

Hosting a Site Visit for a Decisionmaker

You may want to host a site visit to build your relationship with a decisionmaker in a less formal setting, to discuss a policy your PTA would like changed, or just to show off your PTA's latest advocacy accomplishments. Decisionmakers exist at all levels of government and school administration and can be elected or appointed to their roles. At the federal and state level, a decisionmaker can be a legislator or their staff, or a state or federal education agency staff member. At the local level, decisionmakers can be school administrators or leaders such as school board members, superintendents, principals or teachers. Since local decisionmakers are usually familiar with your school, site visits are most beneficial to build relationships with state and local elected officials or education agency administrators.

Before you begin the process, feel free to reach out to National PTA Government Affairs staff to help brainstorm and plan your visit by emailing GovtAffairs@PTA.org.

Planning the Visit

Before you begin coordinating a school visit, check with your school's principal to see if there are any policies about site visits. Then, meet with school officials to brainstorm what you would like to accomplish and what messages you would like the site visit to convey to the decisionmaker, such as highlighting successful family engagement programs within your school and/or advocating for a certain policy or practice to be implemented. To ensure the visit runs smoothly, create a draft agenda for the visit—including which classrooms, programs and personnel you'd like the decisionmaker to see in action. If possible, schedule your visit to coincide with a PTA activity or meeting to highlight the work your PTA is doing.

Scheduling the Visit

If you'd like to host a site visit for a federal or state legislator, it's important to schedule the visit when the decisionmaker is in-district and when school is in session. Members of Congress are usually in their home districts Friday through Monday and during the August recess. The best way to schedule a site visit for a federal-level decisionmaker is to email a letter of request to the elected official's district scheduler at least six weeks in advance of the proposed site visit. Check out the PTA Take Action Center at PTA.org/TakeAction to find their contact information.

State legislators spend most of their time in-district, which makes scheduling easier. To schedule a site visit with a state-level decisionmaker, you'll want to call the district office to begin the scheduling process. Always make sure to explain why you believe a site visit would be beneficial (e.g., to see effective family engagement programs). Include specific information about the visit, such as date, time, location, others who may be invited (i.e., business partners), whether the media will be present and what activities are planned for the visit. Elected official's schedules can be hectic, so be as flexible as possible with your schedule. Make sure to double-check the date and time of the visit with your school and district staff to work out any possible scheduling conflicts, such as school-wide testing.

Alerting the Media

A site visit is a great opportunity to get the word about your PTA's great work by contacting the media. Before you reach out to any media outlets, it is important to contact your school's staff to make sure they approve of inviting the media.

If your school agrees to invite media to the site visit, work with the decisionmaker's press secretary or communications director and school staff to coordinate press activity. Then, invite local television news stations and newspapers to cover the event. Send a media advisory to all the local news outlets alerting them to the time, date and purpose of the site visit. A sample media advisory and other tips for working with media can be found in our **Advocacy Toolkit**. If the media is unable to be present, take pictures and include them with a summary of the activities and send this to the local media outlets. They may want to cover a recap of your event!

Preparing for the Visit

Prepare teachers and students before the visit by explaining what to expect (e.g., who will be attending, a brief overview of the schedule) as well as appropriate behaviors during the visit. Teachers can plan lessons and activities to help students understand the role of our legislators, civic responsibilities and the purpose of the visit. Make sure you have clear plan of what you would like to show the decisionmaker and if appropriate, any relevant information on policy actions necessary to help or support a program or the school in general.

Hosting the Visit

Have students interact with the decisionmaker during the visit, and provide the decisionmaker with statistics about the effectiveness of your programs, success stories about your family engagement efforts, and other information that shows the connection between PTA, your community and the decisionmaker. Throughout the visit, take lots of photos to post on social media and make sure to tag the elected official in your posts.

After the Visit

Once the site visit has ended, it's time to amplify the visit on social media! Make sure you gather all the photos that were taken during the visit and select the best ones to post online. Tag any relevant participants, including the decisionmaker to help boost visibility.

Then, send a thank-you email or letter to everyone who participated, including any photos and press stories. In your correspondence, recap the highlights of the decisionmaker's visit and restate any requests for actions the decisionmaker can take to strengthen your school and family engagement policies. Be sure to also request a follow-up meeting to continue to build your relationship with the decisionmaker and further discuss your request for action. Visit [Conducting Meetings with a Decisionmaker](#) for helpful tips on scheduling and holding your follow-up meeting.

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