

# Contacting Elected State Officials

Getting in touch with your representatives in Pennsylvania's General Assembly can be an effective way to seek changes in state education policy. Even though the General Assembly meets in Harrisburg, it is often more effective to contact your legislators at their local offices.

## Find Your Legislators

Find out who your legislators are and learn about their interest in education issues.

- Check the General Assembly's website: [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us) (enter your zip code or county in the box at the upper right).
- It may also be a good idea to contact legislators in neighboring districts.
- Learn about your legislators' positions and track their records on education issues:
  - Check the legislator's personal website and newsletters
  - Do an internet search for their statements
  - Explore the website for Good Schools Pennsylvania ([www.goodschoolspa.org](http://www.goodschoolspa.org))

## Get Information

Before meeting with your legislators, try to fully research the issues you want to discuss.

- Gather information and data about the specific issues you would like to discuss with your legislators. Consider using ELC's Action Plan and Toolkit.
- Collect newspaper clippings and other reports related to your concerns.
- Learn about proposals already pending in the General Assembly. Research these proposals and decide what you think about them. This information is available from:
  - Your legislators' offices
  - Good Schools Pennsylvania ([www.goodschoolspa.org](http://www.goodschoolspa.org))
  - Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC) ([www.eplc.org](http://www.eplc.org))
  - Education Law Center ([www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org))

## Advocate for Action

**Write a Letter.** Conducting a letter-writing campaign to your legislators and the Governor can bring an important issue to their attention.

**Schedule a Meeting.** Meet with your legislator in order to introduce your community group and talk about the education issues that are most important to your local schools. Explain your local concerns, but make sure to place them in the larger statewide view. Provide the information you have gathered, including specific examples and stories.

**Work with Others.** Talk with your friends and neighbors. Work together with other leaders from your local school district – teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members – who share many of your concerns and can provide the legislators with important insider's knowledge. Use the news media, church bulletins, and other ways to publicize your concerns.

**Ask for Action.** Invite the legislators to visit your local schools and meet with community members. Encourage the legislators to take action, for example, by cosponsoring a bill.

**Don't Give Up.** Keep in touch with your legislators, whether or not they immediately agree with you.