

5 Ways to Connect with Decision Makers

1. Invite your local decision maker to visit your charter school for a tour

What better way to connect with your local decision maker than on your own turf? Most public officials know very little about public charter schools, but education is always a big issue during elections. Help them understand public charter schools by opening your school's doors and inviting them in! Public officials love opportunities to talk with their constituents on a more personal level, and who doesn't enjoy seeing great teaching and learning in action?

2. Invite your local decision maker to charter school events

Do you have an open house at your school? Awards ceremonies? Community involvement activities? Graduations? These are all fantastic opportunities to showcase your charter school. If appropriate, you can even invite the public official to give a short address to the group, an opportunity that public officials rarely give up. They will get to see first hand the kind of engagement you have at your charter school and it is another terrific opportunity to explain why public charter schools are so important to the larger community. It also benefits your charter school community. By seeing a public official at a school event, it encourages them to become more active and puts a face to the support behind charter schools.

3. Attend your local decision maker's events and public meetings

Many local officials host 'listening sessions' or town hall meetings in their home district. Add yourself to their email list so you will be up to date on when these sessions are and make sure you attend! Especially if your local official has already visited your school, showing up at an event of theirs makes them feel like you are a true supporter, and public officials are quite loyal to the people they perceive as supporters. Remember, "90 percent of life is just showing up."

4. Communicate regularly with your local decision maker

Don't be that person who only communicates with their local official right before a vote or election. Most constituents flood decision makers in the week or a few days before an important vote, and while a short burst of enthusiasm is certainly a tactic of advocacy, a more sustainable one is communicating with your public official on a more regular basis. Call their office, write a letter, send an email. These are 3 easy ways to let your local decision maker know that you are involved. Remember always to mention public charter schools and always thank them for their time.

5. Vote

Obvious, but often overlooked. How do public officials become public officials? Because people like you vote! So, use your voting rights purposefully. Know the issues, vote accordingly, and let your local decision makers know that you are a constituent and you vote.