



Working with Your Legislative Delegation

By Robert J. Safransky, Ph.D.

You can do much to energize the people and organizations in your district to partner with your school board in presenting your needs to the legislative delegation.

Concerned about funding for your district? Wondering how you can present your case to your legislators? Take the following test to evaluate your knowledge of the legislative process:

- Who is the chair of your district's legislative delegation?
- When does your legislative delegation hold hearings on proposed laws for the new legislative session?
- What bills did your legislative delegation support in the last session that benefited your district?
- Does your legislative delegation know the school district's legislative program?
- Do your administrators know the members of your legislative delegation?
- Do your administrators know your district's legislative program?

- Do the members of your school Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) know your legislative program?
- Do your school PTA members know the members of your legislative delegation?
- Do your teachers know your district's legislative program?
- Do your teachers know the members of your legislative delegation?

So, what will knowing these people and programs do for you? It all depends on how you want to work with your legislative delegation to get positive legislation passed.

Most school districts have a person who is responsible for working with the legislators and informing them of the district's position on bills and issues that arise in each legislative session. Even if you have a full-time or part-time lobbyist representing your district's interests, you can do much to energize the



people and organizations in your district to partner with your school board in presenting your needs to the legislative delegation.

1. Consult with your superintendent and inform him or her of your plan to hold a meeting of district organizations with the legislative delegation several months before the annual legislative session. If you receive approval, contact the legislative chair and discuss your proposal.
2. Meet with the legislative chair and request that the entire delegation mark their calendars to meet with the district personnel on a mutually agreeable date and time. The purpose of the meeting will be to present the district's legislative program to the legislative delegation. Inform the chair that it will be a breakfast meeting in a school or at another time of day if the chair does not wish to participate in a breakfast meeting.
3. Request that the superintendent prepare the district's annual legislative program and present it to the school board for approval so that you have time to prepare a presentation for the legislative committee meeting.
4. Consult with the food services supervisor as to which cafeteria could best handle a large crowd and serve a quality breakfast. If the district has a school that is centrally located and has a food service, culinary arts, or future chef program, it would give the teacher and students an opportunity to work with the cafeteria staff and to learn how to prepare for and serve a large gathering. It would also show your delegation that students are learning real-life skills and practicing them.
5. Prepare an attractive invitation to the legislative delegation and send it to them by both mail and email. Invite the legislator

and his or her immediate legislative staff to be the school system's guests. Post the invitation on the district's Website. If your state does not permit legislators and staff to receive free meals, inform them of the cost and that they can send you a check for the meal.

6. Prepare an invitation to all district PTA presidents and School Advisory Council chairs. Also invite the presidents of all unions in the district and the presidents of the local administrative organizations and subject organizations. They will have to pay for their own meals. Include a form with the cost of the meals and the name of the district person to whom the checks should be sent. Attendees will receive their tickets at the event from tables manned by representatives of the principals' organizations.
7. Prepare the program and have it printed. It should include a welcome from the school board chair and the superintendent, who will introduce the presidents of the unions and principal organizations; an introduction of the delegation by the delegation chair; the presentation of the district legislative program; and a response by the legislative chair.
8. Determine the seating arrangements for the program. If possible, have the maintenance department erect a temporary stage so the attendees can see the legislators, school board members, superintendent, and district lobbyist. School principals, PTA presidents, and School Advisory Council chairs from the same school should be seated at the same table. Union presidents would sit at a reserved table. District administrators would be seated at each table.
9. Prepare a short PowerPoint presentation of the district's legislative program. Highlight

needs by being specific about who is affected. If using a student as an example, be sure to get the parent's permission to show the student's photo and his or her name.

10. Invite the media several weeks before the program and then send reminders so that they will attend. Arrange for the district's media department to videotape the program so it can be viewed on the district's Website.
11. After the event, ask for feedback on the pluses and minuses of the program, the meal, and the meeting with the legislative delegation.
12. Remember to send a personal thank-you note from the superintendent to each member of the legislative delegation, the PTA presidents, the principals, and the union presidents.

Will this event influence your legislators? It depends on how many people show up and how they react to the presentation of the program. However, you have informed every principal, PTA president, and School Advisory Council chair of your district's program and of who their legislators are.

If you follow up by posting on your district's Website the school district's legislative program and district contact, the legislative delegation's email addresses in the state capital and their home office addresses, your district people will be able to contact them during the legislative session at your request.

After the legislative session, you should meet with the delegation and thank them for their work during the session. Also, let them know that you will be having breakfast together before the next session! *Bon appétit!*

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