

MISSOURI NEA *Back Home* LEGISLATIVE MEETING PRIMER



Missouri NEA Education Advocates support MNEA legislative priorities by organizing back-home meetings with legislators and sending a brief report of the meeting to MNEA Government Relations staff.

These meetings are especially valuable to MNEA.

- They involve local educators in MNEA's pro-active agenda to support and improve public schools at home.
- They build capacity for local screening meetings as a part of MNEA's advocacy during the upcoming election cycle.
- Meeting with your legislator can be a powerful opportunity to build a relationship that will advance the interests of your local and MNEA.
- The meeting can position you as a reliable expert on your issue and an important ally for your legislator.
- Follow-up meetings help to maintain the relationship with the legislator and MNEA's capacity in that district for political and legislative advocacy.



Use the following tips to guide you as you work to strengthen the legislative connection back home.

Plan your meeting. Decide whether you are going alone or with one or two other members, local leaders, staff or governance. If you go as a small group, decide who is going to lead the meeting and what each person is going to contribute to the discussion. Plan for a meeting of no longer than 15 to 20 minutes.

Suggest a meeting place and make an appointment. Feel free to suggest a good place, but be flexible enough to allow for what works for the legislator. It's a good idea to select several dates and times that will work for all members of the group and then ask the legislator to pick one of those times.

Select one issue you care about and define your message. Particularly for the first meeting, you should focus first on building relationships and finding common ground. Bring up only one issue.

Invite comments and questions. Engage your legislator in dialogue. Role-play beforehand so you can anticipate comments the legislator might make or the questions he or she might have and be prepared with persuasive responses.

Have a "leave-behind" and offer to continue to meet. Provide your legislator with brief, written information for further reflection. For a first meeting, nearly all legislators react very positively to MNEA's Education Transformation Task Force Report.

Report on your visit. As soon as possible after your meeting, jot down notes that record the tone and what was said. This will help in reporting on your visit. Let your local and MNEA G.R. staff know that you made the visit and report what you covered and what the legislator said.

Follow up. Send a handwritten thank you note to your legislator. Let legislators know that you appreciate their time and would like to continue to meet with them, discuss education issues and serve as a local education expert for them.

MNEA CORE MESSAGES FOR *Back Home* LEGISLATOR MEETINGS

The goal of public education is for all students to have access to a quality public school where they can develop the knowledge and skills to participate fully in our democracy and succeed in this dynamic 21st century world.

MNEA educators are deeply committed to the success of every student. Students are at the center of everything we do.

- **All students, regardless of zip code, deserve the tools and time to learn.** If we're serious about every child's future, let's get serious about what works. This means resourcing all school so that students have more one-on-one attention and modern tools and textbooks. Missouri currently ranks 47th in state share of funding.
- **We need to ensure that every child has a qualified, caring and committed teacher.** Teachers work in schools because they believe in children. Teachers strive to connect with each child, discover passions and unlock potential. We must ensure that every teacher has the resources, mentoring and support he or she needs. Teachers are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success.
- **Good education inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn.** Teachers set high expectations for all students. Students must learn writing, critical thinking and problem-solving skills through reading, math, history and science. We encourage creativity through a well-rounded education that includes arts, physical education and music. School is a place where discovery happens. No bubble test can measure a child's curiosity. Of all the things we teach kids, the most important is love of learning.



Missouri NEA's legislative priorities

- Investing in all of our students, regardless of zip code, with the tools and time to learn
- Ensuring every child has a qualified, caring and committed teacher
- Creating an effective partnership to provide an education that inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn

Be an Education Advocate

You can help create a better future and support MNEA's legislative effort by becoming an MNEA Education Advocate.

Education Advocates commit to:

1. Coordinate back-home meetings with their legislators.
2. Encourage MNEA members to attend Capitol Action Lobby Days and legislative brunches or dinners during the legislative session.
3. Participate in candidate screenings in the spring.
4. Stay connected through email alerts.

Together, educators can make a positive difference for students and public schools.