

Planning for Stakeholder Visits

In response to school requests for support in coordinating visits with various stakeholders (legislators, State Board of Education members, other community leaders), CSI has compiled the following considerations for scheduling and hosting a visit. This resource is meant to serve as a guide to assist you in scheduling, planning, and conducting a school visit for stakeholders. If you have any questions or need assistance in coordinating school visits, don't hesitate to contact Amanda Oberg at 303-866-5193 or amandaoberg@csi.state.co.us.

Reasons for inviting stakeholders to visit your school:

- It allows you to raise awareness for your school, including your unique model, major initiatives, achievements, and challenges.
- It allows you to demonstrate the positive contributions your school makes by showcasing the services you offer, the staff you employ, and the students you serve.
- It helps key stakeholders and decision makers more clearly understand the concerns of your school and the students and community you serve.
- It also allows you to explain how a proposed new law, regulation, policy, or decision would impact students and your school.

Step 1: Preparing for Hosting a Visit

Prepare your message. Clearly identify the purpose for hosting the visit, whether it simply be to get to know one another or to address a particular challenge or upcoming decision. Be sure your message captures:

- Your school's mission and the programs and services you provide
- The importance and impact of your work
- Examples through personal stories and experiences

Step 2: Sending the Invite

Send a written invitation. Write a letter inviting the stakeholder to visit your school. Briefly describe your school, its programs, and indicate who will participate in the visit.

Invite local news media. A school visit with a stakeholder is a terrific opportunity to receive media coverage. Submit a media advisory to local education reporters (a sample media advisory template included in this resource). If you do invite the local news media, remember to inform the stakeholder or stakeholder's office that the news media has been invited.

Step 3: Planning for the School Visit

Choose a location within your school where you can accommodate everyone. This might be a conference room, office or lunchroom where everyone involved in the school visit can meet and where everyone can come back together after the school tour or event. Whatever location you decide, ensure there is enough space for people who are part of the visit (including parents, staff, or even students) to engage in a conversation with the stakeholder.

Identify what parts of your school to highlight and who you would like the stakeholder will meet. Have a plan for what you want the stakeholder to see and hear – perhaps based on a school event or engaging class. Identify who are your school (teachers, parents, board members) will be in attendance, and who will share what information.

IDEA! Give a specific focus for the visit. Plan the visit to maximize attendance and attention. One idea is to send a letter from the students served by the school inviting stakeholders to share mid-morning coffee/recess with a student representative, school administrator, parent and staff. Stakeholders are likely to stay longer if they wish, but keep the official invitation to 60 minutes.

Prepare materials to share during the visit. Prepare a fact sheet about your school, highlighting the message you want the stakeholder to receive. It may also important to provide a statewide perspective on charter schools, and CSI can provide materials for this.

Typically, a school visit lasts about an hour.

At the start (before the tour):

- Invite visitors to sit down while you prep them for the school visit.
- Give the stakeholder and/or staff person your business card (or a list of all participants and their titles).
- Present supporting materials you have prepared.
- Give a brief overview of the background of the school, its personnel, the children and parents served, and unique education model.

During the tour:

- As you tour the school, describe successes (service to all students, community partnerships, etc.), as well as challenges (funding inequity) and how you are addressing them.
- Consider telling one or two brief “success stories.” You might want to arrange for a parent and/or teacher to share the story and/or be present for questions.
- Staff not involved with the tour should continue working as usual.

Wrapping up:

- Allow for time after the tour to sit down with the stakeholder to explore possible solutions to challenges.
- Thank participants for taking the time to visit and for their past support, if appropriate.
- Send a thank you letter outlining points covered during the tour and include additional information if requested.

Ways CSI Can Support Your Efforts

If you would like assistance in planning for stakeholder visits, contact CSI's Communications Coordinator, Amanda Oberg, at 303-866-5193 or amandaoberg@csi.state.co.us. CSI can specifically help with:

- Help with preparing your school's message
- Sharing local news media contact information for media advisories
- Helping to plan the school visit
- Providing CSI materials for distribution to stakeholders

Media Advisory Template (to inform the media of stakeholders visiting your school)

A media advisory is a one-page description of an upcoming event or other news item that serves as a heads up to reporters. It describes the “who, what, where, when, and why” of a news item and can easily be emailed to media contacts. The purpose is to give enough information in advance to reporters so they can determine whether or not to attend. Attendance may determine whether or not a story is written about the event. It is best practice to send the media advisory at least a week before the event and redistribute it the day before the event as a reminder to media.

WHAT: The Event or a Brief Description (Organization Announcing New Initiative to...)

WHO: Speakers

WHEN: Date and Time

WHERE: Location of Event

WHY: Background information about the event, directions to the event, if necessary, and/or company boilerplate

Contact Information: Press Contact