

Communication Tips and Techniques

You Count!

Your personal letters, e-mail messages and telephone calls are very important and can make the difference on an issue.

Calls to Action

Calls to Action are carefully timed around issues in the statehouse and require immediate attention. The most important part of this program is your participation. Calls to Action are issued by mail, telephone, fax or e-mail. They will describe the issue at hand, the district's position, give instructions for contacting your legislator and include a request for feedback to the district staff.

Unless otherwise instructed, use the communication method you are most comfortable with to communicate quickly and effectively.

Follow these four basic steps to guide any communication!

- ✓ **Identify** yourself by name and your affiliation with Salina Public Schools.
- ✓ **Explain** why you are calling or writing: "I am calling/writing to support/oppose House Bill: HB_____, Senate Bill: SB_____."
 - Be polite and concise. Focus the content of your message by creating 1 or 2 talking points
 - Ask your legislator his/her position on this issue. Don't assume your legislator has prior knowledge of your issue. Be calm, respectful and prepared to educate, using local examples to accentuate your point.
- ✓ **Request** a written response to your phone call if you did not speak to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, provide it as soon as possible.
- ✓ **Thank** them for their time and consideration.

Good Communication Tips

- Use personal stories to illustrate your points, or provide other facts and examples. Put a "face" to the issue instead of facts and figures.
- Letters or phone calls about specific pieces of legislation should include a bill number.

Written Communication (letters or emails)

- Be brief, clear and complete (a one-page letter on a single topic is best).
- Include your name and address on the envelope and on the letter. Include your full name, address, telephone number and e-mail address in an e-mail message as well.
- Use proper etiquette
 - o On the envelope and on the inside address, refer to your senator or representative as "The Honorable..."
 - o In the salutation, use "Dear Senator (last name)" or "Dear Representative (last name)"
- Don't forget to send a note of appreciation when a legislator does something that deserves recognition.

State legislatures are only in session part-time, and telephone calls are often taken by a staff member and not the actual legislator. It's okay to leave a message, and to ask for a return call if appropriate.

Telephone Communication

- Identify yourself to the person answering the phone.
- Tell them in which legislative district you reside and your school district.
- If the legislator is unavailable, give the staff member your message.

Face-to-Face Communication

Face-to-face communication is very effective. If you have a formal meeting with a legislator, be sure to leave a short written statement or summary of the information you wish to communicate.

Building Relationships

Effective advocacy begins with personal relationships. Work on building long-term relationships with legislators:

- If you don't know them, start with a letter or call for an appointment to meet with them.
- It is okay to advocate strongly for a position, but don't forget to be polite and reasonable.
- Listen to what our legislators have to say.
- Show appreciation for their hard work. Thank them for past support of K-12 education.
- An encouraging note will always be welcome!
- Ask to be put on their mailing list for newsletters, announcements and other information they may share with constituents.
- Invite your legislator to a community or civic organization meeting, site council meeting, or offer to accompany them on a visit to school. Contact your building administrator to make the necessary arrangements.
- Attend political functions and legislative forums.
- Be accurate and factual. Support your position with facts. Hopefully your legislator will begin to consider you a resource of information. Communication and effective follow-up are keys to enhancing that relationship.

Information Resources

Bill Hall, Salina USD 305 Superintendent of Schools, 785-309-4727

Jennifer Bradford-Vernon, Salina USD 305 public information director, 785-309-4723;
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[Salina USD 305 web site](#)

[Kansas Association of School Boards](#)

[Kansas State Department of Education](#)

[Kansas Legislature](#)