

Washington State PTA has a grassroots advocacy platform, adopted by the members, that covers a wide variety of important topics that impact children and youth. Legislators need to hear stories directly from you, their constituents, so they understand how important these topics are to families, students, and communities. These meetings are your opportunity to speak up for all of Washington’s children and youth and urge legislators to create programs, policies, and laws that improve the lives of children and youth and further PTA’s vision to make every child’s potential a reality.

Meetings with legislators in Olympia typically only last 15 minutes and talking to your legislators is easier than you think when you are prepared. Follow the steps below for a successful meeting!

All resources in **blue** can be found in the Focus on Advocacy Toolkit on the [Focus on Advocacy page](#).

Step 1 – Schedule Meeting

- Schedule meetings with legislators and their legislative assistants as early as possible.
- Use the [School District x Legislative District spreadsheet](#) to find the names and contact information for your legislators and their legislative assistants. Keep in mind, many school districts are represented by legislators from more than one legislative district, and they all need to hear your concerns and stories.
- Draft your email meeting request using the tips and sample email in the [How to Make Appointments with Legislators](#) document. Customize the sample email as needed throughout the year.
- Ask whether the meeting can be in person on Focus Day or if it should be conducted virtually. If in person, ask if the legislator has a limit to the number of visitors and if masks will be required or optional. If the meeting is virtual, determine who will set up the meeting and provide the meeting link (you or the legislator) and determine which remote meeting platform will be used (Zoom, Teams, other).

Step 2 – Prepare for Meeting

- Determine who else (other PTA members) will attend your meeting and get their contact information.
- Read the legislator’s biography on the [Washington State Legislature website](#), including knowing what committees they serve on. That is usually their area of expertise.
- Review the WSPTA legislative priorities and full platform on the [WSPTA Advocacy webpage](#).

- Plan your meeting with three parts. Remember, most meetings will only be 15 minutes, so planning who will speak and what will be said is critical. Use the [Build Your Pitch](#) document to help plan what you want to say!
- 1. **PART 1 - PRIORITIES:** Share the current [WSPTA Legislative Priorities](#) so they know what our members support.
- 2. **PART 2 – PITCH:** Build your pitch in five easy steps:
 - **Your Issue** – Talk about one issue your local PTA or council is passionate about. Describe your issue but be concise and to the point.
 - **Fact or Statistic** – Share a noteworthy fact or statistic that relates to this issue.
 - **Personal Story** – Share a personal story that goes with the fact or statistic. Identify who on your team has a relevant story² to share – keep to 3-4 minutes, if possible.
 - **The Ask** – Be specific about what you want them to do (for example, vote yes on a specific bill, support more funding for student mental health specialists in schools.)
 - **The Close** – Share a catchy phrase, leave an image in their minds, or close with three to five words for the person you are meeting with to remember.
- 3. **PART 3 - RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:** If you have time, ask what is most important to the legislator. Perhaps you can be a resource.
- Plan a practice session (phone call or remote meeting) before the event, if possible, to:
 - Brief attendees on important information and expectations.
 - Make sure attendees are familiar with the remote meeting platform being used (Zoom, Teams, etc.) and that everyone downloads any updates needed prior to the meeting.
 - Assign a person to host the meeting and share any documents or videos. Do a test run sharing documents/videos to ensure everything runs smoothly during your meeting.
 - Practice running the meeting – do introductions, share your priority, and share your stories. Make sure you can stay within the allotted meeting time.
- Confirm with PTA attendees multiple times – meeting date, time, and the meeting link, if applicable.
- Confirm with the legislative assistant a few days prior to the meeting.

Step 3 – Hold Meeting

- If holding a virtual meeting, make sure to login to the meeting link 5-10 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Verify your audio and video are working and that you are using the virtual background.
- If your meeting is in person, plan to arrive 5-10 minutes in advance. Check in with the Legislative Assistant and then return to a waiting area.
- Have any resources you plan to share readily available. Know that most legislators will not accept paper copies, but you can use them and say you will follow up with an electronic version.
- Execute the meeting plan you and your team came up with.
- Answer and questions the legislator has and offer to send follow-up information as needed.

Step 4 – Post Meeting

- Send an email thanking your legislators and staff for meeting with you and providing any requested follow-up information.
- Thank your members for their participation.
- Complete the [WSPTA Legislator Meeting Summary form](#) after your meetings.
- Building a relationship with your legislators is an ongoing partnership so stay in touch with them several times per year by sending relevant information or thanking them for their work on legislation. Subscribe to your legislator’s newsletters or other communication to keep involved throughout the year.
- Promote advocacy to your membership all year by reporting about your meeting and by sharing communications from your legislators and WSPTA.

Seven Tips for Success with your Legislator Meeting:

1. **KNOW THEM** – Read their biography on the legislative webpage and find something in common or something that will resonate with them when talking about your issue.
2. **ORCHESTRATE** – Designate someone to start the meeting if more than one person is attending. Take turns, practice, or decide ahead of time who will say what.
3. **INTRODUCE** - Have attendees quickly introduce themselves and mention if they are a constituent. Briefly tell the legislator what you plan to discuss.
4. **PITCH** – Make your pitch and ask them if they can support your position. If they are unsure or noncommittal, circle back or tell WSPTA leadership so they can respond.
5. **BE RESPECTFUL**– It is okay to be firm on your position or to disagree with the legislator without being disagreeable. Absolutely no foul language, yelling, or threats.
6. **WATCH THE TIME** – Know how much time you have. Most meetings are 15 minutes and legislators go from one meeting to the next, shifting topics.
7. **FOLLOW UP** – If they asked for additional information, send it, along with additional information with hyperlinks to supporting documents. Sent a “thank you” email.