



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GUIDE

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS

Building a strong relationship with your local legislator can have a tremendous impact on your school district.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

- Reach out to legislators early — before the session — to discuss key district priorities and the state of your schools.
- Strive for ongoing, regular communication — be a familiar voice and face to them.
- Know your legislators' backgrounds: Don't assume they are education policy or finance experts. What committees do they serve on? Are they parents? What is their experience outside of the Legislature?
- Communicate on their terms – ask your legislators which methods of communication they prefer: texting, e-mails, phone calls, meetings in person, school visits during legislative breaks, etc.

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Inventory your relationships: By knowing your legislators' committees and issues of interest, you can identify who on your team can help make solid connections.
- Give them a “heads up” on positive and negative news before it is released publicly. This will help them advocate for you.
- Keep social media positive. Always.
- Know the impacts. Be able to let legislators know how proposals may affect your district.
- Say THANK YOU — whether on social media, your district newsletter, a public acknowledgment or a personal note, legislators appreciate recognition of the impact of their work.

VISITING THE CAPITOL? LET US KNOW—WE CAN HELP.

AMSD is available to assist superintendents, board members, district staff and parents in testifying on key issues.

2026 AMSD Day at the Capitol: Monday, April 13.

JOIN fellow AMSD members as we convene at the Capitol to discuss important education legislation, attend hearings, and meet with key legislators.



Getting there: Maps, directions, parking, and more at the MN Legislature website:
www.leg.mn.gov/leg/faq/





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COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATORS

- Share the AMSD platform and your district priorities. Know your data and share your district's information to back it up.
- Develop consistent messaging themes for leadership, school board members, principals and others to deliver to legislators.
- Keep interactions positive and clear.
- Repeat priorities and needs in different delivery forms (meetings, school tours, e-mails, handouts) and from different stakeholders.
- If your legislator introduces a bill on your behalf or one your district supports, offer testimony and handouts to support the bill.
- Ask your legislators if they are interested in establishing a regular check-in time.



- Add legislators to your newsletter and press release distribution.
- Prioritize: Be concise; don't oversaturate them with too much information.
- Make sure information is relevant and timely.
- Invite legislators into your schools and classrooms to observe and participate in various activities or unique programs.
- Your concerns and messages will be better received at the end of session during final budget negotiations if you've established an ongoing rapport/relationship.



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EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY

- Plan on very brief testimony – often limited to 2 minutes.
- Have your testimony prepared in advance.
- Be clear and concise, try to avoid repeating previous testimony.
- Know your position: State whether you are testifying in support of, or in opposition, to legislation.
- Your testimony is personal. Provide your specific examples.
- Review the list of committee members and learn their backgrounds.

COMMITTEE LOGISTICS AND RULES



- Legislative committee staff is responsible for setting committee agendas for each hearing and will establish guidelines for testimony and the speaking order of testifiers.
- Work with AMSD if you plan to testify on a specific piece of legislation. AMSD can help prepare and submit testimony or handouts.
- Start your testimony when directed by the chair with “Thank you, Madame/Mr. Chair.” Identify yourself and your role with your school district.
- Testimony and Q&A is moderated through the chair of the committee.
- Don't guess: It is better to say you will research the issue and provide the information to the committee as soon as possible.



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AMSD RESOURCES



ONLINE RESOURCES

- Session information on our website, **www.amsd.org**, provides regular updates about the legislative session.
- View the AMSD Legislative Platform at **www.amsd.org/platform**.
- Research and details about the AMSD positions on key legislative issues at **www.amsd.org/positionpapers**.
- Find legislators' contact information by school district at **www.amsd.org/advocacy**.
- Links to education bills, summaries and more at **www.amsd.org/billtracker**.
- Legislative resources at MN Legislature Website: **www.leg.mn.gov/**.



STAY CONNECTED WITH AMSD

Web: **www.amsd.org**

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