Unite, Inspire, Lead
Our Students, Our Union, Our Future

Expanding on Teacher Leadership--How to Meet with Legislators

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Indicate the NEA Strategic Goal and NEA Organizational Priority your session addresses:

- NEA Strategic Goals
  - Goal 2: Empowered Educators for Successful Students
- NEA Organizational Priority
  - Institutional Racism
  - ESSA
NEA LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

• PROGRESSION LEVEL(S)
  – Level 1: Foundational
  – Level 2: Mobilizing and Power Building
  – Level 3: Agenda Driving

• COMPETENCY THEMES
  – Advocates for policies and strategies that positively impact our professions and student learning
Objectives

In today’s session we will explore:

- Who to contact and how
- What to do/say in your meeting
- How to maintain contacts for maximum impact
Getting your foot in the door

• Contact the policymaker or their office via email or phone to request a meeting

• Social media can work too

• Qualify yourself - state your credentials

• Keep it short and casual

• DON’T OVERLOOK THE LEGISLATIVE AIDES!!!
Insight #1: Influencing policy is NOT a drive-by event

One conversation changes nothing.
Insight #2: Build working relationships

- Establish credibility over time.
- Come prepared.
- Build rapport.
- Offer solutions.
- Show up and follow up.
- Leave behind.
Insight #3: Preparation is paramount!

• Make the most of your time with a policymaker by ensuring that you ask them specifically to do something for you.
Insight #4: Offer what you have (that policymakers don’t):

- Experience and expertise
- Roots on the ground
- Emotions to support the main idea
Insight #5: Push Back Artfully

- Be selective.
- Identify common ground.
- Signal that you are going to press an issue.

Strategies:
- Ask a question.
- Be self-deprecating.
- “Help me to understand...”
Insight #6: Effectively Use Your Time

- Before the meeting, do your homework:
  - Where do policymakers stand?
  - What are their levers?
  - What will you ask them to do?

- Spend more time on solutions than problems.

- Ask questions.

- Build in real time for a conversation.
Sample agenda for policymaker meeting

- Introductions
- Who am I and why should you listen to me? (Give your card to everyone in the room who didn’t come with you.)
- Why is this important to you?
- What do I want? The ask
- Why do I want it? (and why do you also want it?) Reasons/data/etc.
- Story
- Repeat the ask
- Guide the conversation
- Thanks. Leave a one-pager behind.
- Next steps--offer yourself as a resource.
Insight #7: Offer solutions:

Identify the problem but use most of your time and energy on solutions

- Remember there is strength in numbers to unify around the depth of the problem

- Offer yourself / group as a part of the solution
Now let’s practice

We’re going to

• Determine an ask.
• Develop a supporting story.
• Develop an elevator speech.
• Practice pitching our agenda.
Discussion

What are your compelling topics for discussion with a policymaker?
The Ask

• Select an issue that you care about, that effects your school (or community), and that you can speak to from your experience as an educator.

• Choose a policymaker to be your audience.
  – Who can make a policy decision on this issue?

• What do you want the policymaker to do?
  • Actionable, concrete.
  • Within the policymaker’s realm.
Add a Story

Storytelling Strategies

Stories are about people (name names)

• The people in your story have to want something (goals).
• Stories need to be fixed in time and place (setting).
• Let your characters speak for themselves (voice).
• Audiences bore easily (keep it snappy).
• Stories speak the audience's language (no jargon).
• Stories stir up emotions (make ‘em laugh, cry, whatever).
However, don’t depend on emotion to tell the story.
• Stories don’t tell: they show.
• Stories have at least one “moment of truth.”
• Stories have clear meaning.
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• Introductions
• Who am I and why should you listen to me? (Give your card to everyone in the room who didn’t come with you.)
• Why is this important to me and to you?
• What do I want? (The ask)
• Why do I want it? (and why do you also want it?) Reasons/data/etc.
• Story
• Repeat the ask
• Chat
• Thanks. Leave a one-pager behind.
• Next steps--offer yourself as a resource.
Partner Up for Practice

• Keep your key message at the forefront of your mind

• Practice your story/pitch with a partner
  Each partner will have 5 minutes for a pitch and 3 minutes for feedback

• Provide constructive feedback for your partner

(This is a discussion with a policymaker. Your partner may ask clarifying questions, etc.)
Consider the following questions when providing feedback:

- What grabbed your attention?
- What do you remember?
- What was the point of the story?
- At what point did your mind wander?
- What did you want to know more (or less) about?
- Are there any possible unintended meanings to this story?
Table discussion:

- How did this activity go?
- How might you use this in the future?
How do you get in the door?
The Elevator Pitch/Speech

• What can you say during an elevator ride? You have 30-40 seconds average to grab the attention of a person. What do you say and how do you say it?
• Tell who you are
• Identify your goal (the ask)
• Engage with a question or story (30 seconds!)
• Give a card.
• Tell the person you’ll be following up.
• This must be interesting, attention-getting and FAST.

2017 NEA National Leadership Summit | February 24-26, 2017
Practice

• Take a minute to create an elevator pitch/speech for your issue.

• Partner up. Tell your partner who she/he is.

• We will do 3 rounds—1 minute, 45 seconds and 30 seconds.
  – Each partner will first tell the other person a 1 minute description of the situation and then the timing will start. You have 1 minute TOTAL to get prepared, so share the time.
  – Each partner will practice pitching their agenda. First round is 1 minute each; second round is 45 seconds each; and last round is 30 seconds each.
  – NOTES ARE OKAY!
Table discussion:

• How did it go?
• What went well?
• What was difficult?
Session Outcomes

- How can this content be used in your current position?
Final Thoughts?
• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at
  www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment