

How to Host a Public Official at Your School

Hosting a local official is low cost, it doesn't disrupt the school day or pull you away from the building, and it allows him or her to see the students and teachers in action and puts a face to the political issue. Below are some tips for pulling off a successful visit.

Scheduling:

- Depending on their role, public officials can have very tight schedules. It is important that you contact their office early and don't be surprised if you have to wait several months for a visit.
- Be prepared for a last minute time change or cancellation. It is not because your public official doesn't like you, it's because last minute committee meetings and hearings happen all the time. Be flexible.
- When scheduling the visit ask if anyone will be joining the invitee (sometimes a chief of staff or aid will be there, or even sometimes a significant other).

Preparation:

- Do some research on the people who will be visiting your school. Know a bit about their background and make sure you know their stance on education. Have they been supportive of or hostile to public charter schools in the past?
- Decide on which classrooms or parts of the school are most important for the visitor to see. If you are a STEM school, for instance, don't only show the visitor art classrooms.
- Let all your staff know who the person is, when he or she will be visiting, and which classrooms you plan on stopping at.
- Encourage your staff not to do anything different on the day of the visit. Most people can tell when people are acting and a little bit of noise and commotion at a school is expected.
- Brush up on the [charter school talking points](#) so you are well prepared to answer questions that he or she might have.

The Visit:

- Greet the visitor and introduce yourself and your role at the school. Thank them for coming and explain that you will tour the school then have time for additional questions at the end.
- Be personable and get to know him or her. Developing a personal connection with him or her will help your public official remember you and your school.
- Important topics to cover while touring the school:
 - What is a charter school?
 - What is your educational program?
 - Why does the school need to be a charter school?
 - What kinds of students attend the charter school?
 - How are your students performing academically?
- Allow the visitor to engage with the teachers or students, if they want. You want them to feel like they are welcome in your school.
- Have a camera present for the photo opportunities (and then send them to Sarah at sgranofsky@wicharterschools.org for the Monthly newsletter)!
- Before they leave, make sure to hand them information about your charter school and ask them to support charter schools.

Follow up:

- Send the visitor a note thanking them for their visit and inviting them to come back or contact you with questions.