

How to Plan and Execute a Successful Legislative School Visit

Set up the meeting

Invite your legislator to your school by sending them a personal invitation. You can determine your legislators by visiting <http://www.legis.state.pa.us> and entering the address of your school. You will be directed to a brief biography and contact information for the legislators in your district. From there, you will be able to email your legislator directly through a link to their email address on the website.

Don't hesitate to follow-up your request via phone if you haven't heard back in a few weeks.

Prepare for the Meeting

Once your event is confirmed, provide the legislator's staff with a detailed agenda of the day's events and participants. Generally, you can expect the visit to last about an hour. Build in some time for the legislator to ask questions.

The most important thing to do is to be prepared. First, learn as much as you can about your legislator's background- review his/her biography, learn their party affiliation, committee and subcommittee membership. Probably most important is to know whether they are supportive or not of charter schools! Compile a school fact sheet with impressive information about your school including your school's work and why it is important to the community. In addition, know your current charter school issues well and be familiar with how it affects your students and families!

Consider sending out a media advisory asking your local reporters to cover the event or prepare a press release. It might be a good idea to coordinate with your legislator's staff. Anticipate that any media in attendance will bring a photographer and prepare your list of students with or without signed photo releases.

During the visit

Invite students to greet the legislator with a fun sign or a song at the entrance and be ready to go on time. Each legislator is likely to bring one or two staff members with them for the visit. Prepare your staff and students to expect some new faces during the day. A good idea is to have a staff member available to take pictures and post on social media. Many legislators are active on Facebook and Twitter and will appreciate your outreach.

Give a compelling overview of your school and tour several classrooms!

- Consider your school's "why" – why do you exist? How are you making an impact? Why does your school matter? How does your school affect your community? Address these pressing questions in a simple, compelling "why" story where you tell the legislator exactly why your school matters.
- Create a concrete, simple story that demonstrates what makes your school unique and highlights your key differentiators. Whatever makes you unique, tell your legislator about it using an emotional, person-based story. Allow your school's key differentiators to come to life for your visitors by showing them classroom techniques in action or introducing them to students and staff who exemplify these messages.
- Don't hesitate to brag a little! Elected officials are always looking for talking points about great things happening in their communities and they often share this information in speeches and interviews

Follow-up

Immediately after the visit, you should send a thank you letter. Handwritten thank you notes from students, sent or delivered to the legislator's office, are a nice touch! Be sure to provide any additional information you may have promised and send a copy of any pictures taken with the legislator. Most importantly, cultivate your relationship by staying in contact with your legislators. Remember to follow up by continuing to invite them to events at your school or to include their staff on your newsletter.

Please share any photos and details of your visit with PCPCS! Photos make a great addition to our newsletter and website to encourage other PCPCS members to schedule visits of their own!

For more information on this publication, please contact Brandie Karpew, Director of Operations and Data Analytics at b.karpew@pacharters.org. For more information of the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools, please contact us at info@pacharters.org.



How to Plan and Execute a Successful Legislative Visit