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# Ready, set, advocate! A quick start guide for newly elected board members and sitting superintendents

By Dr. Dana Godek and Michael Moore | January 27, 2025



The 2024 election is over, but the political season is just beginning. With a new wave of lawmakers across the country, now is the time for superintendents and board members to advocate for education priorities.

Here's your quick-start guide to maximize influence:

1. Flag key legislative dates.
2. Prepare meaningful introductions.
3. Monitor emerging leaders who may shape education policy.

Advocacy is a year-round responsibility and the upcoming legislative sessions offer significant opportunities to make an impact. Below, you'll find actionable advice to ensure your district's voice is heard and its needs addressed.

## Spotlighting influential lawmakers

Engaging with legislators committed to education and workforce development can open doors to bipartisan collaboration. A few standout examples include:



- [Tim Walberg](#): Newly elected to chair the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in the 119th Congress, succeeding Virginia Foxx (R-NC). As committee chair, Walberg's plans to focus on issues such as fighting antisemitism on campuses, increasing opportunities for American workers, boosting internships and apprenticeships, and enhancing college affordability.
- [Natasha Hill](#): Advocates for affordable childcare, viewing it as essential for workforce stability and family well-being. She emphasizes retirement security and access to medical care as integral to economic resilience.
- [Victoria Hunt](#): Champions equitable K12 funding and clean air and water initiatives, linking environmental health to student success. She's also focused on emergency preparedness to protect schools and communities.

Tracking similar legislators in your state will provide insight into potential allies and emerging policy trends. Stay informed about lawmakers in your state and beyond who align with your district's priorities.

## Key legislative dates across the U.S.

Timely engagement with legislative processes is a cornerstone of effective advocacy. Be sure you know the key dates and anticipate when and how to communicate.

Here is a sample of significant legislative dates for the 2025 sessions across selected states:

State	Pre-filing date	Organizational day	Session start
Colorado	Dec. 1, 2024	Nov. 8, 2024	Jan. 8
Florida	August, 2024	Nov. 19, 2024	March 4
Illinois	Nov. 12, 2024	Nov. 30, 2024	Jan. 8
New York	Nov. 15, 2024	Dec. 21, 2024	Jan. 8
Virginia	July 15, 2024	Nov. 18, 2024	Jan. 8

Understanding these dates ensures your advocacy efforts align with legislative calendars, allowing you to engage at the most opportune moments. Have someone on your team research dates for filing of bills, relevant committee hearings and deadlines for input.

Build and share a calendar for your board members, you, your communications team, and stakeholders who already have working relationships with legislators.

## Building relationships through communication

Effective correspondence with legislators sets the stage for meaningful collaboration. Whether introducing yourself or addressing policy issues, these principles will elevate your message:

1. Tailor your message: Personalize salutation and tone to the recipient's role. For example, "Dear Senator [Last Name]" signals respect for federal legislators.
  2. Be clear and direct: State your purpose upfront and focus on specific goals.
  3. Align priorities: Highlight shared objectives to foster rapport.
  4. Maintain formality: Professionalism builds credibility and avoids missteps.
- End with Action: Conclude with a respectful request for follow-up or collaboration.



**Pro tip:** Start with a congratulatory letter. Acknowledge the hard work of newly elected officials and introduce key district priorities. For instance:

*“Congratulations on your election to the State Assembly. Your decisive victory reflects your dedication to our community. We look forward to collaborating with you on public education initiatives to benefit all students.”*

## Advocacy strategies for the upcoming session

- 1. Set Clear Priorities:** Identify key areas where your district seeks legislative support. Common priorities include increasing funding for K12 education, expanding workforce development programs and addressing equity gaps.
- 2. Engage Stakeholders:** Collaboration strengthens your advocacy efforts. Include teachers, parents, and community members to amplify your message. Partnering with organizations like EdTrust or National PTA can lend credibility and reach.
- 3. Monitor Legislation:** Track bills affecting education policy to stay ahead of changes. Tools like [LegiScan](#) provide real-time updates on legislation in all 50 states.
- 4. Leverage Data:** Use district performance metrics to illustrate needs and successes. For example, chronic absenteeism rates or graduation data can support funding requests or policy recommendations.

## Equipping superintendents and boards for advocacy

Advocacy begins with alignment between superintendents and school boards. Here's how to ensure a united front:

- Conduct advocacy workshops: Train district leaders on effective communication and legislative engagement.
- Align on messaging: Develop a unified narrative that reflects district priorities.
- Establish roles: Designate board members or staff to monitor legislative updates and coordinate responses.

## Encouraging emerging leaders

Watch for lawmakers with fresh perspectives who prioritize education. Engage early to build relationships and influence their agendas.

For instance, Rep. Victoria Hunt's emphasis on equitable K-2 funding offers opportunities for districts to advocate for their unique needs.

## Advocacy as a year-round commitment

Advocacy doesn't stop after Election Day. By understanding legislative calendars, building strong relationships and leveraging your district's strengths, you can drive meaningful change.



Use this guide as a starting point to navigate the complexities of education policy and champion the needs of your students and community. Remember, the most effective advocates are those who prepare, engage, and persist.

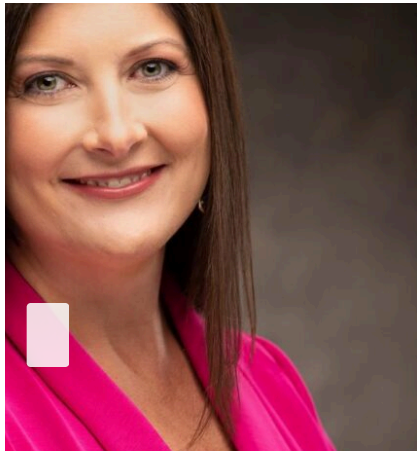
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