

Conversations with Legislators - Tips for Teens at Capitol Day

G.R.A.C.E.

Gracious - Smile warmly. Be hospitable. Introduce yourself with a handshake and good eye contact.

Real - Be honest and genuine. Acknowledge if you don't know something or direct them to someone who may.

Attentive - Listen carefully. Wait your turn to speak. Use open posture.

Check - If you are not sure that you understand a question, reflect back what you are hearing to clarify. ("It sounds like you may be concerned about X - is that correct?")

Enlighten - You are an ambassador for homeschooling; name all the things you enjoy about the freedom to learn at home and enlarge their view in a positive way. *Avoid* comparing it to public school or making negative comments about other forms of education. Most legislators are aware of what goes on in the public school arena; let them draw their own conclusions.

Questions you can ask:

What do you know (or have you heard) about homeschooling?

Is there anything you are curious about regarding homeschooling?

How long have you been a legislator?

What are the biggest surprises, challenges or rewards you have faced as a legislator?

What one piece of advice would you give me as I enter adulthood?

Questions to be prepared to answer:

What do you think/like/dislike about being homeschooled? [Focus on the freedom you have ...]

Do you feel like you're missing out on things like sports or socializing with friends? [Remember, there is no perfect educational system, they all have pros, cons and gaps. Acknowledge that, but point out why you think homeschooling has served you well thus far.]

What activities are you involved with outside of school? [You could point out that with homeschooling, activities are often PART of school, like what you are doing right now!]

What do you want to do after high school? [it's ok not to know, but do name some things you would like to explore.]

If you get asked something you are not really sure about,

1) Admit it. "That's a great question, I've never really thought about that. Let me direct you to someone who may know the answer." Direct them to a TEACH board member, or if at their office, tell them you will find out and get back to them. Then do.

2) If they have specific questions that require facts or statistics, TEACH-CT has a plethora of information on a variety of topics related to homeschooling. We can custom create a folder of materials to meet their needs.

The main goal is to leave them a positive impression of the results of homeschooling, not to change their viewpoint on a particular issue.

Write a thank you note to your legislator if they came, or to another if you had a memorable exchange.