Engaging in Legislative Policy Conversations in Connecticut

League of Innovative Schools

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Outcomes

1. Build understanding of the NESSC Theory of Action (Policy-Practice-Community Engagement);

2. Share Insight into current/upcoming legislative session and the current state policy landscape; and,

3. Support the development of actionable skills to engage in state legislative policy conversations
Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, Outcomes, Overview

Why policy matters

Wisdom from the field

Practice

Discussion

Closing + Next Steps
NESSC Meeting Norms

1. Building on and supporting one another’s efforts
2. Acknowledging and encouraging different approaches as we collaborate
3. Trusting in the integrity of NESSC colleagues
4. Monitoring our air time in group gatherings
5. Communicating openly, clearly, and directly
6. Acknowledging and honoring different perspectives
7. Assuming positive intentions of all members
Opening

1. Find a partner - someone who you don’t work with
2. Introduce yourself - name, role, school
3. Share what interests you about policy and why you are here today

How does policy impact your role, work, students? What comes to mind for you when you think of policy?
Theory of Action

Personalized-Learning Levers
- Proficiency-based graduation
- Multiple and flexible pathways
- Learner-centered accountability

State and Regional Support Strategies
- Changes in state and district policy
- Changes in district and school practice
- Increased public will, understanding, and support

State and Regional Performance Goals
- Increase five-year graduation rates
- Decrease annual dropout rates
- Increase the share of students enrolled in two- or four-year degree programs or pursuing industry-certified accredited postsecondary certificates
If we are going to scale practices that address equity and ensure readiness for all students across our state, we need policy that will compel, incentivize, and require schools to adopt these practices.
How A Bill Becomes A Law In Connecticut

The Proposed Bill
Bill is sent to the clerk of the chamber of the sponsoring legislator for numbering.

Bill title, number and sponsors are printed in the House and Senate Journals.

Bill is sent to the appropriate joint standing committee of the General Assembly, depending on the bill's subject matter.

Bill requiring action by another committee is referred to that committee, e.g. a bill requiring expenditure is referred to the Appropriations Committee.

Committee may report the bill favorably, defeat the bill or issue no report (the bill fails).

Committee holds public hearings for the public, state agency representatives and legislators on all bills it wishes to consider.

Committee may:
1. have the bill drafted in legal language;
2. combine it with other bills and have it drafted as a committee bill;
3. refer the bill to another committee; or
4. take no action, so the bill fails.

The committee may also write a new "raised" committee bill.

After leaving the last committee, the bill is sent to the Legislative Commissioners' Office to be checked for constitutionality and consistency with other law.

The Office of Fiscal Analysis adds an estimate of the bill's cost.

The Office of Legislative Research adds a "plain English" explanation of the bill.

Clerk assigns the bill a calendar number.

Final printing of bill.

Other chamber votes on the bill.

A "yes" vote sends the bill to the other chamber for placement on calendar.

Vote on bill.

Debate and amendments in the house of origin. Chamber may send the bill to another committee before voting.

Bill returned to first chamber for concurrence if amended by second chamber. If not amended, bill is sent to the governor. If House and Senate cannot agree, the bill is sent to a joint conference committee.

If the conference committee reaches agreement, a report is sent to both chambers.

If one or both chambers reject the changes, the bill fails.

The bill becomes law if:
1. the governor signs it;
2. the governor fails to sign within 5 days during the legislative session or 15 days after adjournment;
3. the vetoed bill is repassed in each house by a 2/3 vote of the elected membership.

Vetoed bill can be reconsidered by both chambers.

If governor vetoes, the bill is returned to the chamber in which it originated.

If both chambers pass the bill, it is sent to the governor. The governor can:
1. sign the bill;
2. veto it, or
3. take no action.

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Pg 1 of 1
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Why Your Voice Matters

1. You are closest to the work - you have the most important perspective to share and you will be impacted the most by state education policies

2. The legislature hears regularly from professional advocates and yours would be a welcome, fresh, and grounded voice

3. While professional organizations play an important role advocating on behalf of their members, legislatures appreciate every opportunity they have to hear from the actual members of these groups
Crafting Testimony: Tips

1. Be sure to clearly state your full name, your role, your school/district, and your town
2. State your position at the beginning of your testimony
3. Build your argument clearly
4. Be succinct
5. Stick to the time limit
Crafting Testimony: Tips

6. Be factual

7. Avoid jargon

8. Make sure you understand the proposed legislation, including whether it changes existing statutes or creates new ones

9. Support your argument with evidence

10. Talk about your local context
11. Bring written copies of your testimony (25 in ME)

12. If your arguments have already been made, don’t repeat them - abbreviate/summarize

13. Close by reiterating your position.

14. Offer to answer any questions and express interest and availability to engage further

15. If you are unable to attend in person, the legislature accepts electronically submitted testimony
Panelists

1. Fran Rabinowitz, CAPSS
2. Patrice McCarthy, CABE
3. Katie Roy, CT School Finance Project
4. Ev Lyons, CAS
5. Jeffrey Villar (CCER/CBIA)
Let’s practice!

1. Move to school/district-based groups
2. Identify policy area to lift or protect (10 min.)
3. Determine position (5 min.)
4. Develop argument (30 min.)
5. Gallery walk and feedback (15 min.)
6. Refine (10 min.)
7. Debrief (10 min.)
Questions?
Next steps & resources

1. GSP sample Proficiency-, Competency-, Mastery-Based local policies
2. We’re available by email or phone for support
3. Monthly email update while legislature is in session
THANK YOU

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