



## Adopt-a-Legislator

The Adopt-a-Legislator program is a proven strategy to help school board trustees become effective advocates for their school districts. The goal of the program is to help each trustee develop a meaningful relationship with one of the policymakers who represents your school district. Below are steps for implementing the Adopt-a-Legislator program in your school district:

- (1) **Each trustee adopts a legislator.** The board president asks trustees to volunteer to “adopt” one of the legislators who represent the school district. In this document, “legislators” includes state representatives and senators, members of the State Board of Education, members of Congress, and any other policymaker who legislates on behalf of school districts. A trustee assumes responsibility for adopting only *one* legislator, so that the advocacy responsibility is not overly burdensome.
- (2) **Trustees initiate a relationship with his/her adopted legislators:**
  - Meet with the adopted legislator at the legislators’ district offices to get to know one another, without discussing too many education issues;
  - Provide the legislator and his/her staff with basic facts about your school district, preferably in written format which the legislator’s staff could retain for future reference; and,
  - Send a short thank you note, offering to serve as a resource to the legislator and his/her staff for education.
- (3) **Trustees continue to build a relationship with the adopted legislators:**
  - Invite the adopted legislator to attend the hearing on the district’s budget;
  - Invite the adopted legislator to back-to-school events; allow the legislator to address the audience;
  - Arrange briefings for the legislator by key district staff (e.g., business manager, personnel director, superintendent and assistant superintendents, principals, and teachers);
  - Meet regularly with the adopted legislator to discuss how various laws are affecting your district and challenges your district faces that could be remedied through legislation; and,
  - Share with the adopted legislator TASB’s Advocacy Agenda when it is published in early October and discuss additional legislative issues that your district may have identified.
- (4) **Trustees share personal contact information with their adopted legislators.** Each trustee should share his/her e-mail address, cell phone number and home phone number with the adopted legislator so that the legislator can contact the trustee for guidance about the local impact of pending legislation.
- (5) **Trustees communicate with their adopted legislators on a timely basis.** Before the legislator votes on pending legislation/ rules, the trustee responsible for that legislator should make contact via telephone, e-mail, or fax to explain the impact legislation/rules would have on the school district and request that the adopted legislator vote for/against the legislation, accordingly.
- (6) **Trustees recognize and thank their adopted legislators.** Periodically, trustees should recognize and thank their adopted legislators with a personal letter, an article in the district’s newsletter, or a small reception for the work he/she has done on behalf of their school district.

Please call Dax Gonzalez in TASB Governmental Relations with any questions regarding the Adopt-a-Legislator Program at 800-580-4885.