



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

How to Prepare a Message

As a School Nutrition Professional, you are an expert in your field, and as such, you may be called upon to advocate for your programs at the local, state, and national level. The amount of time to make your case is limited, so it is helpful to prepare a strong yet succinct message. Answering these questions can help you develop a message that is clear and compelling but also provides the necessary information for your audience.

1. Who are you?

- Are you a constituent? Are the students and families you serve constituents?
- Describe your work, background, and responsibilities. This is an opportunity to establish yourself as an expert.

2. What is the issue for the meeting?

- It can be hard to summarize a problem briefly but being concise and using plain language can effectively drive the point home.
- Don't act surprised if your legislator is unfamiliar with these issues.
- Time is limited; try to focus on one or two pressing issues.
- Provide facts, data, and examples; this can help a policymaker make the case to colleagues.

3. Why is this issue important?

- Discuss the possible impacts that a specific scenario could have on your programs. Mention all positive and negative aspects.
- Be prepared to discuss opposing viewpoints. This strategy can help shape the discussion and demonstrate your expertise.

4. Why is this issue relevant to the policymaker?

- Describe how this issue directly affects his/her constituents. For example, a child going without a meal, impact on a school's academic success, or the possibility of substantial job loss.
- It is easier for policymakers to support a positive change like the development of a school garden program. However, most legislators will work hard to mitigate negative any impacts.

5. What actions would you like the legislator to take?

- Always have a clear call to action and ask for a follow-up or response.
- Be specific in your requests- do you want them to write a letter supporting a position? Reach out to a colleague? Hold a hearing? Draft a bill?

6. What should a legislator take away from this meeting?

- Try to prepare a takeaway packet.
- Leave something behind in writing that is factual, descriptive, and memorialized the visit. Examples include District Profile Sheet, infographics, relevant news articles, letters from kids, and related resources.