



Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

## **Template for Preparing a Conversation with your Legislator**

### **BASIC ADVICE:**

- Be respectful of the legislator's time. If visiting, plan no more than a 10-15 minute meeting.
- Call ahead to schedule a meeting; be on time. And, it's really OK to talk to an aide instead of the legislator. Sometimes, it is actually better. State the topic you want to discuss and who will be attending the meeting, if you are going with others.
- Take along a colleague, teacher, parent or other community members to share the conversation. This reduces the stress/anxiety of the visit and shows there is more broad-based support for the legislation.
- Do not use education/library jargon unless you explain the terms, such as, information literacy, digital learning, flexible scheduling, etc.
- **MOST IMPORTANT** - Focus on what this will do for students, not you or the job of the librarian.
- Try to refrain from using first person (I, me, mine) and state "a school librarian does...." Or the "school library program provides...."
- If you plan to invite the legislator to your school, be sure to ask your principal about this first.
- Leave behind a one-page handout. You can use the PSLA provided one, but add your contact info and maybe info about your school library program and staffing.

### **DETERMINING YOUR PA HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE(S):**

Pennsylvania has 203 House Representatives so it is quite likely that the Representative who represents your home address is different than the one who represents your school address. Type both addresses [here](#) to learn if that is your case. If so, be sure to contact both Representatives. However, use your school address when contacting the Representative who represent your school and your home address when contacting the Representative who represents your home address. Legislators are most interested in talking to their constituents (or their voters!). You are advocating on behalf of your students and teachers when you contact the legislator who represents the school address.

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Think About</b>	<b>Articulation</b> (Jot down what you plan to say)	<b>Who is Speaking</b>
<b>STEP 1</b> <b>Introduction/ Greeting</b>	Introduce yourself and others. Be sure to include your job title, where you work, and/or if you have students in the school. Use business cards if you have them.		
<b>STEP 2</b> <b>Reason for the Visit</b>	State clearly your reason for the visit	I am here today to talk to you about the co-sponsorship memo: One "Certified Librarian" Per Public School being circulated by Rep. Longietti and Rep. Murt.	
<b>STEP 3</b> <b>Create a "Hook" to capture interest</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personalize the conversation by telling something about your experiences as a school librarian, parent, etc. and the lack of or inequality of school librarians and libraries for K-12 students</li> <li>• Consider reading the legislator's bio on their website to learn what he/she might be most interested in and tie it to school libraries</li> </ul>	Example – "As a former prosecutor, I know you are interested in kids being safe on the Internet. Did you know that school librarians teach students about that?"	
<b>STEP 4</b> <b>Talking Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide what talking points will be meaningful to this legislator; no more than 3</li> <li>• Be clear; don't use jargon; keep it short</li> <li>• Focus on the needs of students, not the needs of the librarian or the library</li> </ul>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Equity- "Too many students do not have access to quality learning resources and the instruction of a certified school librarian."</p> <p>Information skills – "According to the state endorsed library curriculum, school librarians teach students to evaluate what they see, read, and view whether on the</p>	Decide who is best to talk about this point

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Think About</b>	<b>Articulation</b> (Jot down what you plan to say)	<b>Who is Speaking</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide who will discuss which points</li> </ul>	Internet of in print, and to differentiate fact from opinion.”	
<b>Talking Point # 1</b>			
<b>Talking Point # 2</b>			
<b>Talking Point # 3</b>			
<b>STEP 5</b> <b>Supporting Evidence or Proof</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One or two sentences of research/data to support your position</li> <li>• Makes your position credible</li> </ul>	Example – “A search engine finds thousands of “hits,” but a librarian teaches how to find the right ones.” OR “I just learned that our teachers are unaware of POWER Library databases that our state licenses for schools. This is something that school librarians teach to both students and teachers.”	
<b>STEP 6</b> <b>The “Ask”/Invite</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restate the ask</li> <li>• Invite the legislator to visit your school and see what students are doing in the library</li> <li>• Press for a commitment or state that you will call again to see if he/she has decided to sign the memo</li> </ul>	Example – “I’m sure you recognize how important it is to have certified school librarians providing resources and instruction to our students. Can we count on you to sign the co-sponsorship memo?”	