

Community Schools Advocacy to tell your Story

**Denzel Cummings
Reuben Jacobson**

Coalition for Community Schools

Agenda

- Advocacy Toolkit
- Pre-Meeting Tasks
- Meetings Structure
- Talking Points
- Tips
- Asks
- Contact Us

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

- This [advocacy toolkit](#) will help you better prepare to advocate for community schools
- This toolkit will help you answer and develop strategies for the following questions:
 - *What do you want to happen as a result of meeting with this legislator? (What is your “ask”?)*
 - *Which issues do you most care about, and most heavily impact your mission and the population that you serve?*
 - *Which issues are important to the legislator?*

Before Meeting With Your Representative

- ▶ **Do your Homework!**
 - ▶ Research what issues are important to your elected officials.
 - ▶ It is important to understand what will resonate with them.
 - ▶ You can find these issues by going to their websites.

Your Role as a Constituent

- Remember, it's your legislators' jobs to hear from you as a constituent
- You have a unique perspective & **stories** to share with them
 - Think ahead of the stories you want to tell
- Don't be intimidated!
- Think of it as the beginning of a relationship, not a one-time encounter

Structure Your Meeting

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Explain Why You're Here
- ▶ *Briefly*: What is a Community School & key Community School strategies?
- ▶ **The “pitch”: Tell your Story! (using data and anecdotes)**
- ▶ The “ask”: Ask them to support funding that bolsters community schools (particularly 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Full-Service Community Schools) and to visit your school(s)
 - ▶ If they say yes, maybe, or no, what would you do?
 - ▶ Thank them for their time
 - ▶ Offer yourself as a resource & say you'll keep in touch
- ▶ Follow Up – Thank you Emails

Community School Talking Points

▶ Results

- ▶ Academic Achievement (Math and reading scores)
- ▶ Improved Attendance and Graduation Rates
- ▶ Increased Student, Family and Community Engagement

▶ Cost Effectiveness

- ▶ Leveraging private and public resources
- ▶ Return on investment

▶ Infrastructure and Systems Change

▶ Scalable and Sustainable

▶ Innovative Partnerships and Opportunities Emerge

Community Schools Messaging

New Tagline for the Coalition

Partnering so students learn and thrive

Elevator Speech

A Community School is a public school – the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners; providing all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life.

CORE MESSAGES

We believe every student should encounter community schools that are:

- Partnering for better learning
- Hyper-local
- Pushing the fact they are a proven approach, updated for a new era



TIPS

- ▶ Your job is to inform your legislator of what you think is the right thing and why, so focus on the issue and stay positive.
- ▶ Pay attention to their reactions as you share your community school stories/experiences. Adjust your follow up according to what resonated with them and what they were inclined towards.
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to a question they ask, tell them that you will find out the answer and get back to them
- ▶ Tell them you will stay in touch through their education LA (Legislative Assistant), and that you are happy to serve as a resource whenever they could use you (to provide testimony, review a bill, etc.)

QUESTIONS TO ANTICIPATE

- ▶ If you are already doing this work without direct support, why does the Federal Government have to get involved? In some cases, the work is also happening without state support. Why should the State Government get involved?
- ▶ How does dedicated community schools funding fit in with other federal/state funding streams?
- ▶ Tell me more about the results that you are getting?
- ▶ How are you engaging families?
- ▶ Is there scientifically-based research to support community schools?

Asks

Please share the following “asks” in your meetings (federal examples).

Example of Asks:

Appropriations:

- ▶ Protect key programs for youth, families and communities in the FY 2018 budget that are slated for elimination or at-risk of elimination in President Trump’s proposed budget

Every Student Succeeds Act:

- ▶ Ensure ongoing, meaningful stakeholder engagement in implementation of ESSA at the state and local levels.

Affordable Care Act:

- ▶ Protect Medicaid funding that is critical to provide school-based health services for students, particularly with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Denzel Cummings, cummings@iel.org
- Emerson Policy Fellow, Coalition for Community Schools
- Reuben Jacobson, jacobsonr@iel.org
- Deputy Director, Coalition for Community Schools

www.communityschools.org