

## Your voice can make a difference ...

As the 85th Legislative Session convenes on January 10, 2017, make sure you are informed about three legislative priorities that impact all students in Texas Public Schools. During the session, let your legislators know what you think.

### How can you help?

Concerned citizens often ask what they can do specifically to help students. Complete one or more of the enclosed items and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same!

### Empower yourself

- Choose an issue affecting your district and schools and learn about that issue. Attend a school board meeting, read local and statewide education publications, and/or review the information about Legislative Priorities.
- Develop a short, focused message or an "elevator talk" (1-2 minutes) about the issue you choose. The short talk should briefly identify a problem, present a solution and issue a call to action. It is a very useful tool when you have only a minute or two of someone's attention and you want to get a point across.

### Tell your legislators what you think



- Follow legislators' social media accounts and feel free to reach out to them using these communication tools.
- Send a letter or email to your local legislators.
- Call local legislators and schedule face-to-face meetings.
- Establish a relationship with the aides in legislator's local office.
- Attend and ask questions at town meetings hosted by local legislators.
- Copy editorials or news articles, or send links to these articles to local legislators.



- Invite a local legislator to be your guest at a (district school) special event.
- Ask local legislators to agree to take a leadership role on your selected issue.



### Tell the media what you think



- Write an OpEd or letter to a newspaper editor and send your published letter to local legislators.
- Follow the media on social media accounts and reach out to them using these communications tools.

### Tell your community what you think about your important issue and encourage others to do the same @

- Use social media and hash tags to spread the word about your issue and your solution.
- Update your Facebook or Twitter status with a key point from your "elevator talk".
- Host a discussion about your selected issue with a local group in your community.
- Encourage others to do the same.
- Team up with a school leader to speak to a local community group.
- Participate in a community forum about your selected issue.
- Share links to relevant news articles or information from the school district website.
- Invite people to participate in events in your community or online (virtual meetings) that are organized by you, the school district or another community member.

### Tips for writing effective letters, emails and social media posts



It's your right to communicate your opinions and knowledge to the people who have been elected to represent you in state government. Legislators want to know what's important to you, and they value your input. Sadly, they often report that their inaction on an issue is simply because not enough people spoke to them about it. So, remember your advocacy is not just permissible, it's appreciated.

When writing a letter, you should keep your letter short; a single page is best. Be concise and specific, but add personal touches on how your selected issue impacts you and your family and follow up with a phone call.

### A majority of U.S. adults – 62% – get news on social media. Many of the state legislators have Twitter accounts.

- Sign up for Twitter at [twitter.com](https://twitter.com)
- Find people to follow.
- Learn how to write in 140 characters.
- Use hashtags in your posts and searches.
- Don't just promote: RT and MT (RT – re-post someone else's tweet or MT – copy and paste a link that someone else posted and comment on it as well.)
- Share well and you will get more followers.
- Add photos or videos to your tweets.
- Tie your account to other social media such as Facebook.