

Keys to hosting a magnet school tour

Inviting your elected officials to visit your magnet school is a powerful way to inform them about the theme-based programs that are offered in their district, and to show them how important federal, state, and local support is for these programs. It is also an effective way to build relationships with these officials and their staff, as well as establish yourself as a valuable expert and resource.



✓ **STEP ONE: Invite your legislators to visit your magnet school.**

1. Contact your legislators' Washington, DC offices to schedule a visit. The contact information for your two U.S. senators and congressional representative may be found at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov
2. Call well in advance for scheduling purposes. Depending on their calendars this could be a month ahead of time. Most congressional offices also require a written invitation before they will consider a scheduling request. You may use the sample invitation letter that is included for this purpose.
3. When you call, ask to speak with the office scheduler and clearly state that you would like the legislator to visit your school. You should also invite staff members to attend as well.

Sample Conversation: Hi, my name is [your name] and I'd like to invite Senator/Representative [Last Name] to visit [name of magnet school]. How can I send a formal invitation to the office and who should I follow-up with afterwards?

4. Follow-up with the scheduler as necessary and be persistent. It is wise to be flexible and have alternate dates in mind. In addition, you may want to ask for the scheduler's contact information so that you may follow-up with them directly about a week after your initial contact.

✓ **STEP TWO: Plan your legislator's visit for maximum effect. Make the visit worth their time.**

1. **Plan a special event** that will bring constituents to your school during your legislator's visit. Attendees can include school personnel, parents, students, school board members, institutional and business affiliates, and community leaders.
2. **Make the visit educational** - Showcase the programs that are offered by your magnet school. Prepare folders that include marketing materials and information about your magnet program, the number of children it serves, your school demographics, details of community partnerships, and data about student performance. You should provide copies of these folders to your legislator and all attendees.
3. **Contact the local media** to cover the tour/event to ensure the community learns about your school as well as your legislator's interest. Let the congressional office also know that you will be working on media coverage and a press release.



STEP THREE: Prepare a plan and agenda for the school tour.

1. Identify who you would like to participate in the event. This could include the school principal, magnet coordinator, lead teachers, parents, students, or school partners.
2. Invite all these people and schedule a brief meeting to review their roles and the details of the tour.
3. Assign a staff person to take photos and notes during the visit. Be sure to share the photos with the congressional member and coordinate with their office to conduct press outreach.
4. Before they visit, learn about the elected official and their interests, policy views, and committee assignments by visiting their website and social media outlets.

Sample School Tour Agenda -

- Once everyone has arrived for the school tour, each participant should introduce themselves to the member of Congress and explain how they are associated with the magnet school.
- Make sure there is a presentation by the principal welcoming the elected official to the school.
- Mention how government support has helped the magnet school, especially if your school or district has received a Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant recently or in the past.
- Lead the legislator on a tour of your facility highlighting the most impressive features of the school.
- Share general information about the magnet program that addresses: student enrollment and demographics, the school theme and curricula, school transportation and admissions process, community partnerships, teacher professional development, parent and family involvement.
- Have one or two students join the tour and talk about their experience. They can discuss what they enjoy most about the magnet theme and their future goals. You may also consider having them participate in a program demonstration.
- Consider having a teacher present and reinforce how the magnet program has helped students academically and have them share a memorable story about a favorite student.
- Allow time for the elected official to ask questions from the tour host, students, or any other participants. You should also prepare a few questions to ask them about their education interests.
- Before the tour concludes, please make sure to inform them about the proposal to cut magnet school funding in Congress and ask for their support when they return to Washington, DC.



STEP FOUR: Reinforce the event with your legislator.

1. Publicize the visit in your school newsletter or other appropriate publications. Send copies to both the legislator's local and Washington, DC offices. Don't forget to also post to social media including Facebook and Twitter.
2. Follow-up with the congressional office with any requested materials and offer to be a future resource on issues relating to education and magnet schools.
3. Send a thank you letter to your legislator, their staff, and anyone who helped arrange the visit.
4. Finally, let us know how the school tour went by filling out this [feedback form](http://bit.ly/1IkKOBi) located at - <http://bit.ly/1IkKOBi>

If you have any questions about this process or need advice, please email our Legislative and Communications Manager at john.laughner@magnet.edu

SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

<<Insert District or School Logo>>

<<Insert Date>>

The Honorable <<Insert First and Last Name>>

<<Insert Washington, DC Office Address>>

Dear Senator or Representative <<Enter last name>>,

On behalf of <<Insert name of magnet school>> I am writing to invite you and your staff to visit our school on <<Enter date>> at <<Enter time>>.

We would be honored to welcome you to our school and provide you with an opportunity to learn about the specialized curricula and instruction that is offered at our magnet school. During your visit you will be able to meet with our faculty and staff and witness up close how our <<Describe theme>> is challenging students and preparing them for success in the 21st century.

(Feel free to personalize this section by describing a new program that you are excited about, or a new partnership you have formed, or new building/facility that you have opened. For example, you could describe how your magnet school just started a new STEM or Performing Arts program that features a partnership with a local university or business. This will draw the attention of members of Congress who are interested in learning about cutting edge education programs)

As I am sure you are aware, there are approximately 4,300 magnet schools in the United States serving nearly 3 million students. Based on innovative and theme-based curricula, magnet schools breakdown traditional school attendance boundaries by allowing families to choose programs that appeal most to their children's academic interests and talents.

We look forward to hosting you during your next visit to the district. Please feel free to contact me directly at <<Enter email address>> or <<Enter phone number>> with any questions you may have about our school and to schedule a time for your visit.

Sincerely,

<<Enter Name>>

<<Enter Title>>