

Advocacy for Public Policy

Title I State Parents Advisory Council
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The Education Policy and Leadership Center

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The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC)

The Mission of EPLC is to encourage and support the development and implementation of effective state-level education policies in order to improve student learning in grades P-12, increase the effective operation of schools, and enhance educational opportunities for citizens of all ages.

www.eplc.org

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EPLC Strategies

- **Strategy #1 - Information**
Link relevant and reliable research and other information to state-level education policymakers and others and provide assistance with policy analysis and policy development.
- **Strategy #2 – Leadership**
Develop awareness and capacity among policymakers, educators, parents and community leaders to serve as advocates and champions for significant education policy issues.
- **Strategy #3 – Public Advocacy**
Promote a public climate that expects and holds policymakers accountable to advocate, adopt and implement effective policies that advance significant education goals.

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Why Advocate?
Relevancy and Potential of Public Policy

- Understand why public policy matters.
- Consider how you are affected.
- Determine how public policy can be used more effectively.
- Understand that you can make a difference.

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Public Policy

- Public vs. Institutional vs. other (i.e. family).
- The “law” vs. practice or habit.
- Local (municipal, county, school district), state and federal.
- Constitutions, statutes, regulations, other.
- Recognize pyramids of law and jurisdiction.

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Relevancy of Public Policy

- Affects each of us in many ways.
- Shapes the environment in which we work.
- Shapes our professional lives.
- Can mandate, encourage, prohibit, or inhibit.
- Apply to “some” or “all” of a category.
- May create a “right” or entitlement”.
- Effect of constitutional prohibition on “special laws” (i.e. Pittsburgh, Harrisburg SD).

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State Policy Levers

- Constitution
- Statutes
- Regulations
- Department Standards/BECS/Guidelines
- Appropriations
- Conditions attached (targeted, pilots, incentives, rewards)
- Appointing Authority
- Bully-Pulpit (speechmaking, convening)
- Elections and Political Campaigns

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Why Public Advocacy?

- The Importance of Public Policy.
- Federal, State & Local Education Policy.
- Your right to petition your elected officials.
- State & Federal legislators are generalists.
- Good policy depends upon those with experience, expertise, information, insight.
- Role of state associations and lobbyists.
- Role of the member and the constituent.
- **If you don't, who will?**

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Opportunities for Public Advocacy

- Opportunities provided in the policymaking process.
- Requirements for public action by policymakers.
- Requirements for public notice.
- Requirements for several "readings" of legislation.
- Regulatory review process.
- Your obligation to "pay attention".

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Advocacy Framework

- Know the Issues.
- Understand the Process.
- The Decision-Makers.
- The Policy Levers.
- The Political Environment.
- What Works for Advocacy?

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Know the Issues

- Do the homework - become knowledgeable.
- Know what to ask for, and why.
- What is the problem?
- What do you propose?
- Who is affected?
- What is the cost?
- Who favors the legislation (potential allies)?
- Who opposes the legislation?
- Have an "elevator speech" ready!

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PA General Assembly (The Basics)

- Institution with a long history steeped in traditions.
- House of Representatives (established 1681)
 - 203 members
 - Presiding officer is the Speaker
 - About 60,000 constituents
- Senate (established 1790)
 - 50 members
 - Presiding officer is Lt. Governor
 - About 250,000 constituents

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“Rules” for Operations of General Assembly

- **Constitutional Rules**
 - One subject per bill.
 - Three readings per chamber.
 - 102 in House and 26 in Senate to pass legislation.
 - PA Supreme Court has usually been deferential to General Assembly.
- **Statutory Rules**
 - Sunshine notice, etc. These can be changed by writing new law.
- **Rules of the House and Senate**
 - Each chamber has its own Rules.
 - Are easily changed or suspended by the chamber.
 - Committees; committee members; public notice, voting.

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Basics of State Legislative Process

- Any legislator can introduce any idea.
- Process is not easy.
- Committee process.
- Influence of the Committee Chair, Members.
- Committee Options – no action; hearings; long-delay; immediate action.
- Amendments in Committee.
- Fiscal note from Appropriations.
- Floor action (or not)

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Enacting a Law

- Bill must pass both House and Senate in exact same form (language, punctuation, everything!).
- Need to reconcile any differences.
- Conference committee.
- Send to Governor for approval.
- Sign, veto, or go without signature.
- Understand the many intervention opportunities available to you (timing is important)

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Tracking a Bill on Website of PA General Assembly

Details about a Bill:

- Bill number remains the same entire session.
- Printer's number changes with each re-print.
- Names of Sponsors.
- Summary of the content.
- Latest action.

History of a Bill:

- See all actions.
- Link to all amendments & text.
- Link to all votes.

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Making State Law

Statutory Process

http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/VC/visitor_info/pdfs/makingLaw.pdf

Regulatory Process

<http://www.irrc.state.pa.us>

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Know the State Budget-Making Process

- Most important legislation each year
- Planning begins previous summer/fall
- Governor's budget message in Feb/March
- Appropriation Committee hearings in House and Senate (by invitation)
- June 30 constitutional deadline

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Know the Regulatory Process

- State Board of Education
- Composition & Structure
- Staff and PDE
- Role of State Board of Education
- Regulatory Review Process
- Understand the intervention opportunities
- Transparent process with multiple opportunities for public/legislator comment

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PA 2017 Policy-Making Context

- Budget remains the most important policy tool.
- Strong executive state.
- Divide between Governor and republican legislative leadership.
- Divide within Republican leadership senate/House.
- Divide within Republican leadership in the House.
- New Republican education committee chairs.
- Deep divisions based on ideology as much as partisan politics.
- No Vision for Education and Children in PA.
- Policy often not driven by good information & data.
- State's fiscal condition is not good.
- 2018 elections upcoming.
- Effects of gerrymandering.

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PA State Budget Context

- PA has one of the most unequal and unfair school funding systems in the nation.
- Low state share – about 35-36%.
- Low appropriations per student.
- Great dependency on local wealth/property taxes.
- Therefore great inequity.
- 2007 Costing-Out Study noted much inadequacy.
- Progress in 2008-2010.
- Nearly \$900 million cut in 2011.
- Largest cuts in poorest districts.
- Debate now about how much state money? How to be distributed? How state is to raise the money?

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Consider PA Policy-Making Context

- Policies focused on short-term – often not strategic nor complementary
- Policies often not sustained
- Fiscally and socially conservative state
- Tension of “what works” and state mandates vs. local control
- Relatively low state taxes, but impression that taxes are high
- Little accountability for state policymakers on education issues

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Other Contextual Issues

- Educated Citizenry
- Ready for Success - 21st Century Skills
- Emphasis on Workforce/Jobs
- Staffing of PA Department of Education
- Other?

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Know Your Legislator(s)

- Who are your legislators (House, Senate)?
- Incumbent or new?
- Lives where?
- Background – family, work experience, community involvement?
- Who are their supporters? Opponents?
- Legislative interests? Committee assignments? Caucuses joined? Bills sponsored?
- Past voting record?
- Who are the staff?

You need to start where they are, not where you wish they would be.

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Influencing Your Legislator(s)

- **Goal is to build a trusting relationship between you and policymaker**
- Focus first on your own legislators
- Establish your credibility – don't ever lie, mislead
- Legislative offices - Get to know the staff
- Build a team of constituents
- Visits to your school, program (your turf)
- Allies, Coalitions and Networks
- Media opportunities (with children)
- Petitions? Letters? Calls? E-mails?

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Effective Public Advocacy

In case of school board members:

- **These are critical decision-makers in PA because of 500 districts and local control**
- **Same Goal: Trusting relationship – establish credibility**
- Build a team of constituents (Booster club? Former students? Employers/businesses?)
- Present to School Board meeting
- Visits to your school, program (your turf)
- Discuss how policy decisions affect you, your children, schools and community. Allies, Coalitions and Networks
- Media opportunities (with children)
- Petitions? Letters? Calls? E-mails?

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Building Effective Relationships

- Discuss how policy decisions affect you, your children, schools and community
- Tell a story
- Engage lawmaker in other ways such as service on committees, boards
- Serve on an advisory committee
- Testify at hearings
- Be a campaign volunteer
- Become a reliable source of information
- Become the "turn to" person on your issues
- Hold policymaker accountable
- Say "Thanks"

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Allies and Coalitions

- Who are other stakeholders?
- What are their interests?
- Are there competing interests?
- What are their advocacy capacities?
- Coalitions are challenging.
 - What are the costs?
 - Do you have to compromise goals?
 - How much time will be required?
 - Will your focus be diverted?

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Office Visits

- Ideally.....make an appointment
- Homework – what will resonate with this lawmaker?
- On time – be polite – busy people
- The “ask”
- Stay on message
- Don’t argue or leave negative impression
- Business card plus “a leave behind” with key points

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Communications Tools

- Editorial Boards
- Education Writers
- Letter-to-the Editor
- Op-Ed Columns
- Partners’ Networks
- Building Alliances
- Web Site as an advocacy tool
- Blogs
- Facebook, Twitter
- E-lists
- Other??

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Policy Information Tools

- Pennsylvania Manual
- State Associations
- Pennsylvania Bulletin www.pabulletin.com
- History of Bills
- House/Senate Journal
- Legislative websites
- PDE and SBE websites
- Agency Websites/newsletter/e-alerts
- EPLC – www.eplc.org and links to others
- Get on EPLC mailing lists

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Contact Information

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