Capitol Hill Advocacy Day FAQ

When is the CEC Capitol Hill Advocacy Day and why is it part of CEC’s National Legislative Conference?
CEC’s Capitol Hill Advocacy Day will be held Tuesday, June 10, 2014 and is the culmination of CEC’s National Legislative Conference. On this day, special/gifted education advocates will meet with their elected officials to share a vision for the future of education policy, which is now at a critical crossroads.

Why is it important to meet with Congressional offices?
97% of Congressional staff say in-person, constituent visits have a significant impact on how a legislator views a policy issue. Right now, policymakers are considering many legislative proposals that will directly impact special and gifted education – this is a critical time to advocate on Capitol Hill.

Who am I supposed to meet with?
Please schedule meetings with the offices of your two Senators and one member of the House of Representatives (you can find their contact information here). While it would be wonderful to meet with the Member of Congress, you will likely meet with his/her Education Legislative Assistant. That’s okay – Congressional staff have a direct pipeline to the Member and his/her eyes and ears!

How should I coordinate my Congressional meetings with other attendees from CEC’s National Legislative Conference?
In an effort to organize Congressional meetings among CEC meeting attendees who may be coming from the same state, please follow these steps for scheduling your meetings. It is important to coordinate visits to the same Congressional office as legislators and their staff are extremely busy and we want to maximize their time.

How long in advance should I schedule my meetings?
Please start scheduling your meetings on Capitol Hill as early as possible, it can take a few weeks to get a response so please plan accordingly.

How do I go about making an appointment? Via phone or email? And what do I say?
Click here to read CEC’s step-by-step tips for setting up an appointment with your Congressional office (including a sample email/script you can use to request the appointment).

What time should I schedule my meetings?
CEC will host a Congressional Awards Breakfast in one of the Capitol Hill buildings from 8:30am-9:30am. Please plan to attend this breakfast and therefore schedule your appointments anytime after 10am.

What topics will attendees from CEC’s National Legislative Conference discuss with Congressional offices? Will there be handouts available for us to leave behind for Congressional staff?
CEC’s National Legislative Conference will provide attendees with a variety of Issue Briefs/Talking Points and you can choose 2-3 to highlight during your meetings with Congressional offices. CEC will provide packets of materials for you to leave with the Congressional office. Topics to be covered include: Expanding Early Learning Opportunities for Children with Disabilities; Strengthening K-12 Education for
Children with Disabilities and/or Gifts and Talents; Reforming Teacher Preparation Programs; Improving Opportunities for Special Education Research; Increasing the Investment in Special & Gifted Education; Advancing Policies for Students with Gifts and Talents; and Passing the United Nations Treaty for the Rights of People with Disabilities.

If it is not possible to meet with the actual Congressman/Congresswoman, should I try to schedule time with their staff?

Absolutely! Congressional staff play a very important role in determining the direction of legislation and provide information and input to the Member of Congress regarding their area of interest. You will likely meet with the Education Legislative Assistant.

What do I do if I am having trouble getting an appointment?

Follow CEC’s step-by-step How to Set Up a Congressional Meeting. If you have already done so and are still having difficulty getting a hold of your Congressional office or are not able to work out a time, contact CEC at pubpol@cec.sped.org CEC’s Policy Team will give you further guidance on a case-by-case basis. Keep in mind that it may take a while to get a response, so remember to be patient.

How long should each of my meetings last? How much time should I schedule between my meetings?

You should expect each of your meetings to last around 30 minutes, depending on the availability of staff or the Member of Congress. It will take you approximately 20 – 30 minutes to get back and forth between the Senate side and the House side. Therefore, you should allow 1 hour between your Senate meetings and your House meeting to give yourself enough time in the event that a meeting starts late, runs longer than expected, or to ensure enough travel time between the House office buildings and the Senate office buildings.

Additional Resources:

- Check the “Advocacy Resources” area of CEC’s National Legislative Conference website for regular updates.
- CEC Issue Briefs will be available shortly.
- CEC’s National Legislative Conference will provide you with in-depth briefings on the issues to discuss with Congressional offices and logistics you will need to get around on Capitol Hill.
- Remember, CEC staff is with you every step of the way. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact CEC’s Policy & Advocacy Team: 703-264-9498 or pubpol@cec.sped.org