

TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

Letters and telephone calls--especially from voters in legislators' own districts--really count. These tips are designed to help you make your point in the most effective manner, which includes being polite, respectful and saying "thanks," even when the legislator disagrees with you.

GENERAL TIPS:

- Be brief and to the point.
- Use specific facts and examples to illustrate your point. You are an expert on what is happening with your child and your local schools. Legislators want to know how their votes affect constituents.
- If you're asked a question and don't know the answer, simply say so and offer to get back to them.
- Don't assume that legislators are as well-informed as yourself. Explain the situation, tell them what you think and ask them for their position on the issue.
- Letters or calls about a specific piece of legislation should include the bill number.

WRITING LETTERS:

- A one-page letter on a single topic is best. Be brief and specific.
- Be certain that your name and address are on the envelope and letter. Type or write legibly.
- Don't send form letters or postcards. They are not as effective as a well-written, personal letter.
- To find out who your legislators are, call (651) 296-2146 or visit www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder.asp. This Web site provides links to legislators' office addresses, phone numbers and e-mails.
- Address your legislator as "Representative" or "Senator."

CALLING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Identify yourself to the person who answers the phone. Be sure to say that you are a school district resident and a constituent in the legislator's district.
- If the legislator is unavailable, give the staff member your message.

MEETING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- If you're planning to visit the Minnesota Capitol, let your legislators know when you'll be there and try to schedule an appointment to meet with them.
- You can schedule an appointment to talk to a legislator by calling his or her office. Be sure to identify yourself as someone who lives in the legislator's district.
- During the session, legislators get busier and have less time to spend in their offices. You may be asked to meet with him or her before or after a committee hearing.