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_Understanding the Legislative Process: What You Need to Know_

The first step to being an effective advocate is to understand the policy context. Here is your roadmap to the essential information you will need.

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Now that you understand the process, here are some ways that you can be an effective advocate for education technology.

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This toolkit was compiled and written by Danielle Siegel, CoSN intern and Irene Spero, Chief Strategy Officer.
Talk the Talk: Key Terms for Federal and State Legislation

You will need to learn the vocabulary—and understand the terminology. Here are the ABC’s that are important in the policy process.

Act
An act is a bill that has been enacted, or signed into law, by a legislative body.

Amendment
An amendment is any change to a bill. Amendments can add new information, delete information, or modify information contained in a bill.

Appropriation
Appropriation refers to the allocation of funds to be used for a specific purpose. There is an Appropriations Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Most state legislatures also have a committee dedicated to appropriations.

Bicameral vs. Unicameral legislature
A bicameral legislature is composed of two chambers or legislative bodies. The United States Congress is a bicameral legislature with a House of Representatives and Senate, with most state legislatures following this model. The exception is Nebraska, which has a unicameral legislature—with only one chamber.

Bill
A bill is a potential law proposed to a legislature for consideration.

Caucus
A caucus is a group formed by legislators with similar interests and legislative agendas. They serve as forums for discussion, networking, and personal affiliation. There are caucuses for political parties, but also for more specific membership categories like geographical location, military affiliation, and specific issue advocacy.

Committee
A committee is a part of a legislative body with a specific topical jurisdiction—such as labor, education, etc.—which examines relevant issues, provides recommendations to the rest of the legislature, and spearheads relevant legislation.

Conference Committee
A conference committee is a special committee consisting of members of both legislative chambers in which both parties resolve disagreements over disputed terms of a bill. Both Congress and state legislatures utilize conference committees.

Floor (of the House and Senate)
The “House floor” or “Senate floor” literally refers to the floor space of a legislative building where representatives conduct legislative activities. When a bill is being formally discussed by a body, people say that bill is “on the floor.”
**Hearing**

A hearing is a legislative committee meeting which is usually open to the public and the media. At a hearing, lawmakers, experts, and other relevant parties may present testimony on matters being considered by the committee.

**“HR” and “S”**

**federal:** “HR” stands for “House of Representatives,” and is usually seen followed by a number. “HR#” refers to a bill that originated in the House, and each bill’s number remains the same throughout the legislative process. The same system is used for legislation in the Senate, with “S#” signifying legislation that originated in the Senate and a tracking number that remains with the bill throughout its legislative life.

**state:** In state legislatures, notations for bills may vary in both the House and the Senate. For example, the California Senate uses “AB#” for bills, and the Missouri House of Representatives uses the notation “HB#.” However most legislatures follow the form of letter(s) and a number, and the important things to know to track the progression of your bill of interest are its legislative body of origin and number.

**Initiative**

An initiative is a mechanism which allows citizens to directly place proposals onto their state ballot, consequentially bypassing the traditional processes of the state legislature. A ballot initiative process exists in **24 states.**

**Majority Leader**

The majority leader is the highest-ranked member of the majority party in the Senate and second in command to the Speaker of the House. This leadership system is used in both Congress and most state legislatures.

**Minority Leader**

The minority leader is second in command to the majority leader in the Senate and next in command to the majority leader in the House. This leadership system is used in both Congress and most state legislatures.

**Popular Referendum**

The popular referendum is a process which enables voters to approve or repeal an act passed by a state legislature. A popular referendum usually takes the form of a petitioning process to put a measure on the ballot for popular vote within 90 days after a legislature passes an act. A popular referendum process exists in **24 states.**

**Recess**

Legislatures operate on their own calendars, with adjournment signifying the formal end of a session. A recess, on the other hand, signifies a break during which the work of a legislature is temporarily suspended.

**Speaker of the House**

The Speaker of the House serves as the head of the House of Representatives in Congress with duties ranging from political and legislative leadership to institutional and administrative tasks. This leadership system is used in both Congress and most state legislatures.
Sponsor/Co-Sponsor
A sponsor of a bill is the member of the legislature who originally introduced the legislation for consideration by the body. A cosponsor, of which there can be many, is a member who adds his/her name to a bill to lend support to the measure.

Subcommittee
A subcommittee is a group of selected members of a legislative committee tasked with studying a particular policy area and then advising the greater committee on that issue. Members of Congress often sit on multiple committees and subcommittees.

Table
To table a bill means to remove it from the legislative temporarily with the possibility of future consideration.

Veto
The veto is a power vested in the President at the federal level and the Governor at the state level to refuse to sign a piece of legislation, thus blocking that bill from being enacted into law.

Sources Referenced:

The Washington State Legislature
The Nebraska Unicameral Legislature
The United States Senate
The United States House of Representatives
National Conference of State Legislatures
Vote Smart
# How to Navigate Your State Legislative Website

*State legislative websites can be daunting—here are some tips to make this process easier.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to Look For</th>
<th>Why is it Important?</th>
<th>Tips for Navigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find your district’s representative</td>
<td>The job of a legislator is to represent the needs of their district. They will be more inclined to give their own constituents their ear. Your representative—or their office—should be your first point of contact as an advocate.</td>
<td>• Many state legislature websites have search boxes to help you locate your representative by zip code or name.                                                                 • Other sites have a district map that shows you which member represents which district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find contact information for your representative</td>
<td>Representatives split their time between their districts and the capitol. Find contact information for both offices.</td>
<td>• Members are often listed under their committee assignments. Look for a link to committees, and that often leads to member bios and contact information.   • Some sites have rosters of contact information for each representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify committee membership</td>
<td>Representatives focus the majority of their legislative work on issues related to their committee assignment. Locate the members who sit on the committee of most interest to your policy concern.</td>
<td>• Most sites will have a tab at the top of the page called “committees.”                                                                 • If not, look for tabs about legislators—those often lead to member bios that indicate committee assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify leadership</td>
<td>Members with leadership positions determine the logistics and direction of a legislature, and have a great deal of influence on the legislative agenda. Familiarize yourself with the leadership of both chambers and the roles they play.</td>
<td>• Many sites have a “leadership” tab for both their House and Senate pages. Look for these.                                                                 • If your state does not have a separate page for leadership, then leadership roles are often indicated next to the members’ names on a committee’s page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find legislation</td>
<td>The websites of state legislatures are excellent resources for finding full texts of bills being considered by the body, as well full text of bills that have been enacted into law.</td>
<td>• Many websites have search functions—often a search box—that allow you to look for legislation by its bill number.                                                                 • If you do not know a bill’s number, try searching using key words/terms in “quotes.”</td>
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</table>
Get Started: Links to Websites of State Legislatures

Now that you know the basics of navigating the website, it is time to get started and review the website for your state legislature.

Alabama	Montana
Alaska	Nebraska
Arizona	Nevada
Arkansas	New Hampshire
California	New Jersey
Colorado	New Mexico
Connecticut	New York
Delaware	North Carolina
Florida	North Dakota
Georgia	Ohio
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Idaho	Oregon
Illinois	Pennsylvania
Indiana	Rhode Island
Iowa	South Carolina
Kansas	South Dakota
Kentucky	Tennessee
Louisiana	Texas
Maine	Utah
Maryland	Vermont
Massachusetts	Virginia
Michigan	Washington
Minnesota	West Virginia
Mississippi	Wisconsin
Missouri	Wyoming
Know Your Timeline: Links to Legislative Calendars by State

Being a successful advocate requires you to be in the right place at the right time. Plan your advocacy agenda in accordance with the legislative calendar of your state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Montana</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>New Hampshire (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>New Hampshire (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut (House)</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
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<td>Connecticut (Senate)</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>Delaware</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida (House)</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida (Senate)</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>Georgia (House)</td>
<td>Oklahoma (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia (Senate)</td>
<td>Oklahoma (Senate)</td>
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<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Pennsylvania (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois (House)</td>
<td>Pennsylvania (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois (Senate)</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<td>Indiana (House)</td>
<td>South Carolina (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana (Senate)</td>
<td>South Carolina (Senate)</td>
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<td>Iowa</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
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<td>Kansas (House)</td>
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<td>Kansas (Senate)</td>
<td>Tennessee (Senate)</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Texas</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Utah</td>
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<td>Maine (House)</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
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<td>Maine (Senate)</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Washington</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri (House)</td>
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<td>Missouri (Senate)</td>
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Want the bigger picture? Find the dates of legislative sessions for all 50 states [here](#).
How a Bill Becomes a Law in a State Legislature

1. Idea/Draft/Reading/Referral
2. Committee Consideration and Vote
3. Second and Third Readings
4. Referral to Other Chamber
5. Conference Committee
6. Governor Signs or Vetoes

For more detailed models of how a bill becomes a law, see these examples from the Indiana and Vermont state legislatures.

How to be an Advocate at Each Step of the Legislative Process

**Idea/Draft**
- draft your own sample piece of legislation to give to your representative
- call, write, email, or set up a meeting with your representative to discuss a policy proposal

**Scheduled for a Reading/Committee Referral**
- contact a member of the chamber’s leadership—in many state legislatures they decide which bills get assigned for a reading and then referred to committee

**Committee Consideration**
- contact the chair of the committee—the chairman or woman decides whether a committee considers a bill, or if it dies
- contact other members of the committee, who can influence the chair/play a role if the chair does decide to consider a bill
- give/provide testimony to be used in a committee hearing on the bill

**Second and Third Readings**
- contact chamber leadership—they often decide if a bill gets heard for second and third readings
- if a bill is scheduled for a second reading, any legislator in the chamber of origin can suggest amendments that must be approved by majority—call your representative if you want to propose an amendment or discuss their vote on all or parts of the bill

**Process Repeated in Other Chamber**
- same steps for representatives of other chamber

**Conference Committee**
- find out who sits on the conference committee for the bill of concern
- ask what changes are being made, track the work the committee is doing
- call, write, or set up appointments to assure bill does not die or loose your policy positions of interest

**Bill Sent to Governor**
- call or write your governor’s office
- send in a letter with signatures from community expressing widespread support (or disapproval) for your bill of interest
- look for statements in the media of governor’s support or disapproval of the bill as an indicator of intention to sign or veto
- conduct a social media campaign to show your governor there is widespread support (or disapproval) for your bill of interest
Tips for Reading Legislation

Legislation can be wordy, dense, intimidating and difficult to follow. Here are some tips for reading legislation.

Follow these tips to read legislation with greater ease and accuracy:

• **Research the bill’s legislative history.**
  On many state legislatures’ websites, there is an option to view a bill’s legislative history in addition to its summary and full text. Reviewing the bill’s progression through the legislature will help put it in context by telling you who reviewed it and when.

• **Look for other pieces of legislation referenced in the bill.**
  It is helpful to look up any other legislation referenced in the bill you are reading. Again, this will provide context of the greater debate and legislative precedent surrounding the measure addressed in the bill.

• **Identify key definitions contained within the bill.**
  Some bills may include a section at the beginning containing definitions. Reading this will help clarify what exactly the bill is discussing, as words in legislation are used purposefully and in an often narrow and specific context.

• **Pay attention to lines containing repeals.**
  Many pieces of legislation contain provisions repealing parts or all of past legislation. These provisions are often short and contained at the end of a bill, so they are easy to miss. Be aware of them, as repeals can make drastic changes to existing practices.

• **Determine whether a change is procedural or substantive.**
  There are both procedural and substantive provisions contained in a bill. If text is underlined or crossed out, indicating something has been added or removed, read carefully to identify under which category that change falls. As an issue-based advocate, you will likely be more concerned with substantive changes.

• **Pay close attention to signal words like ‘and,’ ‘except,’ ‘or,’ etc.**
  While these words may seem insignificant, there have been many court cases dedicated to resolving disputes about what they mean for the interpretation of a bill. Pay particular attention to the distinction between ‘and’ and ‘or.’ ‘Or’ is exclusive, and usually indicates that one or the other part of the list it combines must be met, while ‘and’ tends to be inclusive and usually indicates that all parts listed are necessary.
• **Avoid skipping words.**
  This task may sound daunting for longer pieces of legislation, but bills differ from most everyday texts in that every word is chosen incredibly purposefully and carefully. Skipping one or two words can substantially change the interpretation of a bill. Look up any words, phrases, or acronyms that you do not understand.

• **Underlined text signals new content in a bill, crossed out text signals old law to be omitted.**
  Some downloadable versions of full-text bills will indicate this system on the bill. Take note what words, phrases, or stipulations are added or deleted from previous law when reading a bill.

For a breakdown of the organizational structure of a bill and an explanation of each section’s function, see a sample piece of legislation annotated by the Washington State Legislature.

*Note: Legislation from your state assembly may look different, but this example does an excellent job of outlining the key elements in a bill.

**Sources Referenced:**


“How to Read a Bill,” [The Wisconsin State Legislature](https://www.wisconsinlegis.gov)

“A Guide to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying Statues,” [Georgetown University Law Center](https://www.law.georgetown.edu)
Don’t Forget the Governor

The governor’s office plays a critical role in influencing the policy agenda and determining the state budgets.

Influence on Policy Agenda
As the highest-ranking popularly-elected state official, governors have a considerable amount of informal influence on the policy agenda of a state. Some ways that governors can exert their informal influence are:

- **Developing their party’s platform:**
  The governor is the head of his or her political party in the state and have the ears of members of their party in the legislature. Party loyalty can influence the policy priorities—led by the governor—of legislators. **Know where your governor stands on ed tech issues, and if he or she has proposed policy initiatives in the legislature.**

- **Using the State of the State address:**
  A governor delivers a *State of the State* address for the same purposes. This is a major platform for the governor to persuade the public, the legislature, and the media of the merits of his or her policies. **Listen to/read the text of your governor’s State of the State addresses and identify any comments on ed tech policy.**

- **Establishing relationships with legislators:**
  From coordination on specific efforts like the budget to general legislative oversight of the executive branch, governors work closely with legislators on a variety of issues. This gives governors the opportunity to form personal relationships with legislators which may encourage loyalty or influence the way a legislator thinks. **If your advocacy work is dependent on one or a few members, research their relationship with/loyalty to the governor.**

Appropriations and Budgeting Powers
While state legislatures have an appropriations committee that plays a large role in determining how your state’s money is allocated, the state budget is actually a result of a negotiation process between the legislature and the governor. The governor plays a role in determining the budget by:

- **Providing information:**
  The research and policy analysis that informs a state budget is conducted by executive branch agencies—which report to the governor. The governor uses this information to inform his or her budget proposal that gets sent to the legislature.

- **Consideration and veto power:**
  The legislature can review and revise the governor’s budget and pass a version it prefers, but the governor still has the power to review the passed version and either sign or veto parts of the
budget. Pay attention to which parts of the budget your governor has vetoed in past budgets, it may reveal a pattern of appropriations that could indicate intentions of future funding.

**Veto Powers**

Your advocacy efforts may see a bill through a state legislature, but if a governor vetoes all or part of a bill then your hard work will go to waste. A few types of veto powers possessed by state governors are:

- **Veto**
  A governor can veto a bill that is passed in the legislature—usually within a specified period of time. Governors are often public about their intentions to veto legislation. Check your governor’s press releases and statements to media for insight about whether he or she will veto your legislation of interest.

- **Pocket veto**
  A governor can also veto a bill by not signing it into law until the bill dies. This is a less direct method of vetoing that is just as revelatory of policy preferences but will likely be less publicized, so make sure you pay attention to the legislation killed by the governor via pocket veto.

- **Line-item veto**
  This type of veto allows the governor to reject certain parts of legislation, but not the whole bill. If there is a certain stipulation in legislation for which you are advocating, make sure you have gubernatorial support for that measure.

For more information on the veto and appropriations powers ensured to your state’s governor, look here.

**Sources Consulted**

“Governors’ Power and Authority,” National Governors Association

“Separation of Powers,” National Conference of State Legislatures

“Appropriation Powers,” National Conference of State Legislatures
State Education Agencies: A Major Player in Key Ed Tech Issues

Your state’s executive education agency—called SEAs (State Education Agencies) is also an important player. You can find the websites of your state’s SEA in this database from the U.S. Department of Education.

What do SEAs do?
The role of SEAs is to implement and oversee the education policies passed by your state legislatures. The State Board of Education—the policy body of the SEA—deals with curriculum and assessment standards, regulating materials used in classrooms, and instruction requirements among many other duties. SEAs conduct critical work that may affect you as an ed tech policy advocate, so it is important to be familiar with their work.

What work do SEAs conduct on ed tech issues?
• monitoring and evaluating ed tech programs
• determining systems of online assessment
• regulating materials used for curriculum
• implement internet safety systems for schools
• regulating personalized learning options
• overseeing distribution of federal education funds to the state
• submitting budget proposals to the state legislature
### Get Organized: Articulate Your Advocacy Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify Priorities</th>
<th>Outline Policy Goals</th>
<th>Define Legislative Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your top three ed tech issue priorities?</td>
<td>Which of these initiatives would most benefit schools in your community?</td>
<td>Is your goal to pass a bill? Add an amendment to an existing bill? Repeal current law? Or simply to raise awareness of an ed tech issue?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explore Your Media Goals</th>
<th>Reach Out to Community</th>
<th>Set a Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will you use the media to advance your goals?</td>
<td>How will the community be involved, (i.e., town hall, public board meetings)?</td>
<td>What policy goals do you want to accomplish annually? What monthly goals can help you get closer to achieving your annual goal?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you are familiar with the policy context and understand the process, you are ready to become an effective advocate.

Identify Your Ed Tech Priorities

The field of education technology includes a large variation of issue areas and policies. As an advocate, it is helpful to focus in on a few specific issue areas. Start your advocacy agenda by ranking your top three ed tech issue priorities:

1.

2.

3.

Translate Your Priorities into Policy Goals

Now that you have your priorities identified, translate those into policy goals. Think in terms of legislation; if you could only get one bill passed, what are the top three policy initiatives that would most benefit your community’s schools? (for example, if you said “wifi access” in the previous section, a policy goal would be “getting wifi into the homes of the most underserved families in your community”).

1.

2.

3.

Define Your Legislative Agenda

Is your goal to pass a bill? Add an amendment to an existing bill? Repeal current law? Or simply to raise awareness of an ed tech issue in your state legislature? Define your legislative agenda.

Explore Your Media Goals

In addition to legislative advocacy, are you seeking any media attention for your issue? Local press coverage, state press coverage? Brainstorm the media advocacy measures you would like to take.

Reach Out to the Community

Are you hoping to get your community and/or district involved in your advocacy campaign? Brainstorm the role your community can play in achieving your goals, and what form that may take (i.e., town halls, public board meetings, etc.)
Set a Timeline

It is important to set a timeline for your advocacy campaign. Coordinate your advocacy efforts with the time at which they will have the most impact. Determine your annual goals, monthly goals, and weekly goals.

• **Annual Goals**—select the number of policy goals you previously listed that you think you can accomplish in one year

• **Monthly Goals**—for each month, set a few sub-goals that will help you get closer to achieving your larger annual goal(s)

• **Weekly Goals**—to stay on track for your monthly goals, plan your advocacy efforts by weekly activities
**Your “Elevator Speech”**

An “elevator speech” is an excellent way to test your ability to articulate your agenda in a persuasive and concise way. The following excerpt is from “How CTOs Can Share Success with a Wider Audience” from the CoSN blog, but can be adapted to legislative advocacy. It provides an overview of how to frame your mission as an “elevator speech.”

“Consider how to frame your story. What story are you trying to tell? You’re probably doing many terrific things in your district—but how can you communicate that succinctly and effectively to a wider audience?

To develop a concise “elevator speech” that clearly summarizes your district’s story, start by stating your district’s vision or mission. Then, explain how technology supports that vision, using one or two sentences. Finally, describe the results you’re seeing (or you hope to see) in a single sentence. An example: ‘In the X School District, our mission is to graduate students who are independent thinkers, creative problem solvers, and effective communicators, ready for success. We have given every student in grades 4-12 a digital device, and we’ve redesigned our curriculum to be project-based and grounded in an authentic context. Consequently, we have seen a 20% increase in math proficiency and a 32% rise in ELA proficiency on our end-of-year state exams.’

You can use this model to help introduce your main district story—but also to describe each individual component or success within that larger story. This format (challenge, solution, results) underpins many case studies.”

Try this with your legislative agenda and policy position. This version of an elevator speech is an excellent tool to use during brief encounters with state representatives.

Vision: “In school district/Community X, we are seeking to improve ed tech by…”

Problem: “We are unable to make these improvements because current law is lacking in area Y”

Solution: “The problem could be addressed by passing Z legislation”

Call to Action: “Support our district’s/community’s mission by voting for Z legislation”
Written Advocacy: Writing Effective Policy Memos and One-Pagers

Putting your position in writing is an important part of your advocacy. Make your communication one that will be noticed by taking the following steps.

Policy Memos

Why write a policy memo?
A policy memo is usually written to legislators and their staff, as well as committee staff.

- It is an excellent tool for articulating the purpose, history, strengths, and weaknesses of your proposed ed tech policy.
- It is often used by legislators as a tool to brief themselves and others on policies being discussed in the chamber—particularly ones with which they are not experts.
- If you are proposing a bill or a policy to a legislature, writing a policy memo is a great way to provide a representative with a comprehensive yet succinct way to analyze your proposal.

What should the memo contain?

- Introduction
  - Define the problem/ed tech issue area you are discussing.
  - Explain the significance and implications of the problem.
  - Give a brief history/background of the issue and ways it has been approached.
- Analysis
  - Touch on a few policy proposals to address problem you defined, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.
  - Include arguments against each proposal—even if you agree with them—as well as responses to those rebuttals.
- Conclusion
  - Indicate the policy that you think is the strongest option for addressing the ed tech problem at hand.
  - Finish with a call to action.

Remember: use simple and clear language, incorporate research if available and keep it short.
Sources Referenced

http://wws.princeton.edu/admissions/wws-blog/item/policy-memo-writing-tips

http://fordschool.umich.edu/files/memo-writing.pdf


What Influences a Legislator? Factors to Consider as an Advocate

Part of what makes the legislative landscape so difficult to navigate is the multitude of factors that impact how representatives think and make choices. As an advocate, it is important to understand these considerations when working with legislators to help contextualize representatives’ decision-making process.

Political Considerations
- party affiliation
- the election cycle
- aspirations to hold higher elected office
- loyalty to political figures (the Governor, the President, etc.)
- fundraising and campaign contributions
- interest groups and lobbyist advocacy
- political environment and party balance in the legislature at the time

Legislative Considerations
- House or Senate leadership
- committee membership
- the legislative calendar
- relationships with other legislators
- caucus membership
- advice from a representative’s staff
- expert analysis conducted by the legislative research body

Personal Considerations
- personal passions and interests
- ideological orientation
- opinions of friends and family
- personal affiliations (university, etc.)
- personality
- past experience/history with an issue
Media and Image-Based Considerations

• a representative’s favorability ratings
• media attention surrounding an issue

Constituent-Based Considerations

• community dynamics
• a district’s general political orientations
• district demographics
• importance of issue to district and local economy

Logistical Considerations

• the budget
• a representative’s schedule
Follow the Money: Know Who Funds Your State Legislature

Money plays a large role in American politics at every level. State representatives are not immune to the influence that large donors can have on their time and legislative agenda. It is critical to know who is donating campaign funds to your state representative to fully gauge and navigate the political environment of your legislature.

Use these resources to identify the people, corporations, and industries donating money to your state and federal representatives.

Vote Smart
- allows you to search by zip code or a representative’s name
- indicates a representative’s voting record on certain issue areas and specific bills
- allows you to track the campaign contributions to state representatives by sector, corporation, and industry

National Institute on Money in State Politics
- can search for donor trends to all candidates in a state legislature
- can search by individual candidates and their campaign donors
- indicates both individual, corporate, and industry contributions

Open Secrets
- good resource for federal Congressional candidates
- can search candidates/current representatives by state or zip code and track their campaign donors
- can look at data of individual donors and see which representatives’ campaigns they fund
- breaks down types of donor by corporate, individual, small or large donors, etc.

National Conference of State Legislatures
- great resource for understanding your state’s campaign finance laws
- provides overviews of state law on campaign contribution limits and disclosure and reporting requirements for political contributions
Election 2016: Raising Awareness of Ed Tech

Election campaigns are underway across the country – and could determine the future of ed tech policy. As educators, we can help candidates better understand technology’s role in teaching, learning and decision-making and elevate public education as a prominent issue in the 2016 campaign. Here are some ways that you can help support ed tech in the 2016 campaigns. Advocate now!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Can I Raise Awareness</th>
<th>Questions I Can Ask Candidates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about CoSN’s federal policy priorities.</td>
<td>5 million students lack high speed internet access at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Build partnerships to develop local education technology priorities and messages.</td>
<td>• Students need access to broadband technology at school and at home to experience the dynamic learning necessary for success in the 21st century economy. Do you support funding to ensure robust, high speed broadband for learning at school? How could we in (NAME OF COMMUNITY) ensure that students from low-income families have access to broadband at home for learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Highlight your school district’s education technology plans and share them with candidates and the public.</td>
<td>Congress authorized $1.65 billion for flexible education block grants, but the President only proposed $500 million for the program in the budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invite candidates to visit classrooms and see how technology is transforming learning.</td>
<td>• Will you support increased funding to help teachers and school administrators expand their understanding of how technology can transform education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Write op-eds and letters to the editor describing your education technology practices, priorities, and needs.</td>
<td>83% of U.S. education leaders say that individual engagement is a key element to student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attend candidates’ town hall meetings and ask questions about their education technology platform.</td>
<td>• We live in a world that is increasingly personalized as a result of technology. Yet most of our schools are still following an educational process that is generalized for all students. Will you support efforts to leverage technology and make learning more personalized for students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Follow up with notes to all candidates expressing your thanks for their consideration</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CoSN does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaigns on behalf of (or in opposition to) any specific candidates for public office and this document does not encourage readers to adopt a preference for or against any specific candidate for public office. Readers should pursue these ideas with the goal of educating all candidates for a given public office and their communities about the value and importance of education technology for all students.
Interacting With Local Media

Advice from Jamie Sarrio, an education editor from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution at the 2015 annual CoSN conference, adopted from the CoSN blog by Charlene Blohm and Dennis Pierce—read the full post here: http://www.cosn.org/blog/do’s-and-don’ts-cto-communications-local-media

Do’s

- Learn which reporters cover your district, and routinely pitch ideas for stories to them.
- Speak in basic terms. The best reporters are able to boil things down to a very basic level for readers.
- Write brief pitches with basic information included: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Include contact information and be ready to respond quickly.
- Provide supporting information such as documents, RFPs and expense details.

Don’ts

- Provide inaccurate information or try to hide information.
- Do nothing. Reporters will not necessarily know about your work unless you tell them.
- Try to control the story. If you find a reporter who is trustworthy and credible, help them get the information they need to tell a great story.
- Take it personally if there’s a negative story about you or the district that makes you angry.
Resources: Advocacy with CoSN

Join the CoSN Advocacy Network
Join the CoSN Advocacy Network to stay connected with CoSN’s advocacy at the federal level. By signing up, you can receive emails, newsletters, and timely alerts about emerging ed tech issues. Following CoSN’s federal advocacy is a great way to stay up to date with ed tech legislation and actions you can take as an advocate—knowledge which can help you be a better state advocate.

Sign up here.

Take Action
Use CoSN’s “Take Action” button to find your representatives in both the House and the Senate. There is a button for both your federal and state representatives. CoSN provides you with a sample letter that you can edit to send to your representatives with a call to action to increase ed tech funding. Direct the ed tech leaders and supporters in your district and community to this button—the more letters legislators receive from constituents concerned about ed tech funding, the louder the message.

Take action with CoSN at the federal level here.
Take action with CoSN at the state level here.

Federal Advocacy by Issue
See examples of federal advocacy measures conducted by CoSN. Many of these measures are adaptable to state-level advocacy. Stay up to date on the work that CoSN is doing to advance its policy agenda in its four critical issue areas.

See what CoSN is doing surrounding ESSA Reauthorization
See what CoSN is doing surrounding E-Rate and Classroom Broadband Access
See what CoSN is doing surrounding Privacy and Student Data Security
See what CoSN is doing surrounding FY 2017 Budget and Appropriations

CoSN videos
Follow CoSN on YouTube to watch videos documenting CoSN events, testimony from members about the importance of being an ed tech advocate, advice, and more.

Visit CoSN’s YouTube page here.
Finding Ed Tech Legislation and Data: Resources

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

• Education Legislation Database (2001-2007)
Search all enacted education legislation from 2001-2007 from across the United States with this database. You can search by state, topic, keyword, year, and status.

• Education Bill Tracking Database (2008-Present)
Search all passed education legislation from 2008-Present from across the United States with this database. You can search by state, topic, keyword, status, bill number, year, and author.

• Technology and Digital Learning
This page is an excellent resource on the specific ed tech issues of digital and personalized learning, technology in schools, student data privacy, and broadband access for learning. Visit each issue’s page for an overview of the topic, policy considerations in state legislatures, important policy questions, and the most recent state approaches to addressing that issue.

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)

• State Policy Database
Search this database to find policies under the authority of State Boards of Education, who are tasked with the implementation and regulation of state education practices. It allows you to explore by topic in two categories—educator effectiveness and student learning standards and assessments—or by state. If you cannot find what you are looking for in these categories, try an advanced search.

• Trends in Student Privacy Data
NASBE recently published a report outlining the progress states have made in protecting student privacy—one of CoSN’s policy priorities. View or download the report to get a glimpse of overall progress by state, as well as progress on specific topics within the issue area of protecting student privacy.

Education Superhighway—State of the States

• Broadband Access Database
This “State of the States” database, developed by Education Superhighway, tracks progress in getting high-speed connectivity to all schools in the United States. Click on your state on the map to see an overview of how well your state is doing in three initiatives—closing the fiber gap, getting wifi in every classroom, and making broadband affordable. Click the “view school district data tab” in the bottom right corner of your state’s snapchat to compare how well your district is doing compared to others in the state.
**Data Quality Campaign**

- **State Capacity to Link K-12/Postsecondary Data Systems and Report Key Indicators**

The Data Quality Campaign advocates for smarter use of education data to improve the experience of students K-12. This report outlines states’ progress on key indicators of effective education data usage.

**Education Commission of the States**

- **State Legislation: By State**

The Education Commission of the States provides a thorough database of education legislation in all fifty states. Each state’s database is organized by a specific section of education policy and gives a summary, status, and link to the full text of each bill/law. Click on your state on the map, then scroll down to the “technology” tab to see ed tech legislation.
Resources: Connect with Other State Education Groups

State Superintendents’ Associations
Superintendents of CoSN school districts stress the importance of connecting with other groups in the state who have similar advocacy agendas as your district. State school superintendent associations will often have overlapping policy goals with ed tech advocates—increased education funding, equity, etc. Connect and with them to widen your support and resources and coordinate your advocacy efforts.

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming
State Ed Tech Organizations

Administrators in CoSN districts also stress the importance of knowing the other ed tech groups that are operating within your state and being familiar with their legislative advocacy agendas. Visit the website of the ed tech association in your state to connect with other ed tech advocates.

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming