



TIPS FOR ENGAGING BUSINESS LEADERS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Business leaders have a vested interest in quality early childhood programs in the community. Early childhood programs help their current employees work, and build the basic skills of their future workforce. Businesses that have invested in family-friendly policies, ranging from on-site child care to flexible work hours and child care subsidies, are powerful allies in making the business case. They cannot only attest to the impact of these policies on their bottom line and productivity, but can also share the negative impact that the lack of sufficient funding for state child care subsidies and other supports has on their workforce and overall business productivity and profitability.

Many businesses and Chambers of Commerce have paid lobbyists who work on behalf of their business interests. Engaging these lobbyists to work on the broad early childhood agenda maximizes both their business and political expertise. Contact the staff person assigned to work on Governmental Affairs or Community Relations at your local businesses or Chambers of Commerce.

Cultivating individual business champions to be spokespeople for early childhood investments has been an effective strategy in many communities. These champions are unlikely messengers, and often have established relationships at the Capitol. Identifying potential allies can occur through working with business leaders who are already friendly to children's concerns through Board engagement on non-profits or the United Way, or through connections made through working with the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups such as Rotary or Kiwanis. Being clear in your message and having specific requests is crucial to effectively engaging business leaders.

To find your local **Chamber of Commerce** in Texas, visit the following website:

<http://www.lone-star.net/mall/main-areas/chamber/chambers.htm>

REMEMBER:

Keep the following in mind to make your outreach effort to the business community a success:

1. **ASK.** The best way to get someone to do something is to ask him or her personally.
2. **BE ORGANIZED.** Know exactly what you need done and when. Business leaders are extremely busy and need specific, reasonable projects that can be accomplished in set amount of time.
3. **BE FRIENDLY AND PROACTIVE.** Actively encourage and support their involvement at whatever level they feel most comfortable.
4. **MAKE EVERYONE FEEL INCLUDED.** Be sure to explain the larger context of their efforts and keep leaders informed of progress on a regular basis.
5. **SAY THANK YOU.**
6. **ASK AGAIN.** Business leaders have a vested interest in quality early childhood education and are in a position to make positive change.