

Why Should You Attend the TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit?

We're glad you asked! If you're a [member](#) of [TESOL International Association](#), you have heard about advocacy and the importance of getting involved in policy at the local and federal levels. As the political climate continues to change and have a greater impact on education and immigration reform, a key opportunity to make your voice heard and advocate on behalf of English learners and English language teachers takes place each June in Washington, DC, at the [TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit](#).

So, why should you attend? Participants who have attended in the past were asked that very question. Here are their Top 10 Reasons to Participate in TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit:

1. You will gain in-depth knowledge about federal policy issues affecting English language learners, their teachers, and schools. In addition to detailed policy briefs and other background reading provided before the event, the Summit will feature Congressional staff, federal officials, and other experts discussing the latest on key policy issues for the TESOL field. The summit format also allows for a broader discussion of policy issues, rather than the more narrow focus of legislation. You will learn a tremendous amount of information in a short period of time – and how it impacts the field.

2. You will learn detailed information about the inner workings of Congress and the legislative process. Staff from Congressional offices and other speakers will also provide information on how Congress really works and how you can make an impact. More importantly, you will learn about what is going on right now and participate directly in democracy. Recent speakers have represented The U.S. Department of Education, American Federation of Teachers, Migrant Legal Action Program, National Skills Coalition, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Migration Policy Institute, National Education Association, and more!

3. You will empower yourself with valuable information you can bring back to your community on how to be a better advocate for teachers and schools locally. What is happening in Washington, DC, does have a local impact on your school and your students. Learning about federal policy and current developments, as well as having the experience of meeting with your representatives in Congress, will empower you to be a more effective advocate for your community. The Summit also includes activities to help develop your advocacy and grassroots organizing skills, which will increase your capacity to make change when you return home.

4. You will discover that sharing your voice with policy makers is not as difficult as it seems. The thought of meeting with an elected official can be intimidating, especially if you have never done this before (you are not alone if you are feeling a little anxious about taking such a big step in becoming an advocate). By participating in the TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit you will receive step-by-step instructions on how to contact your elected officials, make your appointments, and conduct your meeting. This information makes the whole

process much easier and prepares you for an effective meeting with your legislators. Further, you may find that there are other participants from the same district and/or state, which will allow you to hold your meeting on the Hill in groups.

5. You will make a difference and give your students a voice by communicating concerns and needs directly with policy makers and elected officials in Washington. Although policy makers and elected officials receive information from constituents all the time, nothing is more powerful or effective than a face-to-face meeting where you can relay needs and concerns directly. You may even find that your representatives are not aware of many of the issues facing your students or programs, which makes the opportunity to provide your expert opinions even more important.

6. You will provide a face for the TESOL field elected officials. More and more information is available about the needs of English learners, and research continues to grow. However, the voices of teachers and program administrators are often missing in policy debates. You can fill that gap and provide key information on what it's actually like in the classroom, teaching English learners of all ages and skillsets.

7. You will have the opportunity to be heard and respected as a professional and expert in the field. No one is a better expert on what is happening in your classroom than you. Elected officials and policy makers rarely have the opportunity to talk directly to ESL experts and classroom teachers, so many officials and their staff will be eager to hear what you have to say.

8. You will get to walk the halls of power in Washington, DC. Operate like a Washington insider and walk the halls of Congress. You'll be on Capitol Hill for a full day for meetings, so you'll have time to see and explore the place where our legislators do the people's business.

9. You will gain solidarity with a network of other like-minded TESOL professionals from across the United States. The TESOL Advocacy & Policy Summit is a collective experience for all involved, so a great camaraderie develops among all the participants. Learn from others who have been here before, and hear about similar situations in different areas of the country. You will create a network of support that you can count on throughout the year.

10. You will benefit from an unparalleled leadership development experience. Ask anyone who has participated before – you will leave the Summit a changed person and an empowered leader.

Bonus!

You will have a terrific addition to your CV/resume. (No explanation necessary.)