

STATE & LOCAL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ADVOCACY MONTH

MARCH 2017

#CSADVOCATES



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
ACTIONS WE ENCOURAGE FOR MARCH ADVOCACY MONTH:.....	3
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MESSAGING	4
ADVOCACY 101	7
THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS AND ADVOCACY	8
LOW TOUCH ACTIONS:	
SAMPLE EMAILS (REGARDING A SPECIFIC BILL AND TO SET UP A MEETING).....	11
CALLING YOUR LEGISLATOR	14
SAMPLE PHONE CONVERSATION	15
USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADVOCATE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS	16
SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR TWITTER & FACEBOOK.....	18
PRESS RELEASE FOR THE MEDIA	24
MEDIUM TOUCH ACTIONS:	
MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS	25
SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER (AFTER VISIT/PHONE CALL)	26
SITE VISIT CHECKLIST (ORGANIZING A SITE VISIT/SAMPLE SCHEDULE/TIMELINE).....	27
SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL	32
HIGH TOUCH ACTIONS:	
ORGANIZING A LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EVENT.....	33
ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ADVOCACY DAY.....	34
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FAQ	37
SHARING RESOURCES'.....	38

INTRODUCTION

Greetings to the Field,

Over the past few years, it has been exciting to see the increased interest in community schools at the state and local levels.

In 2016, we counted [state policy wins](#) in California, Maryland, Minnesota, and New York.

In Maryland, HB 1139 requires the state department of education to notify school districts that federal Title I and IV funds may be used for expenses associated with community schools and for the department to provide technical assistance to districts. In California, SB 527 redirects cost savings from Proposition 47, which reduces penalties for low-level crimes, to a block grant of around \$28 million for preventive investments in education, including community schools. 2016 also saw many [local policy wins](#) on both the legislative and school board levels in places like Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Pomona CA, and Las Cruces, NM.

In 2017, it's important to maintain this momentum at the state and local levels to raise awareness of the power of community schools for all different kinds of communities and states-whether urban, suburban, or rural. These efforts are particularly important as we face a more uncertain federal policy climate for education but also great opportunity with the pending implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

As community school advocates, you have the power to catalyze the change we need -- to bring your stories and your results to the school board, City Council, and state house. This toolkit is designed as a resource for your advocacy efforts.

We will be tracking the collective advocacy across the country that will elevate the demand for community schools. Thank you for being advocates for your students and communities every day, and for sharing your stories with elected officials who can help the community schools movement grow further and faster with their support.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Mary K. Kingston' and the signature on the right is 'M. Blank'.

Mary Kingston Roche
Director of Public Policy

Martin J. Blank
Director of The Coalition for Community Schools

ACTIONS WE ENCOURAGE FOR MARCH ADVOCACY MONTH:

Throughout the month of March, the Coalition encourages advocacy at the state and local levels. Outlined below are our suggestions for advocacy actions, going from low-touch or lower effort, to high-touch or higher effort. These actions can either take a few moments or will take some extensive planning. We encourage you to engage in a mix of both kinds of actions in March if possible. Provided below are the page numbers that take you to further details and templates to conduct these actions.

Low Touch

- Email/Call your elected official ([PG. 11-15](#))
- Tweet or post on Facebook to an elected official ([PG. 16-24](#))
- Tweet or post on Facebook stories/activities that your community school is doing ([PG. 16-24](#))
- Media Outreach ([PG. 24](#))

Medium Touch:

- Schedule a visit with a state or local representative ([PG. 25-26](#))
- Schedule a site visit with a state or local representative ([PG. 27-32](#))

High Touch:

- Create an outreach event with a state or local representative ([PG. 33](#))
- Organize an Advocacy Day ([Pg. 34-36](#))

People to reach out to:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| • School Board | Governor's Education Aides |
| • City Council | Governor's Aides for Children youth and families |
| • Mayors | State Chiefs/State Superintendents |
| • County Council | State Department of Education leaders |
| • State Legislators | Other state agencies, including Health |
| • Governors Offices | and Human Services, Housing, Transportation |

Keep the Coalition for Community Schools Informed:

Let the Coalition know how your meeting/phone conversation went or what response you received from your email. Be sure to include information on where your elected official stood on the issues you discussed.

Sharing this information with us will help us track the collective advocacy actions across the country to get a sense of the scale of our actions throughout the month. Please email Denzel Cummings at cummingsd@iel.org to share what your planned advocacy actions/events are leading into March, and follow up with him to share what your impact was and how the conversations/meetings went.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MESSAGING



Why you need an Elevator Speech and Talking Points?

Every advocate for community schools should be prepared at a moment's notice to talk about community schools to a reporter, legislator, community member or stakeholder. The elevator speech is a clear brief message or commercial about your organization typically about 30 seconds long.

The talking points invite discussion and provide support to why community schools are the kind of public schools that families want and children deserve, where students are safe, loved, and challenged.

Elevator Speech

A Community School is a public school – the hub of its neighborhood, uniting educators, community partners, and families to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school, and in life. (Courtesy of NYC Coalition for Educational Justice.)

Talking Points

Partnerships for better learning: With community partners, community schools offer strong academics, health and social support, and enrichment opportunities that all students need but often aren't getting. Learning improves when these needs are met, and teachers can focus on teaching.

Hyper-local: Local decision-making and accountability, responding to the unique needs of each community and building community bonds. Creatively bringing together all of a community's assets to support public education.

Proven approach, updated for a new era. 50 years of evidence: Higher student achievement, more community support and engagement, and vibrant neighborhoods where schools are the hub.

Embodies core American values: fairness, opportunity, community-driven, local control and accountability, parent and family empowerment.

Results: Community schools are making a difference in the lives of children, youth, and families across the country. Community schools always start with a set of results they want to achieve (e.g., decreasing early chronic absenteeism, improving graduation rates, and improving student achievement). To view results you can bring with you into the field, click [here](#).

Overview

Community schools are the kind of public schools that families want and children deserve. Where students are safe, loved, and challenged.

Where families and educators partner with doctors, nurses, social workers, community agencies, businesses, higher education, and others to provide the comprehensive academic and non-academic supports that meet each student's unique needs and taps his/her unique talents. Counseling and health care for some. Food and shelter for others. GED and job training for community residents. Quality instruction, enrichment, and extracurriculars for all. Where schools are open 24/7: early mornings, late afternoons, nights, weekends, and during the summer.

Where teachers are given the time and space to help students master the more challenging academics they need to thrive in an increasingly complex world. Where educators work with local companies, nonprofits, higher education, and local governments to offer students engaging, real-world projects that make learning more relevant, and open the door to future opportunities.

Where students have a voice in what their school looks like; where families are respected and engaged; where neighbors gather; where the wisdom and assets of the community are respected; and where students, families, neighbors, and community partners work with school staff to shape the school's priorities.

Instead of fragmenting neighborhoods, these hyper-local schools unify them. Instead of inventing another "silver bullet," community schools offer a proven approach that's rooted in our democratic values and retooled for the 21st-century, with neighbors helping neighbors, and schools serving as the hub of their communities.

Community schools, 7,500 and growing, have a multi-decade track record of improving achievement, empowering students and families, and strengthening neighborhoods. They are flourishing in a growing number of cities, suburbs, and rural America, in regular public schools and public charter schools.

Community schools offer an approach that builds on core American values to meet 21st-century needs. They are more relevant than ever.

Tips for Telling Your Community School's Story

- Include numbers – how many students does your community school serve? How many families? How many people does your community school employ beyond classroom/ school-day staff?
- Include results – has attendance increased at your school? Have academic outcomes improved? Have disciplinary rates decreased? Has parent engagement increased, and/ or has school climate improve?
- Include a personal story – share how your community school has had a positive impact on an individual student or family.
- Keep it brief – consider using bullet points to outline numbers and results.

ADVOCACY 101

Community Schools need strong advocates. Every single day, leaders in schools and nonprofits must engage in advocacy that advances their vision and strategy. Advocacy is sharing your point of view, your stories and your results with legislators and other policymakers with the objective of generating their support for your work. It is also a great way to engage policy makers in discussion of issues that constituents, like you, face in your communities.

Building relationships with state and local elected officials takes time and effort. The goal of advocacy activities is to develop a relationship with state and local representatives, and their respective staff. You want these policy makers to view you as a credible source of information on community schools; and to seek and value **your** input.

You are the bridge between what is happening in their communities and to their constituents. **You** have a great story to share about your community school, its students, parents and community impact. **You** can share that story in a way that will make a difference – that is why you advocate. Telling your story in a concise way that is connected to the overall community school movement is the key to advocacy success.

As an advocate, your most meaningful contacts with your elected officials should occur when lawmakers are not embroiled in critical education debates, whether educational improvement or funding issues. You should invite them to your school for a tour, or to speak with your principal about his/her community school; to develop your relationship with them through contacts at community events; and to share important school and community information with them all the time, not just during an advocacy campaign. These efforts will result in partnerships that have a strong foundation. Partnership based on mutual respect and trust is a valuable asset when we need to turn to our legislative leaders for support and assistance regarding community school policy.

When to Advocate

Your job as an advocate is never done. It is critical to remind policy makers year-round of the importance of community schools. It's helpful to understand the process of policy making, so that you can effectively advocate for community schools.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS AND ADVOCACY

Note: While this process describes actions at the state level, there are many similarities at the local level through City/County Council and the school board.

There are several stages in the legislative process where grassroots advocacy efforts can impact the outcome. Keep in mind that the relationships you build with your legislators can help to influence actions throughout these stages.

- **Bill Introduction/Sponsorship**
 - Legislators can be encouraged to introduce a bill to address a specific issue, or to co-sponsor a bill introduced by another senator or representative. Obtaining a large number of co-sponsors on a bill is one strategy for gaining attention and credibility for an issue.
- **Committee**
 - Grassroots advocacy at the committee stage is also very important. Communications may focus on supporting or opposing specific language developed by the subcommittee; providing testimony on an issue, encouraging legislators to sponsor amendments; and asking the committee member to vote for or against the bill. Again, action by constituents of committee members can be most effective.
- **Floor Vote**
 - Constituent communication with all senators and representatives is important when it comes to the floor vote. Grassroots efforts at this stage focus on encouraging a legislator to either vote for or against the bill; to sponsor a floor amendment; or to vote for or against a floor amendment offered by another legislator.
- **Conference**
 - Opportunities for grassroots impact are more limited at the conference stage. The Conference Committee works out the differences between similar bills passed by the House and Senate. However, grassroots communications — particularly from constituents of conferees — may influence whether the House or Senate provision is accepted in the compromise bill.
- **Final Passage**
 - Once a bill passes, the real work begins. Your input on implementation will be important to share, so be sure to follow up with your legislators and offer advice on how to most effectively implement this bill in your and other communities, based on your perspective.

Mapping your State Legislature

The legislative process can be a complicated one. The diagram below is intended to help refresh your knowledge on what a state legislature looks like, and the variety of bodies that could be potential places for your political outreach. Please note, that different states may hold different titles or positions that are unique to your locale. Look online to find your state's particular structure, and the unique positions that may be worth contacting.

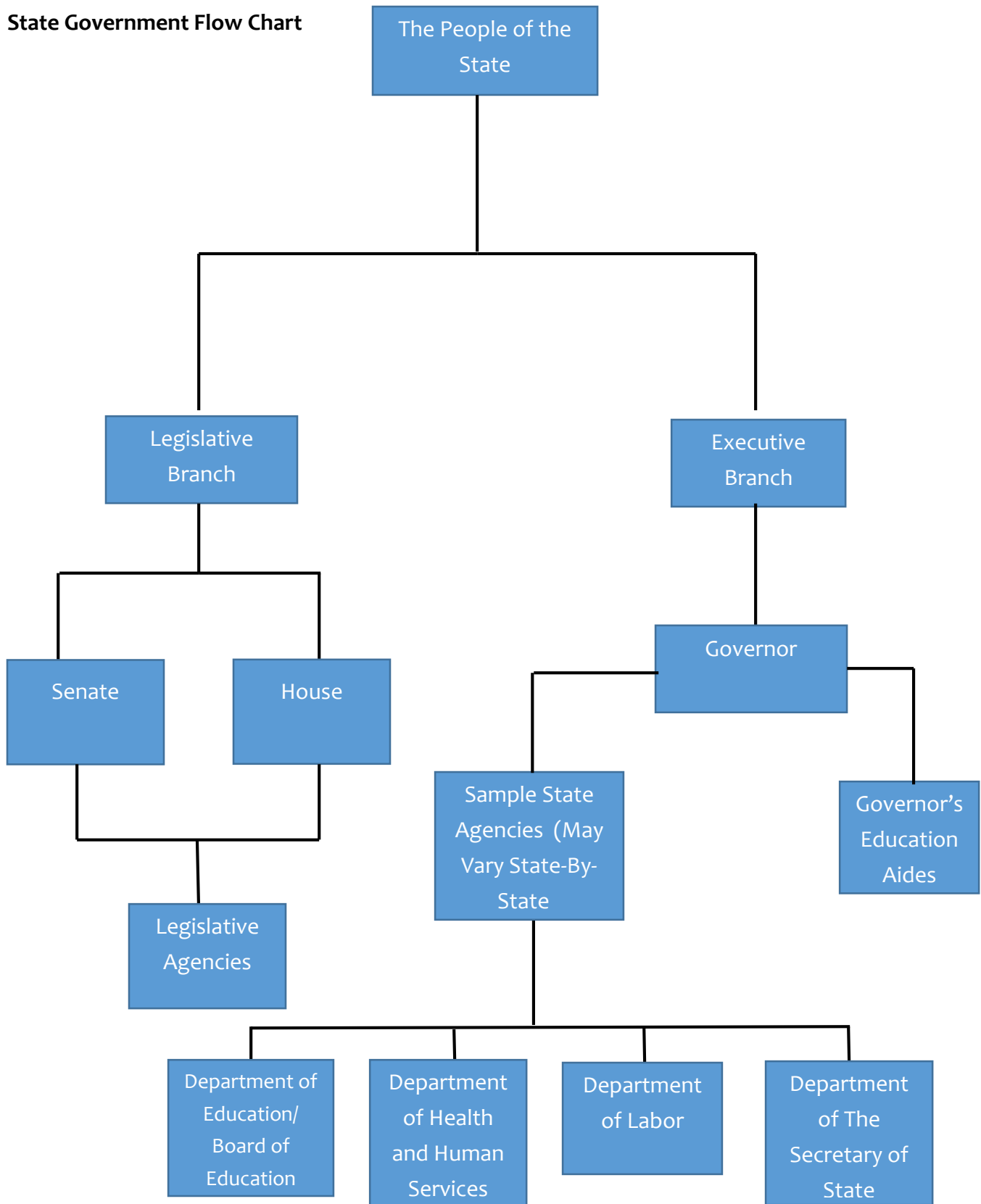
Budgetary Decisions

Legislation is one part of the work that legislators are tasked with accomplishing. They also make critical policy and budgetary decisions ranging from what kinds of provisions are included in bills to what kinds of taskforces are formed to explore which issues. They also play a critical role in budget decisions and in deciding what kinds of programs and supports to fund, and what to cut. Many of the strategies and best practices outlined in this guide can be applied to both legislation and budgetary decisions.

Regulations and Procedures after The Passing of a Bill

Although the signing of a law is a great moment, your work does not stop there. Oftentimes, there are a lot of loose ends and details that need to be decided for the full implementation of a law to happen. Therefore, certain state agencies will be responsible for regulations and procedures to ensure a bill is fully functioning. It is up to you to follow a bill after it is passed, and advocate to those responsible for specific regulations and procedures to confirm that your communities' needs are met by the final details.

State Government Flow Chart



SAMPLE EMAIL TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

The time-tested method of sending written communication to your legislator remains one of the most effective ways to deliver your message to elected officials. Emails from constituents that are well-written, and briefly explain the issue and the proposal's impact, will be noticed.

As a citizen, you have the right to express your opinion to your elected official. The following are some recommendations for corresponding with your elected official:

- Be as concise as possible. Remember that each office has dozens of legislative issues to cover and can have hundreds of constituent requests each day.
- Thank the elected official for taking the time to read your email.
- Remember that correspondence with any elected official is about building an ongoing relationship and persuading them to think of you as a resource. Even if an elected official does not agree with your point of view on an issue today, they might in the future.

SAMPLE EMAIL TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL REGARDING A SPECIFIC BILL

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
(State) House of Representatives
(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear Representative (insert name):

As the legislature begins to debate (insert bill #/ bill name), I wanted to reach out to you as a (insert your title), in (insert school name), and also as a community schools advocate. I believe (insert bill name) will greatly support community schools in (insert district), and will further the work I do every day.

Full-service community schools are growing at a rapid rate across the country (from 33 places in 2007 to over 100 now), and the high demand currently outpaces capacity at the local level. This support is reflected at the state level, where several bills in multiple states were introduced in 2015 from Maryland to California to bipartisan bills in Ohio and Texas. This demonstrates the broad support and versatility of the strategy for any context. It's important to note that the community school strategy is not a program that is layered on to schools, but rather is a vehicle that aligns existing school based services with available community resources to help schools build capacity and leverage funding school-wide to meet the comprehensive needs of students before, during, and after school. Emerging evidence shows that integrated student services, a core feature of community schools, lead to decreases in grade retention and dropout and increases in attendance and math and reading achievement. (Include any statistics/information about your community school/organization)

[Insert a story about your community school. Special programs you offer, unique needs of families you're meeting, and outcomes]

I believe that every young person should have an equal opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential, and a world-class education is essential to achieving this goal. Built into this education should be a full range of opportunities and supports that young people, from rural to urban communities, can leverage regardless of their zip code. For that reason, I respectfully ask you and your staff to consider (insert bill name). This bill will enable us to serve _____ (numbers of students and families you work with) students and families in our community in the most efficient and impactful way.

Sincerely,

(Insert name and address)

SAMPLE E-MAIL TO SET UP A MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

The Honorable (full name)

(Room #) (Name) House Office Building

(State) House of Representatives

(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear [Scheduler's Name] (If the scheduler's information is available, address to them. Otherwise, address to the legislator),

As a constituent of [your district/state], I am writing to request an appointment with Representative/Senator [insert name here] on (insert date here). I lead the local community schools efforts here in [your city], and I'd like to share the work of our community schools and what they have done for students and families in [your state/district].

[Insert a brief story about your community schools. Special programs you offer, unique needs of families you're meeting, and outcomes]

I will be in (insert capital city) on (insert date). It would be ideal if we could meet with [Representative or Senator's name] sometime between (insert available times. It's important to be flexible). Joining me will be the following [your community school initiative name] representatives:

- [List names of those who will be at the appointment]

Please contact me to let me know when would be available to meet, and if we may need to complete any forms in advance. You can reach me at [your phone number and email address]. I will follow up with a phone call in a few days.

We very much look forward to meeting with [Representative or Senator's name].

Sincerely,

[Your name and title]

CALLING YOUR LEGISLATOR

The effect of the phone call is similar to that of letter writing. As with all grassroots advocacy, your call is most likely to receive attention if you have developed a personal relationship with the legislator or staffer. Often, calls are “logged” as for or against a particular issue. Sometimes, you may not get past the receptionist or intern. Nonetheless, making a well-timed call can be particularly important. And, especially when combined with calls from your colleagues on the same issue, the call may tip the balance in your favor. So, don’t hesitate to call.

The easiest way to contact your elected official is to look up the phone numbers online for their office.

For Whom Should You Ask?

- Ask for the elected official if you know them personally.
- If you don’t know the elected official, ask to speak with the staff who handles your issue.
- If you can’t reach a staff member, leave a concise message. Legislative offices do count the number of calls they receive on an issue — pro and con — and relay that information to the elected official.

Tips for Making Effective Phone Calls

- Focus on a single issue, making two or three key points in your phone call.
- Have talking points — or your own notes — in front of you when you call to stay focused on the message you want to deliver.
- Make the issue local — localize the issue to demonstrate the impact on the legislator’s own constituents.
- Clearly state the action you wish the elected official to take on the issue (vote for, vote against, offer an amendment, delete a provision, provide funding, etc.).
- Keep your call brief — not more than three or four minutes.
- Don’t bluff if you are asked a question you can’t answer. Tell them you’ll get the answer and get back to them.
- Leave your name and telephone number with the staff to whom you’ve spoken in case they have any questions later.
- Jot down the name of the staff you spoke to and put it in your contacts. Next time, you can ask for him or her by name and begin building a relationship. Staffers are more likely to listen to and return phone calls from people they know.
- Send thank you note (see sample thank you note)

SAMPLE PHONE CONVERSATION

Staff Member: Thank you for calling Representative **(Name)**'s office. How may I help you?

Caller: Hello, my name is **(your name)** from **(City and State)**, and I am calling on behalf of **(your community school/organization)** where I am a (parent/coordinator/teacher/etc.).

Staff Member: Wonderful, what can I do for you?

Caller: As a constituent of Representative **(Names)**'s district, **(Insert information on why you support community schools, and any specific legislation or funding you support that relates to community schools. Include why this subject is of concern to the Representative's constituents)** Remember, be brief!

Staff Member: Thank you for sharing your concerns with us, and I will relay your comments on to the representative.

Caller: Thank you for this information. I appreciate you sharing my thoughts on community schools. Please feel free to contact me at any time to learn more about community schools. We'd also be happy to host the legislator for a community schools site visit at his/her convenience. Have a great day.

Using Social Media to Advocate for Community Schools

Getting Started on Social Media

If you or your community school is not already on social media, the first step is to sign up for a free account. The steps to set up an account are basic, but both [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) have “help” pages that will guide you through the process and give you a better understanding on how the platform works.

Once you have created an account, before you start posting content, make sure that you have a clear process for determining who will be the primary account user: Resource Coordinator, Program Staff, or Lead Partner Agency staff. There is no “right” or “wrong” person to manage your social media account; it is up to you to determine who in your group is able to take on the responsibility.

What can I tweet about? Anything you’d like to share about your community school/initiative! However, if during your first trial you are unsure how things work or what content is appropriate for you to post, take some time to get a feel for how the platform works. Monitor comparable users and discover what you think works well and what does not. A good way to begin putting content on out while learning how to use the platform is to share or repost what the Coalition for Community Schools has posted on Twitter and Facebook.

Facebook

Facebook is an online social network that connects people and organizations. Users connect by friending each other or liking public figures and organizations. Members can communicate with their audience through messages, personal updates and public wall posts.

Facebook is a great way to connect to community school advocates. You can quickly share useful information with your network, and better understand how your content is performing and how you can spread your messages farther.

There are lots of ways to engage your audience on Facebook. This platform allows you to:

- Share links to articles, petitions, surveys, and slideshows.
- Post photos and videos that showcase your community school and students.
- Tag other users or specific places. **This increases your pages reach and visibility.**
- Make your messages conversational and brief. **Get your audience members engaged and informed.**



The Coalition is on Facebook- “Like” our Page -
<https://www.facebook.com/CoalitionforCommunityschools/>

Twitter #CSadvocates

The hashtag #CSadvocates will be our main hashtag for the month of March. We ask you to be active on Twitter throughout the entire month, but especially in the first week of March as we do a “Twitter and Facebook storm” for community schools. The Coalition will send sample tweets to use before March advocacy month.

Twitter allows users to share short messages in 140 characters or less. Due to the brevity of its messages, Twitter is a great tool for breaking news, tracking specific topics, like community school research and initiatives, engaging with people in your field, and sharing information.

Twitter is an ideal tool for advocacy campaigns because information is delivered and received in real time. Community school advocates can live tweet from an event or meeting to give followers updates and information about the setting. This platform allows you to:

- Bring your message to the attention of another user, like your elected officials, funders, and other community school advocates. You can reply or “retweet” a post to include these individuals or organizations.
- Share links to articles, petitions, surveys, and slideshows.
- Post photos and videos that showcase your community school and students.
- Converse with a variety of elected officials by including their twitter @ in your tweets
- Join or create a conversation about a specific topic by adding a hashtag (#) to your tweet.



The Coalition for Community School is on Twitter!
Follow Us - [@CommSchools](https://twitter.com/CommSchools)

Interactions with Elected Officials

It is okay to interact with elected officials on social media. In fact, using your community schools’ Facebook and Twitter accounts to reach out to your elected officials to support or oppose legislation is an excellent way to make your voice heard for every child and youth you represent. Simply find your elected officials twitter handle and include them in your tweet using @ (their twitter handle). They will receive your tweet, and they will now be able to engage.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR TWITTER & FACEBOOK



Why Social Media Post Work

Social media is a powerful tool that is changing the way people absorb information, mobilize for advocacy, and raise awareness about issue campaigns. Within minutes, organizations and individuals can amplify a singular message and spread it quickly through social media. Community schools can benefit from how quickly information can be shared and how much their follower's networks can see their posts and activities. Online media engagement is only expected to increase in

the coming years; making social media communications a valuable tool for strategic advocacy efforts.

Social Media Posts for Twitter & Facebook

Twitter

Twitter is a great resource for quick updates (140 characters or less). Twitter has 313 million total monthly engaged users so be sure to post impactful and linkable content, photos or short video clips. Be sure to include hashtags that correlate with the campaign (e.g., #CCSadvocacymonth) or connect to a larger conversation that supports community schools.

Facebook

According to the Securities and Exchange Commission 2017 report, worldwide, there are over 1.86 billion monthly active Facebook users, so be sure to create compelling content free of character limit restrictions. Posts should be used to share quotes, articles, longer video clips and photos. Be sure to include hashtags that correlate with the campaign (e.g., #CCSadvocacymonth) or connect to a larger conversation that supports community schools. We've included a few sample post sized for both Twitter and Facebook to give you a sense of what to post.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR TWITTER & FACEBOOK¹

Twitter

Note: See photo files for Twitter & Facebook – [Access Images](#)

Tweet One:

TY @SenatorSylvia for pre-filing a bill recognizing #communitieschools as a proven measure to improve schools #CSadvocates



Tweet Two:

Thank you @pedroarivera2 for seeing the #communitieschools strategy as a way to level the playing field for students. #CSadvocates

Thank you @pedroarivera2 for seeing the community schools strategy as a way to level the playing field for students.
#CSadvocates



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR TWITTER & FACEBOOK²

Tweet Three:

Thank you @NYGovcuomo for continuing to support the #communityschools model by proposing 150 million. #CSAdvocates



Tweet Four:

@Lily_NEA praised staff at Lynn Middle School for serving the whole student through programs & services. #CSadvocates #communityschools



Tweet Five:

Thank you @SenDickCohen for helping to pass legislation in MN approving \$1 million to #communityschools across the state.



Facebook

Note: See photo files for Twitter & Facebook – [Access Images](#)

Facebook One:

Thank you [Sen. Sylvia Garcia](#) for pre-filing for the 2017 state legislative session a bill recognizing that community schools constitute a proven measure to improve schools. SB139 would give struggling schools time to implement the community schools strategy. #CSadvocates

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/SylviaRGarcia>



Facebook Post Two:

Thank you [Pedro Rivera, Pennsylvania Department of Education](#) for seeing the community schools strategy as a way to level the playing field for students and combat inequities in schools
#CSadvocates

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/PADepartmentofEducation/?fref=nf>



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR TWITTER & FACEBOOK³

Facebook Post Three:

Thank you Governor Cuomo for continuing to support and expand the community schools model by proposing \$150 million for new and existing community schools in New York City. Community schools give teachers the time and space to help students master the more challenging academics they need to thrive in an increasingly complex world. #CSadvocates

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/GovernorAndrewCuomo/>



Facebook Post Four:

President of the nation's largest labor union was in Las Cruces for an assembly and ribbon-cutting at the city's first community school. Lily Eskelsen Garcia, President of the National Education Association, spoke to a gym full of students at Lynn Middle School about the importance of taking back their education and the impact community schools can have. #CSadvocates

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/neatoday/?nr>



Facebook Post 5:

Thank you Sen Dick Cohen! The appropriations bill [H.F. 2749](#) which approved \$1 million to create more full-service community schools across the state will help meet the needs of students and families. #CSAdvocates



PRESS RELEASE FOR THE MEDIA

You can decide whether to promote Advocacy month before or after it occurs depending on what role the advocacy strategy plays in your overall communications plan. Create a conversation around Advocacy Month. If you wait to send it out after the start of the campaign, you will be able to provide more information on the conversations and outcomes of advocating with various elected officials. We have provided a [press release](#) template to help guide you in writing a release that drives impact.

Promote your work

Here are a couple of tips for working with the media to promote your work:

- Create your own local media list. Include print and broadcast media. Education, political, family/life section and editorial writers who have written about your school/initiative or shown interest in your work in the past should be included in your list. This list should include reporter's name and news organization, e-mail address, phone number and fax number
- Review previous stories about your school/initiative to see what message will capture media attention now
- Submit timely, newsworthy op-eds to local newspapers
- A story pitched to the media must be new, timely, and have an element of public interest

- Uncover some of the barriers to family involvement in schools and profile how your community school helped a particular family overcome those barriers to support their child's education
- Describe specific courses and programs that are creative, unique, and hands on. Provide quotes from teachers, students, and parents demonstrating how these courses have contributed to their educational experience

MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective method of communicating with elected officials and their staff. In order for meetings to be successful, they also require extensive planning, an understanding of the needs of legislators and, perhaps, a rehearsal. Legislators will usually be interested in visiting your school, and staff is often searching for opportunities to use the legislator's time at home most effectively.

Therefore, a visit to your school will often serve everyone's interests. It is best to meet with state legislators when they are home in their district offices during legislative recess, when they have fewer distractions from legislative business. Local officials are very accessible as they are located within your community, and you can find even more time to meet with them.

Tips for Scheduling a Meeting with your Legislator

- Contact the elected official's office and ask to speak with the appointment secretary/scheduler.
- Explain who you represent (community school/organization) and the reason you want a meeting with the representative. Ask the scheduler how you can arrange a meeting.
- If you are inviting the legislator to visit your school, send an email invitation from the principal or your organization's executive director if possible.
- Ask the scheduler the amount of lead time needed to schedule a school visit and send your invitation far enough in advance.
- Inform the Coalition's staff of the meeting request and date chosen.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER (AFTER VISIT/PHONE CALL)

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
(State) House of Representatives
(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear Representative (insert name):

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me (include date) to talk about the importance of supporting community schools in (State) and in your district (include district number/area). As we discussed, and as I have witnessed firsthand community schools keep children and youth safe, increases academic achievement, and helps working families. (Include any statistics/information about your community school/organization)

I look forward to meeting with you again to further discuss the ways in which we can work together to ensure the ways in which we can work together to secure funding for community schools (or include specific bill/issue discussed) throughout the state.

Sincerely,

(Name, Last Name)
(Contact Information)

SITE VISIT CHECKLIST

Being an effective community school advocate requires building strong relationships with your representatives, and their staff. Some tips to keep in mind while you prepare before, during and after your visit with your policy maker.

Before your Visit

- ✓ Scheduling
 - Schedule individual or group visits with your elected officials.
- ✓ Prepare
 - Treat this as an important meeting by preparing in advance. The mark of a successful legislative visit is leaving the legislator with a good sense of why you were there.
- ✓ Do your Research
 - Learn about your elected official's priority issues, and the committee on which he/she serves.
 - Bring statistics and facts about your community school/organization.
 - How can your official's support help your community school?

During your Visit

- ✓ Arrive Early
 - If you are running late, call and let them know.
- ✓ State the Purpose of your Visit
 - Tell your elected official who you are representing (community school/organization), and what the purpose of your visit is.
- ✓ Listen, Respond, and Don't Argue
 - Your elected official might agree with you – that's okay! Identify issues of concern or differences of opinion and respond based on your knowledge and experience.
 - Be positive and firm. Legislators generally want to help.
 - Tell the truth. Credibility is critical to a successful relationship.
 - In a team visit, work with your colleagues, allowing all to participate.
- ✓ Wrap Up the Meeting
 - The entire visit should not take longer than 20 minutes
 - Summarize your key points and positions
 - Leave fact sheets, other information relevant to community schools, and your contact information.
 - Don't forget to thank the elective official for their time!

After your Visit

- ✓ Follow Up
 - Send a thank you letter. ([See Sample Thank You Letter](#))
- ✓ Keep the Coalition for Community Schools informed
- ✓ Let the Coalition staff know how your visit went and where your elected official stood on the issues you discussed.

ORGANIZING A SITE VISIT

Inviting policy makers to visit your community school is a powerful way to help them understand the value your program brings to the community. The future of community schools lies in the level of commitment that public officials make to fund programs. By hosting a site visit, advocates can help raise awareness of the importance of community schools in your community and the need to keep this work strong.

The following steps provide a guide to schedule and carry out a successful site visit.

✓ **Step 1**

- Contact your legislator: Find your legislators state or local district office number, and call from there.
- You can use this site to find your state representatives contact information:
 - <http://www.statelocalgov.net/>

✓ **Step 2**

- Identify a few dates during the next Congressional or General Assembly recess when you could host a tour of your community school, and send an invitation.

✓ **Step 3**

- Call the district office. Tell the scheduler/legislative aide that you would like to schedule a tour of your community school for the policy maker to attend.
- Be flexible. Provide options for dates and times if your first selection does not work. If a policy maker is not available, see if a staff person can make the visit instead.
- Keep in mind that elected officials' schedules can change without notice. Several days before your scheduled visit, call to confirm the site visit and have alternate dates in case you need to reschedule.
- Remember also that sometimes an elected official will not be able to participate in the visit, but a staffer will. Staffers are responsible for sharing information and making recommendations to elected officials. They play important roles, and it can be very impactful having a staffer participate in a site visit as well.

✓ **Step 4**

- Before the visit, identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your program.

ORGANIZING A SITE VISIT²

- Once you have identified the spokespeople to represent your community school, give them any background material you have on the policy maker so they will feel comfortable meeting them. This is a good opportunity to share the schedule of the site visit and clarify their roles.
- ✓ **Step 5**
 - Congratulations! It's the day of the site visit.
 - Have a fact sheet on your school to give to the senator or representative. Include information that demonstrates the reach and impact your community school has on children, youth, their families, and the surrounding community.
 - Take pictures of the visit!
 - After the visit ends, send a thank you letter to your legislator for attending the site visit.

The Coalition for Community Schools is here to help you with legislative site visits. If you are interested in organizing a site visit contact Mary Kingston Roche at rochem@iel.org.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE AND TIMELINE FOR SITE VISIT¹

The following tools are intended to help you plan and coordinate your site visit successfully before and during the site visit.

Schedule – Day of Site Visit

Time	Activity
3:00 PM	Legislator/Staff arrives at the community school and is greeted by Principal, Program Coordinator, or other lead host. Have a fact sheet available to distribute. Don't' forget to have your camera ready to take pictures.
3:05 – 3:15 PM	Lead the Legislator/Staff on a tour of the school. Choose areas that demonstrate the impact of your community school on the academic, social, health and well-being of your students. Walk the tour yourself in advance to make sure everything is in order and that you deliver your intended message.
3:15 – 3:30 PM	Introduce Legislator/Staff to the children/youth in the program. Have them talk about their experience at the community school. Inform participants of the message you are conveying in advance so they can be prepared and supportive.
3:30 – 3:45 PM	Facilitate a discussion between parents and Legislator/Staff. Ask parents to explain how the programs and services housed at the community school helps their families.
3:45 – 4:00 PM	Have the school Principal or Resource Coordinator talk about school-wide improvement attributable to the community school. 4:00 PM - End of site visit. Follow up with a thank you letter.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE AND TIMELINE FOR SITE VISIT²

Timeline

Time Prior to Visit	Activity
1 month	Invite Legislator/Staff to visit your community school. Be prepared to have various dates you can suggest. Follow up with a formal invitation via email, mail, or fax.
3 weeks	Invite parents, community members, school officials, and youth to participate in the site visit.
2 weeks	Develop schedule for the day; identify roles for spokespersons.
1 week	Finalize program agenda. This includes tour of the community school and supporting materials you will be giving the Legislator/Staff. Meet with other people who will participate in the visit (teachers, parents, students) to discuss what role they will play, what they will talk about, what they want to share about your community school work, and what they need to tell their stories.
3 days	Call your Legislator's office to confirm visit.
2 days	Invite media, if applicable.

SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove Baltimore, MD



Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove in Baltimore moved from one of the city's lowest performing high schools to one of Baltimore's top choice high schools between 2011 and 2015. From an early childhood education program for parenting teens to workforce development for community members, a network of over 75 partners customize responses to needs presented by students and families. Students clocked more than 17,000 service learning hours last school year and are credited with stopping the building of a waste incinerator near their campus through community organizing.

Demographics	Results
Location: Baltimore, MD Grade Levels: 9-12 Number of Students: 437 Race/Ethnicity <ul style="list-style-type: none">African American 51%Asian American 1%Caucasian 25%Hispanic 23% ELL Students: 15% Special Education: 27% Free/Reduced Lunch: 85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">From 2011 to 2015 BFHS moved from one of Baltimore's lowest performing high schools to one of Baltimore's top choice high schoolsStudents posted approximately 17,000 service learning hours in school year 2013-14Students organized to stop the building a waste incinerator to be built less than a mile from the school60 families have been prevented from becoming homeless89% of students indicated they learned a lot at school95% of parents would recommend the school to others

ORGANIZING A LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EVENT

One of the great advantages of state and local community schools policy is the level of accessibility and direct contact it provides activists. This accessibility helps make it easier to plan and organize events celebrate community schools within the community. This also gives the community school an opportunity to invite local or state representatives to see the great work that is being done at local community schools. Other ideas include hosting panels with community schools practitioners, and engaging discussion between community school advocates and the legislators invited. Below is a sample schedule to spark ideas for your own community schools celebration or event.

An Evening to Celebrate DC Community Schools

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

6:00-8:00 pm

Latin American Youth Center

Agenda: 6:00-6:30 pm: Check-in, dinner, gallery walk of community schools artifacts

6:30-7:30 pm:

- Welcome
- Overview of DC community schools and the national community schools movement
- Panels with community school stakeholders

Panel 1: Role of the coordinator: coordinating opportunities and supports and expanded learning/youth development

Rena Johnson, Principal, Stanton ES

Christie Atlee, Community School Coordinator, Stanton ES

Christian Czaniecki, Special Education Teacher & Just Keep Livin' Coordinator, Roosevelt HS

Bryan Crutchfield, student, Roosevelt HS

Karen Feinstein, Executive Director, Georgia Ave Family Collaborative

Panel 2: Family and Community engagement in a community school

Wendy Castellon, Briya PCS adult student and parent

Deidra Bailey, Teacher, District of Columbia International School

Cody Norton, Teacher, Marie Reed ES

Justine Cortez, DCPS Office of Early Childhood

Sarah Garner, Counselor, Jefferson Academy

Kristine M. DuPree, Program Manager, Edgewood/Brookland Collaborative

Brief Discussion and Collection of Commitment Cards

7:30 pm: Remarks by elected officials and city leaders

7:50 pm: Closing Remarks and ways attendees can stay involved with community schools

8:00 pm: Adjourn

ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ADVOCACY DAY

A powerful and effective way to promote community schools is to plan a community schools advocacy day in your district or state. Emerging community schools state coalitions are particularly well-poised to organize a state advocacy day for stakeholders. An advocacy day is also an effective strategy as it can incorporate all the actions listed above. Planning an effective advocacy day involves:

- Selecting a day
- Coordinating logistics (e.g. how to transport people to the state capitol, setting up meetings, etc.);
- Setting specific asks for policies and funding for all participants to share
- Developing a briefing packet and talking points for participants
- Setting up a plan and hashtag for social media

Planning a way to track discussions and follow up on them to continue to build relationships with elected officials throughout the year. *Note: The materials below come from the New York state community school coalition's advocacy day in January 2017. Thank you to the New York coalition for sharing this information!*

Sample Email Announcing your Advocacy Day

Dear Community School Partners,

On behalf of (insert your organization) , we are incredibly excited to see you on (insert date) for Community Schools Advocacy Day in (insert location)! We hope it will be an engaging and enjoyable day with members sharing your community school stories. Please see attached for several important documents:

1. **Group List:** Please take note of your group and group leader. If there are any names missing, please contact me asap.
2. **Legislator Meetings:** This is your schedule of meetings on Tuesday. Relevant member information is included.
3. **Briefing Packet:** Please review this briefing packet for advocacy day information. Note our updated hashtag for the day (insert hastag)
4. **Talking Points:** Please review the attached talking points which highlights key messages and details on our budget priorities.

And below is our agenda for the day:

Community Schools Advocacy Day Agenda

- I. **10:00am -10:30am:** Community Schools Advocacy Day Participants Meet at 3rd Floor Terrace, Legislative Office Building (light refreshments will be served)
- II. **10:30am – 11:00am:** Press Conference
- III. **11:00am-3:00pm:** Meetings with Legislators (Lunch is on your own based on your schedule)
- IV. **3:00pm:** End of Community Schools Advocacy Day *note some groups may have a meeting scheduled at 3:00pm*

If you have any questions after reviewing the attachments, please don't hesitate to contact me. Have a great weekend and I look forward to seeing everyone (insert date)

Many Thanks,

(insert name and title)

Sample Briefing Packet (via New York Community Schools Coalition)

Community Schools Advocacy Day

Briefing Packet

We are looking forward to seeing you in Albany on Tuesday January 24 for the New York State Community Schools Network's Community Schools Advocacy Day! Our goal is to support and advance the development of all local and statewide community school initiatives. We focus on community schools funding for the following reasons:

- To ensure adequate and sustainable funding exists for community schools to develop and strengthen their work in communities across the state.
- To maximize the state's investments, funding for technical assistance is critical for the school districts and schools who want to implement community schools and operationalize the strategy with fidelity.
- To safeguard existing funding streams that community schools leverage to provide essential programs and services for children and families (i.e. school-based or school-linked health services for medical

and mental health, expanded learning opportunities such as after-school and summer programs, and parent/family engagement support).

The purpose of Community Schools Advocacy Day is to:

- 1) Advocate for the New York State Community Schools Network's FY18 Budget Priorities
- 2) Introduce and strengthen the awareness of the the New York State Community Schools Network as a statewide coalition
- 3) Inform elected officials on the community schools strategy; the impact it has on communities/schools/children/families; and the work that is occurring locally across the state

To view the full briefing packet [click here!](#)

Sample Talking Points (via New York Community Schools Coalition)

NEW YORK STATE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS NETWORK- ADVOCACY DAY TALKING POINTS

General Community School Message

- The New York State Community Schools Network is a statewide coalition of community-based organizations, advocacy groups, educational technical assistance centers, and unions to support and advance the development of all local and statewide community school initiatives.
- Community schools develop strategic partnerships with external resources or organizations to promote and support student growth.
- Community schools need time and sustained support to increase student learning and success.
- Community schools increase access to medical and mental health, expand learning opportunities such as after-school and summer programs, and parent/family engagement support remove the barriers to learning that young people might face. With these essential elements housed in a community school, the work leads to expanded student achievement, stronger families, and ultimately a better New York State.

To view the full talking points document [click here!](#)

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FAQ

People have lots of questions about community schools. Here are responses to some of the most common with links to helpful resources. If you have additional questions email us at cc@iel.org.

1. [What is a community school?](#)
2. [What are the key conditions for learning that community schools work to fulfill?](#)
3. [What happens at a community school, and is the curriculum like?](#)
4. [What are the key ingredients in organizing and operating community schools?](#)
5. [How are community schools funded?](#)
6. [What do we need community schools? How do community schools address equity?](#)
7. [Is there national support for the community schools model?](#)
8. [What are the guiding principles driving the operation of community schools?](#)
9. [What are the major differences between a community school and a regular school?](#)
10. [Is there a logic model for community schools?](#)
11. [Do community schools work?](#)
12. [Are there differences between the terms community school, full-service community school, and community learning center?](#)
13. [Do community schools have to be public schools?](#)
14. [Where can I find some examples of community school initiatives](#)
15. [Where can I find resources, toolkits, and technical assistance information on community schools?](#)

SHARING RESOURCES¹

Advocacy

Our purpose in sharing these resources is to guarantee well-organized advocacy efforts that results in successful outcomes. These resources will aid in building local and state awareness of the community school movement.

Below you will a variety of resources that will help with your advocacy goals, including interactions with state and local leaders, social media and sharing stories.

These are links that provide assistance for writing a legislative proposal:

- definitions for commonly used words in state legislation from CoSN
http://cosn.org/sites/default/files/pdf/CoSNStateChapter_AdvocacyToolkit_o.pdf
- Components of a legislative proposal from Afterschool Alliance
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/LegislationSampleLanguage.pdf>

When advocating the message must be clear and concise; this link provides an example of how to do so:

- Child & Family Policy Center
http://www.cfpciowa.org/documents/filelibrary/ecc/Legislative_priorities_2017_5FA6BoD800E75.pdf

Social Media is a prominent form of communication but can also be a hassle; this link provides social media guidelines:

PTA

- <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3892>

Sharing stories is critical in this movement; this link is a toolkit that provides a story example and story worksheet to help create meaningful and concise stories:

National Council of La Raza

- <http://publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/237/AdvocacyToolKitPeerSupport.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

SHARING RESOURCES²

Events

The events listed below are other creative resources that your schools can engage local and state attention to our movement. These events include family engagement, student health and safety, and teacher involvement. Each event is provided with a toolkit that will serve as a guide when orchestrating these events however, this does not limit your ability to make the event creative for your schools.

The following three links come from PTA and are focused on student, teacher and family engagement.

- Family engagement in schools:
<http://www.pta.org/programs/programstyftsw.cfm?ItemNumber=3262&navItemNumber=3986>
- Healthy peer interaction and encouraging anti-bullying atmospheres :
<http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3003&navItemNumber=3984>
- Teacher and staff appreciation:
<http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=4378&navItemNumber=4792>

The Children's Defense Fund provided this toolkit that focuses on providing healthcare for students who are currently uninsured but are eligible to have insurance.

- <http://www.insureallchildren.org/?referrer=http://www.childrensdefense.org/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

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