



Advocating effectively for public education while navigating the political landscape

Building bridges, fostering relationships, and advocating effectively for our students in today's complex political landscape

Linda Hanks

Juab School District, Board Member, President

Utah School Boards Association, Board of Directors, Past President

Pacific Region of National School Boards Association, Immediate Past Chair

Our Mission Goes Beyond Policy

As school board members, we're not just managing budgets or debating policies. We're championing the future of our communities through **meaningful relationships**.

In today's complex political world, these relationships become our most powerful tools for creating lasting change that benefits every student.





A Lesson in Political Reality

Picture this: A high-stakes meeting with legislative leadership, state school board leaders, and education association representatives. Everyone cared about children, but perspectives on funding allocation, spending priorities, and revenue sources varied dramatically.

That day taught me a crucial lesson: **shared support isn't always shared strategy**. Effective advocacy requires understanding these nuances.

How do we build the bridge?

Building the Bridge



The Challenge

Advocating for public education while representing our districts/associations meant navigating complex political relationships

The Realization

True champions need allies beyond education advocates—we must build bridges with all elected officials

The Strategy

Success requires genuine relationship-building, even with those who don't initially share our perspective



Quick Exercise: Know Your Network

Take one minute to list all the elected officials in your area:

- Town/city council members in your district
- Mayor(s) and commissioners
- State representatives and senators
- Your congressman/woman



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Keep that list handy—we'll revisit it shortly.

Principle #1: Build Genuine Relationships



Beyond Political Alliances

Don't see other officials as obstacles or voting blocs. Understand them as **people first**.

Find common ground in shared priorities: community safety, economic growth, youth engagement.

Face-to-face interactions matter most.



Your position alone won't change minds—authentic relationships will.



Principle #2: Communicate Transparently

Be Authentic

Politics may be about messaging, but **authenticity resonates**. Be honest about school needs while listening to others' concerns.

Stay Informed

Know your message and data. **Respectful dialogue** built on **solid information** fosters lasting trust and credibility.

Focus Forward

When disagreements arise, **emphasize shared outcomes** rather than political divisions.

An illustration on the left side of the slide shows two hikers ascending a steep mountain slope. The hiker in the foreground is lower on the slope, using a climbing rope and pulley system. The second hiker is further up the slope, also using a rope. The mountain is depicted with stylized, layered blue and yellow shapes, suggesting snow or rock formations. The background is a solid light blue.

Principle #3: Be Patient, Persistence, and Grateful

Political change takes time. Building relationships and shifting perceptions require **sustained effort**.

Don't get discouraged by setbacks. Celebrate small wins—supportive comments, productive meetings, joint initiatives—as stepping stones toward larger goals.

Remember: **persistence paired with patience & gratitude** creates lasting change.

Your Challenge: Take Action This Week

Review Your List

Look back at the officials you listed earlier. How many do you genuinely know?

Mark Your Allies

Put a star next to those with whom you have authentic relationships

Identify Gaps

Analyze the blank spots. Who's missing from your network?

Commit to Connect

What will you do this week to reach out and build better relationships?

Our students' futures deserve relationships that endure beyond political cycles.

Let's champion public education together through the power of genuine connection.

