



## **STRATEGIC BUSINESS ADVOCACY TO ADVANCE EDUCATION REFORM**



You don't have to have a team of corporate lobbyists to be an effective advocate for education reform. Advocacy is a collection of tactics that are designed to raise awareness of a problem, define solutions to address the problem and build support for addressing the problem.

Some companies have dedicated many years and resources to advocating for education reform. The Genzyme Corporation, for example, is engaged in major advocacy and public education campaigns throughout Massachusetts. The Oklahoma Business Education Coalition, led by Oklahoma's top companies, advocates for higher standards in Oklahoma schools.

### **Checklist of Education Advocacy Strategies for Companies**

CEOs and companies are well-suited to use their voice with policymakers, education leaders, the public and other companies. They can:

- ✓ Make the case that the global economy demands higher expectations, a renewed commitment to math and science investments and data-driven decision making
- ✓ Provide compelling data and evidence; issue reports and policy briefs
- ✓ Communicate with reporters and editorial boards; publish op-eds on education reform; give speeches
- ✓ Communicate to employees the importance of public education to your company
- ✓ Join or start local or statewide nonprofit coalitions of like-minded business leaders to advance education reform
- ✓ Identify and support senior staff to focus their time on education policy and reform
- ✓ Organize, support and partner with education, civic and political allies
- ✓ Serve on local, statewide and national school boards, commissions and task forces
- ✓ Lobby in the capitol or city hall for responsible public policy; contribute to political campaigns or ballot initiatives
- ✓ Focus on state-level and school district policy and practice as the unit of change, rather than individual schools

Business leaders make the case for staying the course with school reform, which can be a lengthy process. They can:

- ✓ Keep the public conversation focused on the vision for the public education system
- ✓ Sustain the public's commitment to school reform over time
- ✓ Take the "long view" (beyond political election cycles) and bring neutrality to politically polarized situations
- ✓ Play a convening role to bridge institutional barriers that block reform or make the system incoherent
- ✓ Stay the course even when the going gets rough; be willing to address challenges and make mid-course corrections
- ✓ Hold policymakers and educators accountable for improvement