



TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

TESOL Goes to Washington 2023

by [*TESOL International Association*](#)

This June, more than 50 dedicated TESOLers took their passion and voices to Capitol Hill to meet with their members of Congress and advocate for the English language teaching (ELT) profession and the multilingual learners of English (MLEs) they serve each and every day. Presented with engaging sessions and the strength of networking, attendees of TESOL's 2023 Advocacy & Policy Summit brought to Congress not only priorities within the federal budget and innovative legislation, but also the stories and impact and promise of their campuses and communities.

Summit attendees gathered near Georgetown on the 20th of June and were greeted with policy and advocacy updates from several of TESOL's colleague associations throughout the day. Proudly sponsored by the [American Federation of Teachers](#), the Summit began with a U.S. Federal Policy Update, covering the backdrop of the 118th Congress and [legislative priorities](#) for this year's Hill visits. On this panel were Deborah Kennedy, executive director for the National Coalition for Literacy, and Roxanne Garza, deputy director of education policy at UnidosUS.

The U.S. Department of Education provided updates with highlighted sessions from the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) and the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Deputy secretary and director of OELA Montserrat Garibay inspired attendees on the secretary of education's vision for MLEs through the [Raise the Bar for Multilingualism](#) program, which included highlights on important dates affecting public education and the numerous resources available through OELA in support of educators, learners, and their families. OCTAE Management and Program Analyst Domminck McParland provided an overview of initiatives through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, including important data on participants and impact across the United States.

Prior to the heartfelt and inspirational keynote from Kia Johnson, director of PreK–12 Language and Literacy at the Center for Applied Linguistics, attendees heard from Roger Rosenthal, executive director of the Migration Legal Action Program on the rights of immigrants and English learners in public education. Attendees then chose between two separate sessions on policy and advocacy for newcomers, one for pre-K–12 and the other for adult education. These sessions were led by Margie McHugh, director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy at the Migration Policy Institute; Julie Sugarman, senior policy analyst for PreK–12

Education at the Migration Policy Institute; and Xinolin Cruz-Gonzalez, deputy director of Californians Together.

The afternoon ended with a question-and-answer session with three staffers from the offices of Representatives Adriano Espaillat, Nikema Williams, and Brian Fitzpatrick. During this session, the staffers had an impromptu request to role-play a Hill Visit, and they handled it perfectly, giving attendees, many of whom were on the Hill for the first time, a glimpse into the expectations for presenting the issues to their members of Congress. The evening ended with a reception, at which the Center for Applied Linguistics raffled off two professional development opportunities.

The next day, TESOLers hit the Hill.

Representing more than 25 states and carrying issue briefs along with data on their own programs and communities, attendees had more than 100 visits at which they presented the issue or policy, framed the impact, told their stories, and made their asks.

While most of the visits were with legislative staffers who work with education policy, several attendees were able to meet directly with their members of Congress, and sometimes these meetings were impromptu visits in the halls of the congressional offices. At one such encounter, several TESOLers found Senator Elizabeth Warren traversing the hall, and, in true TESOL fashion, a party ensued as they all gathered around for pictures. Even when the member was not one that an attendee may have supported, they followed the mantra that education was indeed and truly is a bipartisan issue—regardless of which side of the aisle a member may reside.

Advocacy was on full display during the summit and continues each day. As educators, advocacy is inherently ingrained in what we do—whether in the classroom for the needs of a student well beyond any demands of the curriculum, in the community for the rights and access of families, on our own campuses to advance professionalism and scholarship, or, as evidenced at TESOL’s 2023 Advocacy & Policy Summit, exercised in the direct constitutional right of petitioning the government.

Continue in your advocacy today. TESOL has numerous resources available at www.tesol.org/advocacy, and you too can join in advocating for the federal priorities by taking action today through TESOL’s [Advocacy Action Center](http://www.tesol.org/advocacy).

If you have any questions on advocacy or would like additional information on how TESOL can support advocacy where you are, please contact us today at advocacy@tesol.org.