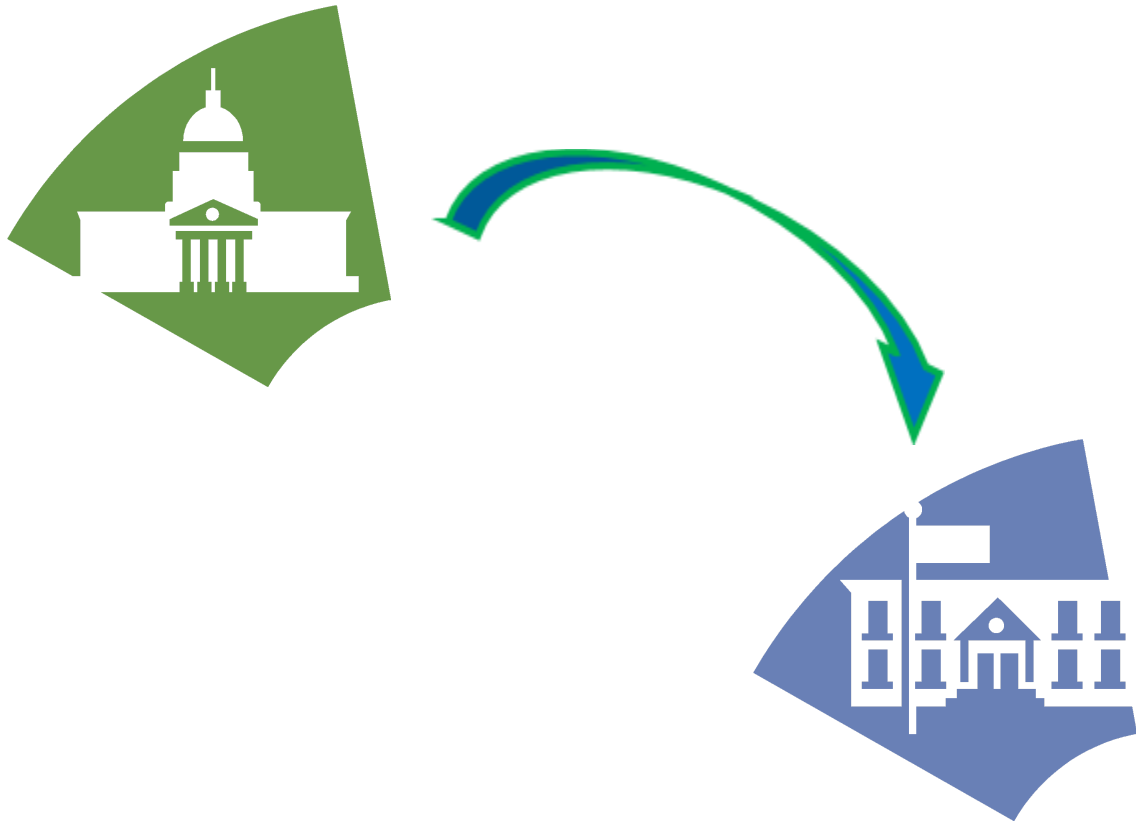


NO LEGISLATOR LEFT BEHIND

A resource guide for hosting a legislator in your classroom



SHAPE-WA Legislative Cadre

Legislators in the Classroom

Thank You for your interest in hosting a Washington state legislator in your classroom! This resource guide will provide you with the key resources you will need to set up a successful experience for you, your students and your legislator.

Purpose:

Legislators gather their perceptions about public education from a variety of sources including research reports, media, personal and family experiences, etc. The vast majority have not spent much sustained time in Washington's classrooms since they themselves were in school -and those that do visit our schools rarely, if ever, visit the physical education classroom. All too often, conversations among legislators about education begin with the statement "When I was in school....." it is the purpose of *No Legislator Left Behind* to change this to "When I visited the classroom....." When faced with making decisions about childhood obesity, waivers and physical education vs. physical activity, we want our legislators to be informed and able to share their first-hand experience and speak in support of effective comprehensive physical education programs such as yours.

Inviting your legislator:

Because a legislator's visit to your classroom is a significant event for your program and your school, it is important that you share your intentions with your school administrator. Having them participate in the visit will be a bonus, particularly if they are willing to facilitate the visit by accompanying the legislator to your classroom in order to provide information about your program as you teach, lead a tour of the facilities, and generate conversations with other staff members about your program and other education issues.

You will want to invite your legislator at least 3 weeks prior to your desired visitation date. Though having a target date in mind will be helpful when scheduling this visit, do be prepared to be flexible - many legislators have full-time careers aside from their legislative lives. Most legislators have offices and may have staff who assist with the scheduling. Begin with a letter or email. A sample is provided – feel free to modify it to your needs.

REMEMBER, **NEVER** USE SCHOOL COMPUTERS OR EMAIL FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

Do not be discouraged if you do not receive a response to this initial contact right away but do be persistent and follow up with an email or phone call if you have not heard back from their office in a couple of weeks. Once a date for the visit has been agreed upon, find out how long they will be able to stay and whether they are interested in experiencing other aspects of "school life" (lunch, recess, a visit to a particular classroom/grade level).

Preparing for the visit:

Once you have scheduled a date with your legislator, you will want to send a "snail-mail" as well as an email letter confirming the date and time. To further engage him/her, about a week prior to the visit,

you will want to send another letter/email outlining the specifics of the day – what they can be expected to see, hear and DO! Your letter/email should contain the following information:

1. Date and time of the upcoming visit
2. Address of the school, and your buildings' protocols for visitors (where to check in, etc.). If you are not able to meet them at the office, let them know who will be escorting them to your classroom.
3. An agenda of the day especially if you have arranged for them to visit more than just your classroom.
4. A brief outline of your lesson complete with references to standards and assessment.
5. Encourage your legislator to be ready to participate! They may even be willing to lead a warm-up or assist students with skills practice.
6. Make sure your legislator has your direct contact information at school. You may also wish to exchange cell phone numbers for day-of coordination.
7. Answer any questions he/she may have.

Media and Outreach

The legislative visit will provide various photo “ops”. Be sure to talk to your legislator’s staff, as well as your principal about their interest in including media around the event. You will also have to make sure that you have parent permission to allow photographs of any students in your class. This is a great opportunity to gather photos that can be used in a school and/or district newsletter, post to you school website, and of course, SHAPE-WA would love to include any of your photos in the journal!

On the day of the visit

Arrive at school early to ensure that you have everything in place for the day ahead. Meet your legislator at the assigned time and provide a place for him/her to store any personal items (purse, jacket). If you are having a student greet your legislator, make sure that you have included this information in the letter you sent the week prior and that you have had the student practice the skills of a proper greeting.

Introduce your legislator (and any staff that may be with them) to your office staff and principal. Supply them with visitor’s badges if this is the policy of your building. If there is time prior to visiting your classroom, this would be a good time for a tour of the building. This is also a good time to provide them with a written or oral agenda of the day.

Before your class begins, share information about your program and your students. Give your legislator information about any cultural, economic and/or academic diversity of your classroom. Explain how that diversity influences your curricular, instructional and assessment choices. Talk to them about the effects of funding, class size and waivers. You will also want to share with him/her the purpose of the lesson which they will be observing/participating in, and the desired outcomes. You may want to provide them with some specific things to look for throughout the lesson. If your legislator has indicated that they have a specific exercise or skill that they would like to instruct/lead the class in, now is the time to make them aware of where that will fit into the lesson.

When class begins, introduce your legislator to your class. If they (hopefully) have come dressed for participation, you might want to assign them a “buddy” who can assist them through the activities ☺

Lunchtime is a great opportunity for your legislator to not only experience “school lunch” (be prepared to purchase this for them and any accompanying staff), but to meet other teachers and other school personnel.

At the end of the day/visit, thank your legislator for investing the time to learn more about your classroom, students and school. You might ask them what he/she learned during the visit, including what reinforced or changed their beliefs.

After the visit

In the next few days following your legislators visit:

- Contact the SHAPE-WA Legislative Cadre leadership to let them know how the visit went. Include any pictures you might have.
Susan Sellers: sellerss100@gmail.com
Paul Clinton: pwclinton@comcast.net
- Thank your administrator, office staff, colleagues and students
- Send you legislator a thank you card. Include any pictures that you might have.

Thank You!

Much of the information in this resource guide was taken from the WEA NBCT Local Action Network Handbook for Legislators in the Classroom (2013-14), prepared by Jim Meadows.

<Date>

<Legislator's>

<Legislator'sAddress>

Dear Senator (or Representative) _____,

I'm a teacher at [insert school name] in the _____ School District and one of your constituents in the __ legislative district. I teach [insert subject and/or grade] and [insert relevant info about teaching experience, e.g. number of years in profession, roles, etc.] I'm writing to invite you to visit my classroom.

As a Physical Educator, I am very excited about Governor Inslee's Healthiest Next Generation Initiative. In order to achieve the goal of this initiative, to make our next generation the healthiest ever, we must begin by developing competent and confident movers. This begins with movement and fitness education in the pre- and primary grades and continues in the secondary grades through effective comprehensive programs that offer students the content knowledge and skills to lead a health and active life.

Governor Inslee's Healthiest Next Generation Initiative will support and advance good ideas that are already under way; ideas such as those that you will experience when you visit the Physical Education program at my school.

I am looking forward to your visit. I will be contacting your office in the next few weeks to work with you or your scheduler to select the most convenient date and time for your visit. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your leadership on our behalf in Olympia.

Sincerely,

[Insert name and signature above]