



SHOW & TELL WITH LEGISLATORS

INFORM, ENGAGE, EDUCATE

**A collaborative effort of RSAI and SAI to engage all 150 Iowa legislators
to visit a public school each year.**



ABOUT THIS SHOW & TELL WITH LEGISLATORS INITIATIVE

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Show & Tell with Legislators is a collaborative effort of Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI) and School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) to engage all 150 Iowa legislators to visit a public school building each school year.

WHY YOU SHOULD HOST LEGISLATORS AT YOUR DISTRICT

Two Primary Purposes:

- 1) Inform, enlighten and educate Legislators about what is actually happening in local schools,
- 2) Build Relationships between school leaders and legislators, to help with advocacy in the future.

Inform, Engage, Educate

Iowa public schools are the heart of our communities and doing amazing work for the students of Iowa. National politics can lead legislators and the public to believe otherwise. Iowa school leaders know if legislators visit our public schools they will see and hear for themselves the great things happening, be more informed about the challenges facing Iowa schools, and become better lawmakers for the children of this state and our future leaders.

Building relationships with your local legislators is critical for your school as well as the education community across Iowa. Legislators have the ability to influence how public schools are funded, how they operate, and their regulation. A school visit will leave a lasting impression on legislators that can improve their understanding of issues facing Iowa schools, as well as can open the lines of communication and foster future discussions between district leaders and legislators as legislation proposal arises at the Statehouse.

RESOURCES TO HELP

Hosting a legislator can feel intimidating. This guide is intended to help you through the process and offer tips to make the visit successful. Contact RSAI or SAI at any point in your planning for resources or to discuss your questions.

HOSTING YOUR LEGISLATORS

STEP 1: INITIAL PLANNING

Plan to reach out a couple of months in advance of the visit as it may take some time to coordinate calendars. Decide if you want to invite one legislator at a time or invite several for the same event. Reach out to SAI or RSAI staff for important considerations in hosting more than one legislator. We recommend calling the legislator's office and asking who is the best person for scheduling a school visit (name, phone, email). Prepare the invitation to the appropriate person via email. Offer a few different dates/times that work for your team. [See sample invitation.](#)

If the legislator declines due to scheduling, ask them to provide alternative dates/times that would work for their schedule. If they decline for any other reason, ask if you can contact the person again for a future opportunity such as graduation, community celebration, etc.

If the legislator accepts, determine how long they can commit to being at the district for the visit on the selected date (preferably an hour or two) and let them know you will share more specific details in advance of the visit. Be sure to have them let you know if there is something in particular they would like to see during the visit.

Find Your Legislator's Contact Information: If you don't know which legislators represent your school district, visit <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find?district=>, then select your school district's name from the drop down list. Their contact information is listed on their individual legislator pages, along with committee assignments.

STEP 2: AGENDA PLANNING

Set the draft agenda for the legislator's visit. An hour or two is a good length of time for a legislator visit. We recommend the agenda including a brief **Welcome & Overview**, a **Tour or Activity**, and a **Closing/Debrief**. Regardless of who is included, ensure everyone is prepared in advance with the agenda, the legislator's bio, and any relevant talking points. [See sample agenda.](#) While you can certainly consider taking a group or candid photos for a social media post or your school district's website, be careful not to turn the visit into a photo opportunity or press event for the legislator or your district. The purpose is to inform, engage, and educate.

WELCOME & OVERVIEW: The Welcome & Overview is a chance to make introductions, share what is going well and what is being worked on at the district, share some basic information about the district, and to set the stage for what they may see or hear about during the tour/activity.

TOUR/ACTIVITY: The Tour or Activity is an opportunity to showcase your district to the legislator.

For the Tour or Activity, consider what you want them to see or hear about, and what may be unique or memorable about your district. This is an opportunity to showcase your district, facilities and programs to your legislator. **It's always best to have them interact with students, teachers, principals and/or board members.** Some specific agenda ideas may include:

- General tour of the campus facilities, a building or classroom
- Classroom or student activity observation
- Participating in a special event
- Reading to/with children
- Q&A with high school students
- Roundtable conversation with group represented by students, teachers, and leadership

When identifying key voices to interact with your legislators during the Tour or Activity, consider your:

- Top performing teachers and staff
- Poised and well-spoken students
- Board members
- Engaged parents

CLOSING & DEBRIEF: The Closing/Debrief is an opportunity to ask them for their observations/takeaways, thank them for the visit, exchange contact information, and discuss any requests or next steps. Be sure to reiterate your school's "story" and legislative priorities. This isn't the time for strong advocacy, rather for information, engagement, and education.

STEP 3: SHARE ALL THE DETAILS

As you get closer to the legislator's scheduled visit, share more details with the legislator's staff so they are prepared. Don't forget to include:

- Where to park.
- Which door to enter.
- Any applicable security protocols.
- The tentative agenda you have prepared, including who they will be interacting with during the visit.
- Be sure to ask them if there is anything in particular they wish to discuss or see.
- Be sure to request permission if you plan to take photos during their visit.

STEP 4: DURING THE VISIT

Consider some welcoming touches such as having a student or someone assigned to greet them in the parking lot or at the door. Have water or coffee available for them upon arrival. Ensure everyone has a hard copy of:

- Tentative agenda
- Contact information/biographies for those in attendance
- Fact sheet & information about your district including mission, enrollment, highlights/honors, etc.

STEP 5: AFTER THE VISIT

Send a formal hard copy thank you letter to the official's office right away. [*See sample thank you thank you letter.*](#)

It's always considerate to send an email to their staff for coordinating the visit. Hopefully the event was not just a press event but an opportunity for them to learn about your district. However, if photos were taken during the visit also share them with the legislator's staff.

Most importantly, continue to build the relationship by staying in contact. Send personal notes or emails periodically. Invite them to future events or share articles with them about issues relevant to the district.

If specific policy question arose, reach out to SAI or RSAI for help in putting together a response and sharing additional resources.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Use this as a potential model, not the only method. Much of your process will depend on what relationship you already have with the legislator(s). Remember, your goal is to inform, engage, and educate your legislator about what is happening at your school district and districts across the state.

SHARE/REPORT THE VISIT

The goal of the Show and Tell with Legislators initiative is engage all 150 Iowa legislators to visit a public school building each school year. Therefore, it's important to report visits by legislators to us so we can track which legislators have had an opportunity to learn from our districts. Please report any visits by legislators using our [*"Show & Tell with Legislators Reporting Form"*](#) as soon as possible. If you have already completed a visit earlier in this school year, feel free to also record it in the reporting form.

If you or a legislator needs follow up from your Professional Advocates/Government Relations Director, please let us know that as well.

ABOUT RSAI & SAI

Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI) was formed in 2014 by leaders from Iowa public school districts coming together to work for legislative solutions around needs and issues specific to rural public schools. The mission of RSAI is to advocate for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal and quality education.

School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) was formed in 1987 representing over 2,000 Iowa educational administrators. The mission of SAI is to support, encourage and develop Iowa's educational leaders and learners.

PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATES

RSAI & SAI Professional Advocates at the Statehouse represent the interests of members throughout the legislative process and with rulemaking and executive branch actions throughout the year. We help members prepare talking points and accompanying data specific to your district. We're glad to help you plan your legislator visit, answer questions, and provide resources for your board to better prepare them for advocacy. Help us by keeping us informed of your legislative visits after they occur and relationships your team has with legislators.



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