



Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children

## Take Your Legislator on an Early Learning Tour!

1. **Prepare.** What is your invited legislator's background, committee assignments, or experience with early childhood education?
2. **Welcome.** In a conference room or other space absent of children, welcome and introduce your legislator by a parent, business leader, or community representative *who lives in the legislator's district*. Thank the legislator for his or her time, and express how excited you are to show him or her how the state and federal governments are supporting high-quality education.
3. **Contextualize.** Provide the legislator with a *one page* program-specific summary. This summary should provide context for your center and the population it serves while highlighting the program's best features. How many employees work at this facility? Are any highly qualified? Is this facility a STARS participant? Does this facility feature Pre-K Counts or Head Start programs?
4. **Tour.** Led by the center director, show the legislator about the facility. The center director should discuss program requirements, regulatory standards, and how federal and standing funding is acquired and implemented. Conversations should emphasize how the facility is supported by what the Pennsylvania legislature (and pass-through federal funding) allows in its budget. The center director should also describe demographics of the children served.
5. **Conclude.** After the tour, return to the initial space so that the legislator may ask and answer questions. In addition to comments from the center director, parent participation can also be valuable to the legislator's experience. Finally, thank the legislator for his or her time, and encourage him or her to contact the center with any questions regarding early childhood education.

### Other ideas to keep in mind:

- Take photos! Send copies to the legislator for his or her newsletter, and, with the permission of the legislator, send a press release to your local newspaper. Also, send pictures to Paige at [pstokes@paeyc.org](mailto:pstokes@paeyc.org) so we can upload them to our Facebook page.
- Write an agenda. A scheduled visit shows respect for the legislator's time and provides him or her with a nearly blank paper on which to take notes. When writing the agenda, allow seven to ten minutes at the end for questions. Thirty to thirty-five minutes is plenty of time!
- Get the press involved! Having a legislator visit your site is a newsworthy event. You can work with the legislator's office to make media contacts, or you can call the local newspaper or news station yourself. You can also use the sample press release (reverse) to inform the media of the site visit. Customize it to reflect your program and highlight events from your legislator's visit

## Sample Press Release to be sent after the visit\*

*Format this letter on your program's letterhead or with your organization's logo.*

### Media Contact:

*(Center director name or other person appropriate for the press to contact)*

*(Contact Phone)*

*(Contact Email)*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*(Date)*

### ***(Senator/Representative) (Last Name) Visits (Center Name) for a Firsthand Look at How Federal Investments in Early Learning Are Putting (Location's) Kids on the Path to Future Success***

*(Your city) – U.S. (Senator/Representative) (Last Name), (inset names of other Community/Business Leaders as applicable), met with early childhood educators at (name of center) today to learn more about how Head Start, Early Head Start and child care programs are providing quality early learning for (##) children and their families in (our area/the \_\_\_ region).*

*"We were honored to have (Senator/Representative) (Last Name) visit our classrooms to see how federal dollars are being used in (city) to provide children with a complex learning environment where they can develop the cognitive and social skills necessary to succeed in school, work and life," said (Center Director Name, title). "We hope today's tour will help provide a better understanding for how crucial these investments are to our community and our economy – now and for the future."*

Research shows that the achievement gap starts before a child even enters kindergarten. As a three-year-old, a low-income child has been exposed to 30 million fewer words than his/her middle-class peers. Early childhood education is one of the most cost effective returns on investment for improving educational outcomes and the economy. For every dollar directed to quality early childhood education there is an estimated 7-10 percent return on investment realized through higher educational attainment, improved health outcomes and increased adult productivity.

*(Include a brief story from the visit with visual, specific examples that demonstrate what quality early childhood education looks like at your center.)*

*"Our hope is for Congress to keep the federal commitment to at-risk young children by providing funding that allows all the children who are in Head Start and Early Head Start to be able to stay in the program, as well as to restore the cuts to CCDBG that resulted in 220,000 children losing access to high-quality child care," said (Name, title, organization).*

An overwhelming number of eligible children are not able to benefit from quality early learning experiences due to limited funding. Nationwide, only one in six eligible children receives child care assistance. Less than half of eligible preschool-age children can access Head Start, and Early Head Start only has enough funding to serve four percent of eligible infants and toddlers. In *(location)* alone, there are *(##)* eligible children on the waiting list for *(child care assistance/Head Start)*. An increase in funding, especially in a difficult state budget period, will greatly affect the lives of at-risk children and families now and provide long-term economic benefits to *(Location)*.

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***(Organization Name)***

*(Insert a brief description of your organization)*

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