



**Colorado Charter Schools
Annual Conference**
February 25-27, 2026
Denver Marriott Tech Center

**FORWARD
TOGETHER** 
2026

*"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."
— African proverb*



Advisory Panel of Experts

Eric Duran, Managing Director
D.A. Davidson & Co.

Gary Clark, Sr. Vice President
Hub International

Eric Slinger, Sr Vice President
Hub Charter

Jody Bartling, Key Account Executive
Facilities Staples Business Advantage

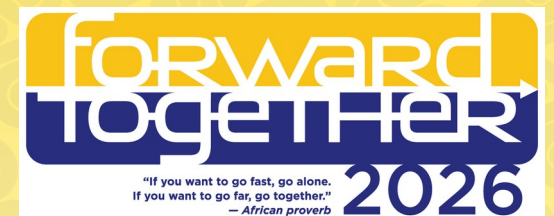
Kristine Turner, Senior Outside Sales Manager
Education First Tours

Rob Gillem, Managing Director
Gillem Staffing

February 27, 2026 | 8:30-9:30AM
Hot Topics



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**



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Colorado League of
Charter Schools



We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public **charter schools** across Colorado.



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action.



CLCS
Action

Today's Agenda

Icebreaker

Getting to Know Your Lawmaker

Purpose of a Lawmaker Visit

Planning the Visit

Messaging Matters

Next Steps & Resources

Icebreaker

Have you ever met with elected leaders before? How did it go?

Have you ever helped host a school event?

Getting to Know Your Lawmaker

DETAILS ON HOW TO FIND STATE ELECTEDS

- Look them up in the Colorado General Assembly [Website](#)
- Ideally, you can also follow them on their Social Media

Purpose of a Lawmaker Visit

Why We Need to Engage Lawmakers

- You are an important messenger and advocate for your school and your stories make an impact. **When you speak, lawmakers listen!**
- School visits can directly influence and strengthen support for charter schools, particularly in high stakes moments when legislative, regulatory, authorizing and more can impact your school's ability to achieve its mission.
- Together, we can build support for charter schools, ensure lawmakers understand the positive impact of our schools, and ensure a bright future for children.
- We want legislators to know that charter schools are part of the public education system!

Goals of a Lawmaker Visit

Build relationships: Ensure lawmaker knows school leaders and constituents in their district.

Share stories: How your charter school is meeting the needs of kids and families; How you are preparing students for workforce and their futures; The uniqueness of a charter school (flexibility, freedom) is the secret sauce.

Provide context: How pending actions they will decide on could help or hinder your school to be successful.

Legislation & funding: How can this visit help your school and charter schools across the state when it comes to legislation and funding?

We Want Lawmakers to Feel...

Positive – This school knows their community (my constituents) and is making a proven difference.

Sense of Community – There is a community feeling and everyone is working together towards positive outcomes for kids.

Future oriented – This school is preparing kids for our workforce and ensuring their future success.

Knowledgeable – I know more about the people at this school and generally about charter schools.

Trusted – I can collaborate and call upon this school to help me understand education issues.

My role matters/take action – I can help (or hinder) this school's (and my constituents') success with my comments and actions at the capitol.

Relationship – I need to stay in touch with this school, positive things are happening here for my community.

Planning the Lawmaker's School Visit

Planning an Effective School Visit

Parents can collaborate with their school leaders to plan a visit in the following ways:

- Identify which elected leaders you will invite (e.g., state representatives or local)
- Choose dates and times that work well with your school schedule. Consider asking the leaders to attend an event already scheduled and one they can play a role in.
- Send an invitation to the lawmaker's office and describe the visit. Make sure to coordinate with the appropriate staffer for scheduling.
- **Plan the visit in detail – be very specific about where the lawmaker will go and who they will hear from. Ensure you have representatives that hold a variety of roles (e.g., board members, teachers, families, students) and that they represent the diversity of the community.**
- Plan for photo ops at every possible stage (ensure student media releases).

Planning an Effective School Visit

- Practice your story and what you want to share during the visit.
- Close with a clear ask of the lawmaker. It can be to continue the conversation, opportunities to work together, and/or support for a specific policy or legislation.
- Thank lawmaker/staff - consider sending student artwork.
- Post photos to social media. Be sure to tag your school, lawmakers, and **XXX** in all posts.

Do's

- Be professional, answer questions. If you don't know an answer don't guess, tell them you will get back to them with the details.
- **Practice, practice, practice.**
- Be clear on what you want to achieve, how lawmaker will feel.
- Keep to the agenda and plan.
- Be respectful of the lawmaker's time.
- Take photos and share them.

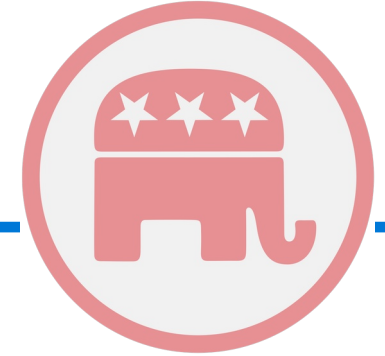
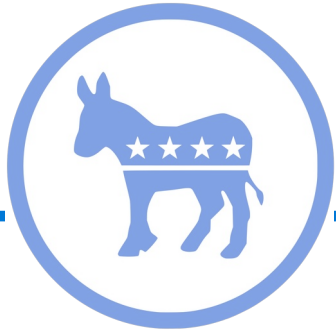
Don'ts

- **Be intimidated, lawmakers are human just like you.**
- Assume the lawmaker knows about your school or charter schools.
- Talk about other charter schools (or district schools) in a negative light.
- Make it confrontational or hostile.
- Let the visit be the end of advocacy – it is just the beginning.
- Be disappointed if the visit is with a staffer. DO figure out how to engage directly with lawmaker in the future.

Messaging Matters

Words that Resonate by Ideology

Date



Democrat Leaning

Support for teachers & students

Opportunity & access

Motivation & engagement in learning

Safety as a value

Shared values: fairness; safe, engaging schools

Outcomes: *real world skills that prepare students for success*

Hope + opportunity over blame

Republican-Leaning

Efficacy & measurable results

Accountability & responsibility

Protecting the nation's future

Parental partnership as a value

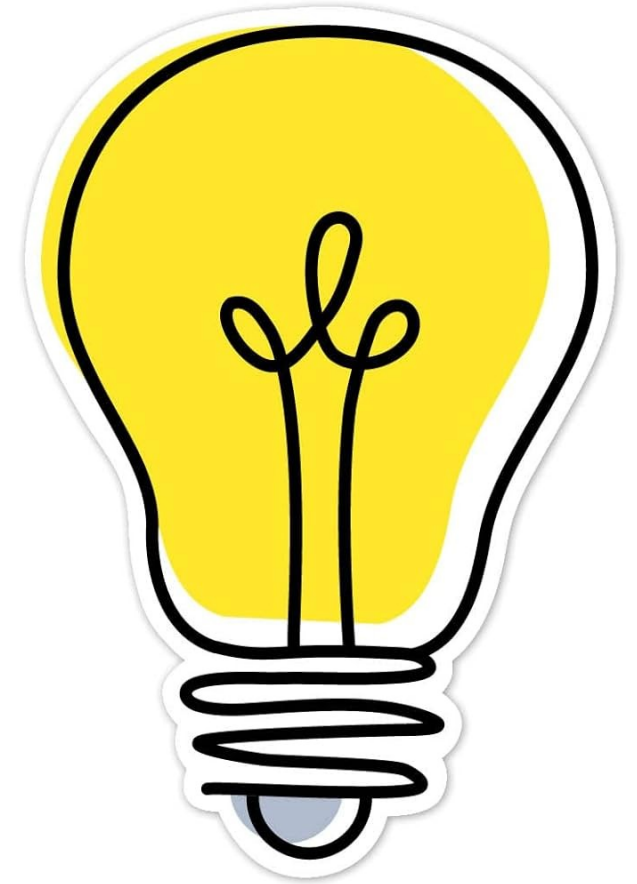
Top 3 Messages

- 1. Start with the basic facts: public, free, and open to all.**
(Shared understanding)
- 2. Show how your charter school provides more individualized attention and prepares students for the future.** (Solutions/examples of what's working)
- 3. Emphasize that charter schools are part of and beneficial to the public school system.** (Shared values of public education)

Storytelling Themes & Proof Points

- **Personalized Learning.** Students receive individualized resources and supports.
- **Flexibility and Creativity.** Teachers are given flexibility to take creative approaches in the classroom to help every student.
- **Empowered Teachers.** Teachers are supported and rewarded for helping students excel.
- **Family/Community Involvement.** Charter schools are supported by communities of involved families who are committed to partnering with educators to ensure their kids get a great education.
- **Fairness:** Charters help students from all backgrounds succeed.
- **Joy in Learning:** Schools create engaging, creative learning experiences that motivate students.
- **Student Success:** Students are prepared for success in school, careers, and life.
- **Community Partnership:** Schools support students with strong community connections.

Pause and Reflect



Your School's Storytellers

Storytelling: Charter School Leaders

School leaders bring credibility, context, and accountability. Their voices help communities understand the school's mission/vision and how it supports families.

Key Messages

- Why the school exists and the community need it was created to address
- How the school supports students, educators, and families
- How the school is held to high academic, financial, and operational standards
- How the school prepares students for the future

Storytelling Prompts

- Why did you choose to open or lead this school?
- How do you know the school is successful?
- What are you most excited about for students' futures?
- What decisions have you made to better meet student needs?

Storytelling: Charter School Teachers

Teachers are trusted, authentic voices who bring the school's impact inside the classroom to life. Their stories show how the school supports educators to meet students' individual needs.

Key Messages

- How the school empowers teachers to meet individual student needs
- How flexibility supports creative, student-centered learning
- Why teachers choose to work at the school
- How classroom practices contribute to student growth and success

Storytelling Prompts

- Why do you choose to teach at this school?
- How does the school support you in the classroom?
- How do you reach students who may struggle in traditional settings?
- What student success makes you most proud?

Storytelling: Charter School Families

Families' lived experiences illustrate why options matter in public education. Their voices help audiences understand the real impact of the school on students' lives.

Key Messages

- Why the family chose the school and what need it met
- How the school supports their child as an individual
- How the school partners with families
- What growth or changes they have seen in their child

Storytelling Prompts

- Why did you choose this school for your child?
- How does the school meet your child's individual needs?
- How has your child grown or changed since enrolling?
- What makes this school the right choice for your family?

Storytelling: Charter School Students

Students bring authenticity and perspective that show the human impact of education options. Their stories help audiences see how schools support growth, belonging, and future goals.

Key Messages

- Why the school works for them as an individual
- How they feel supported and known at school
- What skills, confidence, or interests they are developing
- How the school is helping them prepare for the future

Storytelling Prompts

- Why did you choose this school?
- What makes this school a good fit for you?
- How has this school helped you grow or learn new skills?
- What are your goals for the future?

Resources

Want the resources the League uses? Please fill out the sign up sheet floating around

THANK YOU

**“
Your
feedback
helps us all
move forward
together**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**

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