



A USER'S GUIDE TO YOUR STATE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Advocacy Toolkit

6/1/2018

Audience: This document was developed to assist ISTE's state affiliates and is also appropriate for other education organizations and educators.

In every state, there are a variety of crucial stakeholders we should develop and cultivate relationships with to maximize the impact of your affiliate and ISTE on education via legislation, regulation and policy. Among the key organizations are the State Board of Education (BOE), Department of Education (often abbreviated DOE or DESE), secretary of education, education commissioner, the governor and the state legislature. Each of these organizations and roles is further explained below.

Each state has a **State Board of Education (BOE)** charged with a variety of key functions, among them:

- Setting statewide curriculum standards.
- Establishing high school graduation requirements.
- Determining qualifications for administrators, teachers and other professional education personnel.
- Establishing state accountability standards and goals.
- Developing and approving preparation programs for teachers and administrators.
- Establishing and approving assessment programs.
- Establishing standards for accreditation of local school districts.
- Implementing federal education laws and regulations in their state, such as ESSA and NCLB, and administering federal assistance programs.

The size and composition of your state's BOE will vary; they are as small as seven members (multiple states) and as large as 21 (Pennsylvania). Many have student members, who may serve shorter terms and may not have voting rights.

The board chair (president) typically wields the most power, including setting the monthly agenda, leading the meeting and governing the board. Nevertheless, s/he may not be the best member to cultivate a relationship with. Look for members who by background and professional experience are most interested in technology, and specifically technology in education. Most BOEs have both standing and advisory committees that may map well to your affiliate's goals and policy initiatives.

Adoption or endorsement of the ISTE Standards is a typical decision that would originate in your state's BOE. Most BOEs will develop and publish a state technology plan, which will include important information regarding the state's view and direction on edtech. Staying abreast of and engaged with BOE members, discussions and deliberations are helpful means to ensure that your affiliate's policy needs are considered.

Examples of other typical requests that edtech advocates might make include regulations regarding education standards, assessments, teacher certification, and online and blended learning. While BOE does not commit funding, which is reserved for the legislature and governor specifically, it serves as an influential policy and standards body.

Your state **Department of Education (DOE)** is responsible for myriad of functions and issues, and these can vary significantly from state to state. Generally, the DOE (also called Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE, in some states) performs the following functions:

- Oversees public school districts, charter schools, statewide schools such as Governor's School, publicly funded preschools, and technology and vocational public schools.
- Responsible in most states for all state colleges and universities, the education of incarcerated youth and often supervision of public libraries.
- Provides in-service education for education professionals.
- Offers services and advisory counsel in all areas of education to local and regional educational agencies.
- Conducts long-range studies to plan the state's programs of education.
- Evaluates the efficacy of public education and provides best practices for the improvement of public education.

Every state DOE has one or more people assigned to support technical functions in the superintendent's organization. This role may be called chief technology officer (CTO), technical director, or similar. They are often ideal candidates to develop relationships with, given their responsibility for technology leadership, direction-setting and counsel.

Examples of typical requests that edtech advocates might make include promoting legislation regarding education standards, assessments, teacher certification, and online and blended learning. The legislature has the right to raise revenues (levy taxes) and allocate funding (expenses), subject to approval by the governor. Except in rare instances, funding requests would be initiated in the legislature and/or Governor's Office.

The **state superintendent of public instruction** (called education commissioner in some states) is the chief education officer in your state and may be elected or appointed. Among her/his chief responsibilities:

- Leading the education department.
- Overseeing the Department of Education, which in turn manages the public school system.

- Directing the implementation of educational policies, collaborating with educational officials to improve school performance, and providing guidance and counsel to school districts.

In most states, the senior education executive (state superintendent or similar title) is appointed by the governor, the state BOE or the state legislature. In 13 states, the state superintendent is elected directly by voters. In many states, the state superintendent is a member of the State Board of Education, often serving in the role of chair, executive director and/or secretary. In some states, s/he is an advisory (non-voting) member. The Education Commission of the States maintains an updated listing [here](#).

Examples of typical requests that edtech advocates might make include ongoing communication and direction to local school boards and other education entities regarding education quality, accountability and best practices. S/he is often the first resource the State BOE will look to when considering and approving policy initiatives.

Each state has an **education technology director**. Although the role has a variety of names and scopes across the states, the tech director is an important adviser to the state superintendent and DOE, and is a key stakeholder for affiliates, organizations and educators to know. Education technology directors typically have a number of significant responsibilities under their purview, including:

- Edtech hardware and software.
- STEM.
- Online and blended learning.
- State data management.

You can learn more about this role, the national organization serving them (State Educational Technology Directors Association) and your education technology director's specific role and responsibilities on SEDTA's [website](#).

The **secretary of education (SOE)** is also an important office to develop and maintain a relationship with if your state has one. In states with both a SOE and state superintendent, the SOE is typically the policy lead on education issues and a Cabinet official.

The **governor** is the head of the executive branch, and, as such, is the chief executive of the state. S/he is assisted and counseled by a Cabinet level secretary in some states (Secretary of Education), the State Superintendent, and one or more education policy advisers. S/he has myriad responsibilities, including:

- Recommending and setting education policy.
- Some veto authority over legislation in most states.
- Introducing education legislation, setting budget priorities and final funding streams.

Examples of typical requests that edtech advocates might initiate with the Governor's Office include key education priorities, especially in advance of each legislative session, funding requests and broad educational goals.

Education policy advisers engage in policy creation, debate and revision. Developing relationships with these advisers will often allow you to develop a deeper, more meaningful relationship than an official higher up in the organization. Good legislation and policy directives often begin with these crucial stakeholders.

All education legislation is initiated and enacted through **the state legislature**. The state legislature and executive branch (governor) each have important roles in both education legislation and funding. In both our federal and state government structures, the United States has three branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial. The function of the legislative branch is to pass the laws, the executive branch to enforce the laws and the judicial to interpret the laws according to the Constitution and other governing documents.

- The legislature's responsibilities can vary from state to state, but all state legislatures have the primary responsibility to pass laws.
- In many states, the legislative branch also acts in an oversight capacity for functions of the executive branch.
- All state budgets must be approved by both the House and Senate prior to enactment (approval) by the governor.

The legislature consists of two branches: the House and Senate. In order for a bill to be enacted, it must pass both chambers and be reconciled (that is, the same version must pass both chambers). Note: Nebraska has a unicameral legislature.

The state House and Senate each have an Education Committee, an Appropriations Committee and ad hoc committees that advise legislative deliberations as well. Committee chairs, members and staffers to these committees are important stakeholders in the process, and it's well worth your time to develop and nurture relationships with them.

One of the most influential legislators in the process is the bill's sponsor(s). S/he champions the bill through both chambers and is regularly consulted for leadership and authority on the bill's provisions. Take the time to introduce yourself and make your opinions known, ideally when the bill has been filed (pre-session) or as soon as possible after the bill is introduced. Most sponsors will appreciate your active engagement, subject matter knowledge and interest.

Committee hearings and floor debate on legislation that impacts ISTE and your affiliate are important events for understanding the key factors that legislators weigh as they consider the passage of each bill. These are also opportunities to engage with your targeted legislators to share your opinions and advocate for the policy that you need.

When legislation that interests your organization is introduced, it's ideal to track the bill(s) through one of the many legislative tracking services that are available. Some are free, typically with rudimentary features available, while paid services tend to have more complete coverage and features. Tracking legislation will allow you to see its movement through both chambers, the changes to the language, hearings and votes on the bill, and other measures.

You can use [ISTE's Advocacy page](#) to search legislation. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) maintains a free [comprehensive searchable database](#) of education legislation. It includes full text versions and history of all enacted legislation going back to 2008. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) [website](#) also includes helpful information.

The legislative process flowchart shown in Appendix A shows the process by which legislation is introduced, debated, modified, reconciled and enacted in state government. Because there are meaningful differences at the state level, the process flow shown in Appendix A (Texas example) is representative of what you will experience in your state.

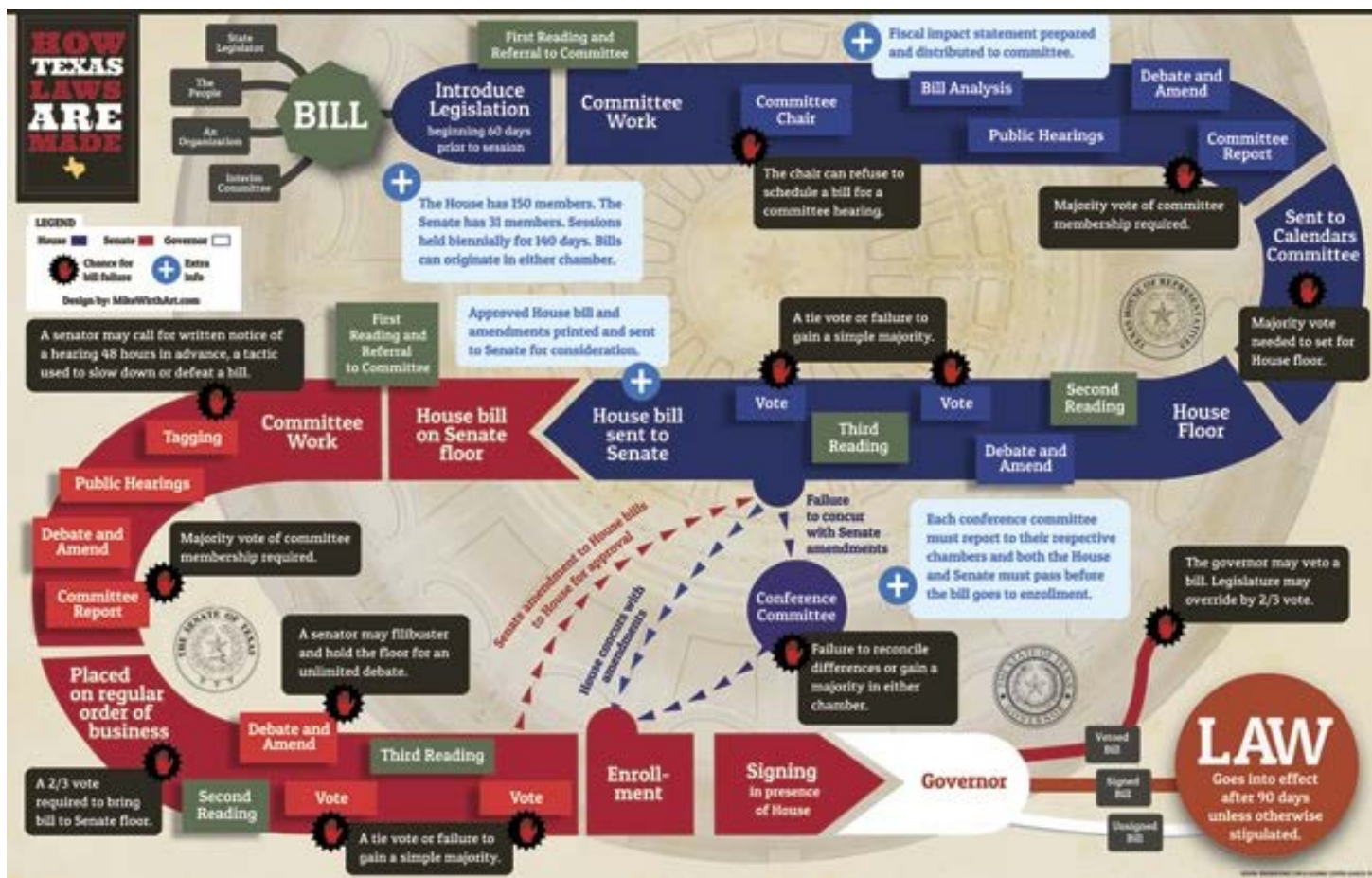
HOW TO AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF YOUR AFFILIATE AND ISTE IN YOUR STATE

1. Cultivate relationships and create ongoing conversations among the education leaders and education policy advisers in your state. Become recognized as a valued thought leader on education policy.
2. Attend BOE meetings, public hearings and committee hearings that address key legislative issues that you are following. Introduce yourself and advocate for specific policy that will advance your goals.
3. Serve on one or more committees advising the DOE and/or BOE on education policy and initiatives. Most state BOEs have both standing and ad hoc or advisory committees that are typically staffed with subject matter experts; key business, education, and community leaders; and political appointees.
4. Use social media, email, your organization's website and other platforms to make your voice heard. (See *Optimizing Social Media for Advocacy* in the [Advocacy Toolkit](#).)

APPENDIX A: STATE LEGISLATIVE FLOWCHART

(Texas example)

The flowchart that follows shows the process of a bill from its introduction in either chamber, through debates, amendments, committee work, floor votes, reconciliation and final action by the governor. Though the flow is based on the Texas Legislature, it is representative of most state legislatures' legislative process.



Source: Open source retrieved 2/28/2018 from <http://www.texascoopower.com>, Texas Co-Op Power, 2013.