



Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign

ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Outreach to the media – large and small outlets – from the local paper to the largest TV station or radio show to a local newsletter – amplifies our message, broadens our reach – and most critically, get the attention of candidates. It is the oxygen they need, the fuel that fires their campaigns and showcases and elevates our issue.

These days, that also includes all things social media, from Facebook to blogs to twitter. And most especially twitter, where you can instantly connect to candidates, elected officials, journalists and bloggers, and make use of its enhanced ability to carry links to reports, statements and even videos and virtual campaigns.

Even a simple letter to the editor can take flight, reach a wide audience and help you communicate with a broader audience. Op-eds, which take a little more effort, are also an excellent tool, and can be shared widely after publication.

Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

These are widely read, easy to submit and short enough for anyone to write with passion. Every newspaper, newsletter and online publication has its own rules for what they publish – and whether such a letter needs to be a response to its own coverage – or whether they are open to general concerns of the community – especially during the election season. Most are no more than 150 to 200 words long. If the publication writes regularly on education, children and/or families, your letter is more likely to be published if you reference their coverage. However, many local papers welcome letters that clearly aim to raise an issue they have missed. An op-ed can be longer, up to 400 words. Blogs on your website might also get picked up and shared on social media.

A few tips: Make it timely, writing it right after child care, pre-K or other early childhood issues have been in the news. That can be a local news story, a hearing in the legislature, an announcement by a leading public official or a new report making headlines. It's also a good idea to keep it personal, since people remember stories better than statistics. Emphasize why you're writing and why the issue matters to you. During election season, all key issues are news, and you can simply speak from your heart to voters and candidates about why early care and education must be a top priority. Need ideas? See the sample letters we created as a starting point for parents, early childhood and public school educators, under the heading "**Letters to the Editor**" section of this toolkit. Offered as word documents, you can download and edit with facts about your local community.

Editorial Board Meetings

Candidates and voters are likely to pay close attention to editorials in their local newspapers, and for good reason. These pieces, put together by the newspaper's editorial board, are written by the ranking members of the newspaper staff, often penned by writers with deep knowledge of specific issues.

Editorial boards meet frequently with local community and business leaders, candidates, policymakers and anyone else who can serve as a resource on issues that matter to their readers. Generally, newspapers rely on advocates and experts to request a meeting, and most often, advocates propose the meeting as a way to give the newspaper ideas on coverage, suggestions for articles – and during election season, insights on candidate proposals.

It usually takes some effort to get a meeting, unless your organization already has a connection to the newspaper. It's a good idea to put together a group, given that such meetings can be an intense give – and take – and last an hour or more. You can request the meeting via email or a letter to editorial page editor, with a quick description of what you'd like to discuss, why its important ant timely. You can also do a little detective work, learn which editorial writer covers the area most related to early care and learning. Often, that is the writer covering education, children or family issues.

Before you go to the meeting, make sure you know your material, are prepared to answer questions, especially challenging ones. Be creative in your approach, and be ready to surprise and interest the paper with new angles, breaking research and trends in the community. For example, many school districts now face changing demographics, have more diverse needs among the children and rising poverty. Early childhood education can be a critical investment in putting children – and working parents – on a level playing field, even in suburbs.

After the meeting, be sure to leave materials, including fact sheet and reports, on the issue. And be sure to send a thank you note, which offers another opportunity to make your key points – and address any questions or concerns that you were unable to address during the meeting.

If your letter, op-ed is published, or if you are quoted in a news story, it's time to share: Post it on Facebook, tweet it out and send to your most valued contacts – and to every candidate.

Social Media

These days, there is no more surefire way to reach candidates, journalists and other advocates faster than a tweet. Make sure you follow all the candidates running for office in your area, including those running for Governor, legislature and for Congress and Senate. [The National Women's Law Center has created Useful messages, facts and even sample tweets](#) for child care, which can be used anytime. Our partner campaigns and coalitions, including the Campaign for Children in New York City, and the statewide Empire State Child Care Campaign and Winning Beginning NY coalition regularly send out tweets tailored for NY.

And don't forget that a [quick video](#) can be a powerful tool for organizing the field, spreading your message and broadening your capacity to get out the vote. Sharing such videos with campaign staff is also an easy way to get the candidates' attention: It can serve as a quick briefing, easily viewed at any time, anywhere – while they are on the run. Be sure to post it on You Tube to extend your reach.