



# ***Out of the Capitols and in to the Classrooms:*** **Hosting Elected Officials at *Your* Child Care Program**

**Mary Beth Salomone Testa**

**Policy Director  
Relations**

**Early Care and Education Consortium**

**Mike Radway**

**Senior Director, Government**

**Knowledge Universe  
KinderCare Learning Centers**

# Welcome!

- **Introductions**
- **Why invite legislators?**
- **Lots of ways to do a visit**
- **Planning a successful visit**

# Introductions

- **About the Early Care and Education Consortium**
- **About Knowledge Universe**
- **Tell us about you!**



# Outreach is critical to all our GR efforts

- Regulatory & legislative
- Federal & state
- A marathon, not a sprint
- Educational & fun for the children
- Outreach can be a marketing tool & media opportunity
- One center visit is worth 10 lobbying visits

# Building relationships

- If you build long-term relationships, managing short-term legislative problems is easy
- It is making sure elected officials understand our business
- It is making sure elected officials understand how important our business is to families who vote and pay taxes
- Get to know them in when they are less busy, and they will take your call when they are busy

# Policy goals and challenges

## Goals:

- Help more children get access to good programs by improving policies for providers and families.
- Let legislators know about the many existing high-quality early childhood programs.

## Challenges:

- Many decision-makers do not know what we are talking about.
- We need to work even harder to make it “real” for them.

# Show them!

One of the best ways to help  
decision-makers understand:

**SHOW** them.

# Why do we invite legislators to programs?

## Program visits as an advocacy strategy:

Bring elected officials and other leaders out of their offices and in to the communities they represent

More than a tour- an opportunity to share our message and ask for their support



# Every politician loves children



# Every politician loves children



# Every politician loves children



# Simple but Effective

These events do not have to be complicated or difficult to plan

Brief can be really good!

Move beyond the paper and the meetings

Show them the real world

# Massachusetts State Rep. Patricia Haddad, Chair of Education Committee



# Ohio Speaker of the House Jon Husted

Husted is Welcomed at the Kinder Care Learning Center | Husted for Ohio <http://www.hustedforohio.com/image/husted-welcomed-kinder-care-lear...>



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Leadership that makes a *difference*.

Husted is Welcomed at the Kinder Care Learning Center



» Thumbnail

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Jon A. Husted is a Republican member of the Ohio House of Representatives, representing the 27th District since 2005, and currently serving as Speaker. Jon Husted is running for Senate in Ohio for 2008. He is serving his fourth term in the Ohio House, representing the 37th Ohio House district. Jon Husted was first elected to the legislature in 2006, then again in 2005 and again in 2007. He serves as the chair of the House Rules and Reference Committee and of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee.

Husted Reading at the Kinder Care Learning Center



Husted Asking Questions to the School Children



From Ohio Speaker of the House Jon Husted's web site

# Florida State Rep. Mark Pafford



Rep. Mark Pafford is Deputy Minority Whip of the Florida House of Representatives, and a member of the House Appropriations Committee

# Congressman John Kline VIP Visit – 8/26/10



# Florida State Rep. Anitere Flores, Chair of PreK-12 Appropriations

## Committee

**May 2009:** Florida Rep. Anitere Flores visits her local KinderCare Learning Center

**January 2010:** Governor's budget proposes level funding for the subsidy and VPK programs

**March 2010:** House & Senate budgets, however, propose deep cuts to subsidy, preK, and added a requirement for all pre-K teachers to have a CDA (instead of just the lead teacher)

Chair Flores agrees to meet with the Center Director of the Miami center she visited to discuss the impact of the proposed cuts

They meet the morning of the mark-up and Chair Flores successfully offers an amendment restoring all subsidy funding, reducing the VPK cut from 15% to 1%, and eliminating the increased teacher credential requirement

**April 2010:** Final budget has only .5% cut to VPK and maintains funds for subsidy



# Connecticut Governor Judy Rell



District Manager Nancy Walsh introduces the Governor

Legislators, children & staff with the new law

# Ideas for the Visit

- A tour plus more!
- Interaction is the most compelling part – this is what sets a visit apart from other advocacy strategies!
- Plan around an existing event
  - ▣ Preschool graduation
  - ▣ Awareness week/month
  - ▣ Accreditation or QRIS certification
  - ▣ Special anniversary of center or a teacher
- Introductory purposes
- About a specific policy issue

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# Easy steps for planning a visit



# 1. What is your goal?

- What is it you want to convey, and what are the actions you want your audience to take?
- Based on this, you can decide on the right audience, agenda and materials.



## 2. Choosing and Preparing the Site

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A good site: your own program!

What they see should help you to convey your message and goal

Do a practice run (you only get one chance to make a first impression!)

# 3. Who should we invite?

- Your own federal and state Representatives & Senators
- Members of the leadership
- Members of the relevant committees
  - ▣ Appropriations \$\$\$
  - ▣ Education
  - ▣ Child Care
- Legislative staff



# 4. When Should We Do This?

- Choose a date carefully to ensure attendance – during a break in the legislature
- Choose a date and time that the program is open and operating – your participants will need to see things in action

# 5. Invitations

- Invitations should include all the necessary event details
- Consider who the invitation should come from
- Use a “hook.” Why should they come? Whatever the reason, the important thing is that they DO attend.

# ***A note about the Scheduling Process:***

- Template letter in the Toolbox
- The letter will take some following up by phone
- Try to be flexible about dates and times to increase our chances of successfully scheduling the legislator!



# 6. Materials

- Provide participants with background materials to refer to later
- The purpose of the visit is to move beyond fact sheets and provide an opportunity to see the reality of the needs of communities
  - ▣ but we want to help them remember...

Dear Mr. O Amours  
I like whales very very very  
much. Don't kill all the  
Whales. We like the picture  
you sent us.

Your friend Jenniffer Winn



Dear Mr Norman we have a number of people  
about 90 people behind you so don't  
worry about things we will get more than 90  
more I hope you like my mark

Sincerely your friend Julie Bixey



• I've saved these for 30+ years

# 7. Media?

- Consider letting your local press know about the event
- The legislator's press staff?
- Prepare to highlight the event in your next newsletter and on your website

# 8. Presentation

- Briefly provide numbers and facts, and an overview of your community
- Parents also make great presenters
- Work with the chosen presenters in advance so everyone is “on message”



# 9. Interaction

- This is what sets a site visit apart from other strategies!
- Compelling interaction – not just *OBSERVATION*
- Make sure people don't feel like they are being watched
- TAKE PICTURES!



# *A note about taking pictures*

Photographs serve as a memento for both the legislator and your program, they reinforce your message, and they can be used for placement in the media and for other advocacy efforts.

- Obtain release forms
- Take photographs of *activities* with children
- Take lots of pictures!

# 10. Action Steps

You have invited these people because there is something you want them to do:

Make sure you tell them  
what it is!

# 11. Follow-up

- Make a plan for follow-up in advance so you can respond promptly
- Congratulate yourself and your staff!
- Send a thank you letter and a picture or artwork from the visit
- Keep the legislator engaged and informed – be a resource

# ECEC Campaign Toolbox

- Planning guide and checklist
- Resources: talking points and contact info
- Templates: letters, press release
- Examples: photos and media stories

[www.ececonsortium.org](http://www.ececonsortium.org)

# Planning a Visit Together

- Review the Campaign Toolbox
- Share your ideas and work together to start planning a visit!