

A Guide to Community Schools Congressional Outreach

Congress needs to hear from you so that they know how impactful Community Schools has been for your school, students, families, and community!

A key strategy to ensure Congress continues to support Community Schools and fund the FSCS Grant Program is to reach out to your Representatives and Senators to share the positive impact of Community Schools in their districts. Outreach is most effective when it highlights the stories of staff, students, families, and community partners, alongside quantitative evidence.

To make the process of reaching out to your members of Congress as easy as possible, we've provided **two** templates, one for a phone call and one for an email message, to use when you contact them. We encourage you to personalize the message so that they know how current or potential federal dollars have made a difference in the lives of your students.

We've also provided an FAQ (below) to help address any questions or concerns that you might have about the process, a guide to hosting a virtual meeting with a Member of Congress, and a messaging guide to help your phone call or email be well-received, no matter the recipient.

We truly appreciate your partnership in helping to advocate for Community Schools!

Warmly,
The IEL Policy Team

FAQs:

Q: How do I find my Senator or Congressperson's phone number or email address?

- A: You can search by your address or zip code on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov). This will give you the contact information for both your Senators and Representative.

Q: Is writing to my member of Congress considered lobbying?

- A: No, writing to your member of Congress is not lobbying, it's advocacy. To be considered lobbying, you have to ask a member of Congress to vote a specific way on a specific bill. In this case, you are advocating for the member to support Community Schools and the Full-Service Community Schools Program. You are asking your member to ensure that a program remains supported, not urging a position on a specific bill.

Q: Which is better, emailing or calling?

- A: Both! You should reach out in any way you are most comfortable. Calling is great for when you only have a few minutes, and emailing is perfect if you have a lot you want to share with your Congressperson or Senator. Note: if you choose to call your Congressional Members, be sure to use their Washington office phone number rather than their district phone offices' phone numbers.

Q: Will I be speaking or corresponding directly with my Member of Congress?

- A: Most likely, no. If you call, chances are you will be leaving a voicemail. If anyone answers the phone or responds to your email, it will be a staffer or intern. However, if you do want to speak to your member of Congress, you can always request a meeting with them.

Q: Should I include a specific dollar amount for FSCS in my phone call or email?

- A: You can say how much you've received or have yet to receive for your federal grant, but it's best to ask that "Congress fund the Full-Service Community School Grant Program at the highest level possible."

Phone Call Script Example:

**This is a sample script of what to say when calling a member of Congress. You can personalize or adapt this script as needed. You will most likely be leaving a voicemail, but in the event you speak with a person in the office, you can use the same template.*

Hello, my name is _____, from _____ (town/school district/school). I am calling to ask _____ (Name of Member of Congress, i.e. Representative Valadao) to support opportunities for Community Schools and the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program.

With our current funding, we have _____ (list examples of how the current funding streams have made a positive impact in your school or community). We need Congress to continue to fund opportunities for Community Schools to keep making these positive changes for our students, families, and community.

For example, without this funding _____ (cite an example of something that will no longer happen or a negative consequence of no longer being able to employ the Community School strategy [e.g. attendance rates, academic outcomes, etc.]).

However, with additional funding, _____ (list 1-2 examples of different opportunities or services you would be able to provide/supplement with additional funding).

Please support opportunities for Community Schools, so that my school can continue to thrive and better serve our students and community.

Thank you.



Email Template Example:

**This is a template of what to write when emailing a member of Congress. You can personalize or adapt this template as needed.*

Subject Line: Please Fund and Support Opportunities for Community Schools

Hello,

My name is _____, from _____ (town/school district/school). I am writing to you today to ask for your continued support of opportunities for Community Schools and the Full-Service Community Schools Grant Program.

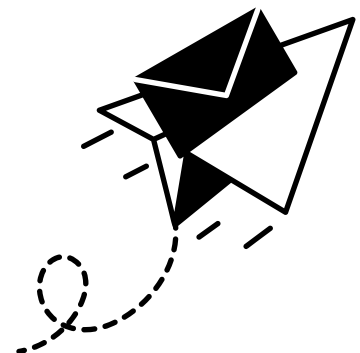
With our current funding, we have _____ (list examples of how the current funding streams have made a positive impact in your school or community). We need Congress to continue to fund opportunities for Community Schools to keep making these positive changes for our students, families, and community.

Community Schools are a federally recognized evidence-based strategy where public schools actively engage parents and students in designing opportunities for better learning and a better life. Years of evidence point to the positive impacts Community Schools have had on academics, family engagement, community development, collaborative leadership, and return-on investment in communities across the country. Community Schools are an effective strategy to coordinate and align school and community resources to increase family and community engagement for students' success while also addressing urgent student, family, and community needs.

However, with additional funding, _____ (list 1-2 examples of different opportunities you would be able to provide/supplement with additional funding).

Please support opportunities for Community Schools, so that my school can continue to thrive and better serve our students and community.

Thank you,
(Your name)



A Guide to Virtual Hill Meetings:

One great way to build strong relationships with your Member of Congress (MOC) and their staffers is by organizing a Virtual Hill Meeting. This is efficient in cultivating an open line of communication in advocating for Community Schools funding and more. The guide below will provide a step-by-step on how to get in contact with the right staffer, how to organize a call, and best practice tips.

Who Do I Contact My Member?

- Find your Member of Congress using [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)
- Find the DC staffer that works on Education
- **How to find Online:**
 - Resources like the House Telephone Directory (generally up to date), LinkedIn, or Legistorm (Paid)
 - Email Formats:
 - The House email format is first.last@mail.house.gov
 - The Senate email format is first_last@SenatorLastName.senate.gov
 - EXAMPLE: John_Doe@booker.senate.gov (if you were trying to email a staffer from Sen. Cory Booker's office)
- **How to Ask the Office:**
 - If you can't find the staffer's name, call your Member of Congress' Office. The people who pick up the phone are usually interns or junior staffers. When you call, you can use a template like below:

Hello! My name is __, from ____.
I am looking to get in contact with
your education staffer to discuss our
Community Schools work in ____.
Could you please provide me with
their name and email address?

Emailing a Congressional Staffer:

When emailing the staffer, you can use the template below:

Hello __,

My name is _____, from _____ (town/school district/school). I'd like to request a meeting with you to discuss _____ (name of Community School).

Our Community School has made a huge difference in the lives of students, families, and our community. Through this model, we have been able to _____ (briefly state your major wins/areas of improvement/academic accomplishments).

During this meeting, we'd love to share the successes and stories from our schools - including _____ (i.e. hearing from our students, Coordinators, etc.). We are hoping to connect during _____ (preferred week or month), depending on your availability.

Community Schools are a federally recognized, evidence-based strategy where public schools actively engage parents and students in designing opportunities for better learning and a better life. Years of evidence point to the positive impacts Community Schools have had on academics, family engagement, community development, collaborative leadership, and return-on investment in communities across the country. Community Schools are an effective strategy to coordinate and align school and community resources to increase family and community engagement for students' success while also addressing urgent student, family, and community needs.

We would be honored to meet with you and share how this program continues to make a difference in our community. Thank you for your time and consideration—I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,
(Your name)

Structuring Your Virtual Hill Meeting:

When preparing for your Hill meeting, please be sure to inform your IEL Regional Director for coalition efforts. Members of Congress are looking for both **quantitative** and **qualitative** evidence of impact of Community Schools, especially stories.

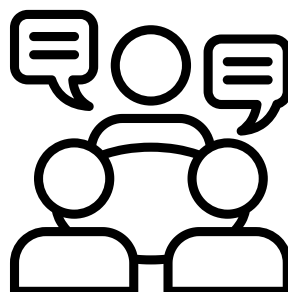
You should anticipate a 15-20 minute meeting, but send an invite for a 30-minute meeting.

- **Potential Strategies:**

- **Storytelling:** Inviting a student or Coordinator to discuss how CS has benefited them. (Staffers LOVE hearing from students! Just make sure they practice before they have the meeting)
- **Agenda-setting:** Write yourself a flexible internal agenda that has short bullets on points you know you want to make.
- **Partnership:** Be sure to note that if they have any additional questions about your program, would like your help to get in touch with other nearby CS, or to pass along more stories, that you would be happy to. Just noting this here, since this will help in keeping the door open for collaboration or further communication.

- **Follow up:**

- This is just a friendly reminder to follow up either the next day or during that week, thanking them for their time, and noting any information they asked for.



Virtual Hill Meeting FAQs:

Q: Why is it better to meet with a staffer than with the Member of Congress?

- A: The Staffer on Education is the office expert on Education. When the Member is deciding what they are requesting funding for, the staffers are relied on to inform them/inform the Appropriations staffer on what the needs of the constituency are.
- A: The Staffer has more time than the Member of Congress, which means they are more reliable to schedule a meeting with/the person you will be in contact with from the office.

Q: What should I mention when discussing funding levels?

- A: When discussing funding, ask for “highest funding possible.”

Q: What is the difference between Advocacy and Lobbying?

- A: If you are concerned about the difference between advocacy & lobbying, you can refer to this [website](#), and the IEL Everyone: An Advocate Webinar on [Understanding the Federal Budget](#).

Q: Can I schedule in-person Hill Visits?

- A: If you are located in the Washington D.C./Baltimore Metro area (DMV), and would like to have an in-person meeting, please contact your Regional Director.

If you are looking for extra advice or would like to schedule a prep call, please email parkm@iel.org and include “CS Hill Meeting Prep Call” in the subject line.

