Effective Meetings with Authority Figures
The 5 Golden Rules

1. Don't go it alone
- Schedule an appointment and **take at least one other person**, if not 3-5 people.
- This shows that you're not the only person who cares about the issue, and gives you more voices to use in the meeting and more ideas on what to do next.

2. Aim for the goal
- Have 1-2 **clear and simple goals** (ie. create a plan for increasing parent engagement; or, find out whether the Councilmember will fund a renovation of the school library).
- **Write up an agenda** for the meeting to show that you're serious and to make sure that everyone stays on topic to achieve that goal.
- When people bring up topics that aren't on the agenda, put them in the "parking lot" – a list of issues to be discussed later – and come back to them another time.

3. Get your story straight
- Two of the most powerful weapons you have are **personal stories** and **facts**.
- Always come ready with at least one personal story that makes the issue real (ie. a parent talking about being treated rudely by office staff; or how their child brought home a history book that said Bill Clinton was President).
- Bring facts to back up your arguments (the number of parents who came to a parent meeting when the Parent Coordinator made phone calls, compared to not making calls; number of days the local library is open late enough for students to visit).

4. Get ready
- Whenever possible, **prepare ahead of time** with the other people who are coming with you, so that everyone is on the same page and knows the goal and the agenda.
- Decide who is going to speak for each part of the agenda.
- You could meet up the week before, do a phone call the night before, or even meet half an hour early – it will make a big difference in being a united front.

5. Follow up

- Even the best meeting won't have much impact unless you follow up with a call or email to make sure that people do what they said they would do.
- Decide on a date for the next meeting or next steps *before* you leave the meeting.