congress-2015.

- Thirty or fewer similar comments on a social media post are enough to get an office’s attention, but they need to be posted quickly, or they may not be seen.
- Social media posts by constituents can influence undecided legislators, but staff generally do not feel social media posts provide enough information to identify constituents.

And:

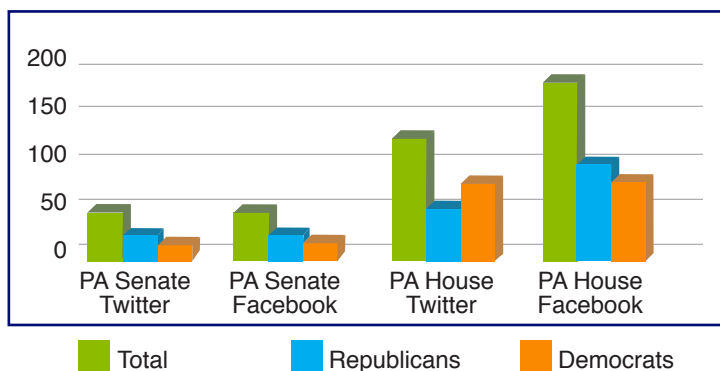
- 76% of the respondents agreed that social media enabled legislators/staff to have more meaningful interactions with constituents;
- 70% agreed that social media have made legislators more accountable to constituents;
- 71% said social media comments directed to the legislator by multiple constituents affiliated with a specific group or cause would have “some” or “a lot” of influence on an undecided lawmaker.

The results of a 2019 survey of congressional staff contained in a report issued in May, 2019 by the Public Affairs Council⁴, a nonpartisan national association, showed:

- 90% of staff call Twitter an effective channel for engaging constituents.
- 85% and 76% think Facebook and Instagram are effective, respectively.
- Nearly two-thirds of the respondents said the member of Congress they work for uses Twitter and/or Facebook.

PSBA believes the same kind of impact is true at the state level.

Pennsylvania legislators are actively using Twitter and Facebook



At a glance, it seems that more House members are using social media than Senators, but keep in mind that there are 203 members in the House and 50 members in the Senate. Look at the green bar totals again and see that nearly all of our state legislators are using social media.

⁴ “Surround Sound.” Public Affairs Council, 6 May 2019, pac.org/wp-content/uploads/SurroundSoundReport_Final.pdf.





One of the best ways to open communications with your legislators is to first open your doors and invite legislators to visit your schools.

Section 6: Building impact



Invite legislators to your schools: Show Them What It Takes

There will be many times when you meet with your legislator to talk about your position on a specific issue and to ask them to vote a certain way. But it's important to open communications well before that important vote is scheduled. One of the best ways to open communications with your legislators is to first open your doors and invite legislators to visit your schools.

PSBA can help you schedule your visits. The *Show Them What It Takes* project is happening in districts across the state. Visits are set up through one of PSBA's Advocacy Ambassadors, who contact the legislators and can help coordinate the events with the district superintendent.

More information about the ambassadors, including who they are, the areas they serve and how to contact them, is posted on PSBA's website at www.ppsba.org/advocacy-and-news/advocacy-ambassadors/. More about the project is posted on PSBA's website at www.ppsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SHOW-them-what-it-takes-1.15.2019-1.pdf.

Welcoming legislators to your schools can go a long way to help you develop and maintain relationships with your legislators. While you certainly want to show off all the great things you are doing, also make sure to take the opportunity to inform them of your challenges and needs. The more time your legislators spend with you and your students, the more likely they will be to support your cause (or at least understand it better). Tips for a successful visit include:

- Use the visits to make a personal impact between the district and your legislators. Have them meet with students, teachers and staff. Let them observe or participate in school activities, classrooms or programs that show them firsthand the dedication to student success.
- Use the visits to emphasize that these students need your legislators' support for greater investments in public education, and what opportunities would be lost without the support. If your legislator was particularly helpful on a particular issue or with regard to the state budget, make sure to thank them for their support.
- Take photos of the visit and post them on your website and social media. Make sure the legislator gets copies of pictures as well.





Share your stories: Success Starts Here

Building support for public education also includes promoting the good works coming from your schools. PSBA invites school districts to share their stories of student success through the “Success Starts Here” campaign, a multiyear statewide effort to share the positive news about public education through advertising, web, social media, traditional media and word-of-mouth with the goal of raising understanding of the value of public education in Pennsylvania. The objective of the campaign is to publicize and share impactful news coming out of schools across the state – stories of public education where innovation, inspiration and meaningful results are thriving. We know these stories happen every day in schools across the state.

The stories are published on the campaign website www.successtartshere.org. The website continues to grow, with hundreds of unique school entities being added. Not sure where to start? Look under the “Show Support” tab of the website for a toolkit that provides everything you need to get involved in the campaign, including ways to work with the media, social media tips, a campaign article to post, downloadable campaign logos, and photo release forms. The tab also includes a link to a form for schools to send their success stories to be featured, and we’ll do the rest.

We know you have great stories and we want to be sure that legislators, parents and the community-at-large know and appreciate the good work done in public schools. Advocacy for public education, for your school district, matters. The commitment to public schools from our legislators depends on it.

Let's work together to build that impact!



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