

Checklist for Effective Communication With Policymakers (State or Local Boards of Education, Legislators, County Commissioners, etc)

DO:	DON'T:
Be polite, fair, and constructive	Make threats or demands
Your homework – be informed about the issue(s) – know all of the pros and cons and be able to explain them	Make claims without substantiation
Keep the focus on CHILDREN – how they will benefit from or be affected by proposed policies/legislation	Focus on YOUR needs
Cite the bill or policy number to which you are responding	Ramble on leaving the reader to wonder, “what was the point?”
Cite your position clearly and with authority; provide reasons (backed by facts or research, if possible)	Make exclamations and accusations without reasoning or evidence
Share personal anecdotes – make the issue “real” for the reader	Assume that the policymaker can sympathize or relate to your issue without sufficient explanation
Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation – use “spell check” – make sure that your writing is reflective of an educated individual – be clear, coherent, and accurate with any information you share	Rattle something off in thirty seconds, fail to proof-read or spell-check and send –poorly constructed letters/emails from educators take away from the credibility of the entire profession
Keep your correspondence to one page or less	Write a thesis on the topic to make your point – you will have lost your audience before they even begin to read!
Use clear, accurate information to make your case	Put down or make negative remarks against another program in favor of your own
Give praise and thanks for support of your position	Criticize, ridicule, or change your position after a policymaker has publicly backed your position
Follow – through – stay in touch with policymakers, their staff, and the organization(s) you are collaborating with and stay on top of the issue until it is resolved	Expect someone else to do the work for you – it is hard to complain if you have not taken action yourself
Let your voice be heard! Be proactive – MAKE A DIFFERENCE!	Do nothing – be reactive – be forced to live with the consequences of not taking action