**School Visit Toolkit**

**A School’s Guide for Hosting Elected Officials**

Inviting elected officials to visit your charter school is a great way to build a relationship with your representatives, show them how charter schools are serving families in their community, and give them an opportunity to spend time with their constituents.

By inviting them to your charter school and establishing a relationship with them, your elected officials will already know you, your work, and be familiar with the issues that are important to you. When the time comes that you do need their assistance, you will already have a connection and they are more likely to be responsive.

Elected officials love visiting schools and while most would be happy just to tour the school and visit a few classrooms, you can also invite them to attend an event at your school such as a back-to-school celebration, a play, or an end of the year ceremony.

If you’re inviting a member of the legislature to your school, keep in mind that during the legislative session, which can run from January through June, they will be at the Capitol working Monday-Thursday. They usually spend Friday’s in their legislative district, and that may be a good day to invite your representative to campus.

**BEFORE**

Invite your lawmakers to campus by sending them a personal invitation. You can use our easy system to find your elected officials by typing in your school’s address and send them an email directly. The email looks like it comes directly from you, and if the lawmaker responds, it will go directly to your email inbox. We’ve provided a draft school visit invitation email below, and we suggest you submit the request 4-6 weeks in advance. Don’t hesitate to follow-up your request via phone if you haven’t heard back in a week. You can also contact Carol Heiler at carol@azcharters.org if you would like her to make an introduction on your behalf. [Click here to email your elected officials directly](https://www.votervoice.net/ACSA/Address).

Once your event is confirmed, provide the elected official’s staff with a detailed agenda of the day’s events and participants. Generally, you can expect the visit to last about an hour. Build in some time for the elected official to ask questions. You may want to send a fact sheet about your school, or share other promotional materials to help the elected official prepare for the visit. We have provided a sample school fact sheet below.

Also, consider sending out a media advisory asking your local reporters to cover the event. It might be a good idea to coordinate with your lawmaker’s staff. Anticipate that any media in attendance will bring a photographer and prepare your list of students with or without signed photo releases. Find a sample media advisory below. Don’t hesitate to contact Megan Gilbertson, megan@azcharters.org, the Association’s communications director, if you have any questions about media.

**DURING**

Invite some students to greet the elected official with a fun sign or a song at the entrance and be ready to go on time. Each elected official is likely to bring one or two staff members with them for the visit. Prepare your staff and students to expect some new faces during the day.

A good idea is to have a staff member available to take pictures and post on social media. Many elected officials are active on Facebook and Twitter and will appreciate your outreach.

**AFTER**

After the visit, be sure to send a thank you note to your elected official. Find a sample thank you note on page 6. Handmade thank you notes from students, sent or delivered to the lawmaker’s office, are a nice touch! Most importantly, cultivate your relationship by staying in contact with your elected officials. Remember to follow up by continuing to invite them to events at your school or to include their staff on your newsletter. Don’t hesitate to brag a little! Elected officials are always looking for talking points about great things happening in their communities and they often share this information in speeches and interviews. Finally, when your elected official may play an influential role in charter school legislation at the Capitol, we’ll be sure to let you know. You’ll be in the perfect position to be an advocate for charter school students!

**Sample Charter School Visit Invitation**

Dear [elected official]:

On behalf of the [school name], I am writing to invite you to visit us for a tour of our school when you are in town. [School name] is located at [address], right in the heart of your legislative district, and serves 250 students in grades 9-12 with a focus on the arts. It would be an honor to show you first hand the school’s many achievements.

Charter schools are public schools that are allowed the freedom to be more innovative while being held accountable for advancing student achievement. Because schools like mine are public schools, we are open to all children, do not charge tuition, do not have special entrance requirements, and are actually subject to more rigorous educational accountability requirements than traditional district schools.

Share here about your schools achievements, any awards the school or your students/teachers may have achieved, information about your student population is applicable, etc.

Again, it would be an honor to have you visit [school name]. Please let me know if you have any questions or if you need additional information. I may be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email here.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title], [School name]

**Sample Charter School Visit Agenda**

**Schedule for Senator/Representative X**

Tour of [Your Public Charter School]

[Put Your Address Here]

**January 28, 2015**

9:00 AM Senator X arrives via main entrance.

 X will greet the member.

9:02 AM Senator X briefly introduced to staff/other VIPs invited to the tour.

9:07 AM Tour of the school begins.

9:10 AM Senator X will visit the science laboratory to speak with graduating seniors.

9:20 AM Senator X to meet 9th grade students in building lobby to contribute a painted tile to their mural project.

9:30 AM Senator X will meet with parents of Your Public Charter School in the auditorium.

9:50 AM Time for Q&A.

10:00 AM Time for photo ops and press.

10:15 Tour ends. Senator X leaves via main entrance.

**Sample Charter School Fact Sheet**

School Name Here CONTACT: Name

School Address Here Phone number / Email

 **Your Public Charter School Name Celebrates Success**

2013-2014 Highlights

**Overview**

*Public Charter School opened in Phoenix, AZ in 2003 to improve the city’s graduation rate and prepare students for college. Today, 90 percent of alumni graduate high school and 98 percent of those students go on to college.*

**Student Population**

Public Charter School serves a diverse student body of 400 students. Overall, 75 percent of the students are from low-income families and the breakdown of our diverse student population is 65% Hispanic; 10% African American; and 25% Caucasian.

Also, 60% of our students are English language learners and 25% participate in special education. Students are accepted to the school by a lottery conducted each year and due to limited space, our school has 450 students currently on the waiting list to enroll.

**Educational Program**

Public Charter School is dedicated to providing an outstanding education, with a focus on the arts. Our curriculum is designed to ensure that all students meet high academic standards, including offering 12 Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses.

**Faculty and Staff**

Public Charter School prides itself on the dedication of its faculty and staff. The teachers are committed to the school’s mission and vision, and are considered experts in their subject. 70 percent of our teachers have Master’s degrees.

**Our Results**

Public Charter School is considered to be a leader in Phoenix. All of our students score above state average in proficiency for both math and reading and excel in their artistic endeavors. 88 percent of Public Charter School’s graduates go on to pursue a higher education degree.

**Awards**

Public Charter School receives statewide recognition as a 2013 Great High School, awarded by the Arizona Department of Education.

**Public Charter School Board of Directors**

**.** JM Scott, Chair **.** Nick Brown

**.**  Sarah Jons **.**  Eric Wilson

**.**  John King **.**  Emily Davis

**Sample Media Advisory**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Megan Gilbertson

602.944.0644 ext. 321

602.688.9435

megan@azcharters.org

LOGO HERE

**\*\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\*\***

Senator X to Visit [Name] Public Charter School

City Name (November 10, 2014) – On Tuesday, November 17 at 8.a.m., Senator XXXX will visit [School Name], a public charter school serving XXXX students, to [insert what the lawmaker will be doing/ how they will interact with students/ participate in the school]. Media is welcome to attend.

**WHO:**  Senator X (R-AZ)

**WHAT:** Visit Public Charter School to tour the school

**WHEN:** Tuesday, November 17 at 8 a.m.

**WHERE:** Charter School Name

 Address

**RSVP:** Media planning to cover the event must RSVP with [contact name at number and email].

**About XXX School**

Put your boiler plate mission/vision summary paragraph of your campus. Be sure to include your website.

**About Public Charter Schools**

Charter schools are public schools that are innovative while still being held accountable for improved student achievement. Charter schools vary in mission and model, serving a wide range of students, many with needs beyond the one-size-fits-all traditional public school. With one of the highest percentages of students attending a public charter school, Arizona continues to lead the nation in charter school growth. Arizona has 618 charter schools that enroll over 190,000 students this school year. Fully, about 31 percent of the state's public schools are charter schools, and about 17 percent of our public students attend a charter. In 2014, 73 percent of charter schools with two years of letter grades either improved their letter grade or earned an A (A-Alt) or B (B-Alt). Also, 18 of the top 30 public schools are charter schools.

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**Sample Charter School Visit Thank You**

The Honorable Senator X

Address

AZ

Dear Senator X:

On behalf of the students and staff at put school name here, I would like to thank you for taking your time to visit. Our students and staff were thrilled to host you and we hope you can visit us again soon.

I hope you enjoyed your visit [insert some of the things they did while visiting]. More importantly, I hope you have learned more about the importance of public charter schools and the benefits they bring to students and parents not only in our community, but across the state. Particularly, I hope you are more familiar with the successes of the put school name here and the significance the school brings to the families in your community.

Again, thank you for taking the time to visit put school name here. We look forward to hosting you again and working towards our mutual interest of providing quality educational options to families and growing the charter school movement.

Sincerely,

School Leader

Title, School Name