Power is in Relationships: The Art of the One-on-One Meeting

All grassroots organization and power is rooted in community, and the building block of community is strong relationships. One-on-one meetings are relationship-building meetings in which you learn about someone’s interests, skills, hopes and dreams, and find out how they want to participate in working towards your shared goal. One-to-ones build networks of relationships and create community.

1. **What is a 1:1 Meeting?**
   A 1:1 is a face to face meeting with the purpose of establishing or deepening a relationship. It is best to request the meeting in advance by calling the person or asking them when you see them. The meeting should last between 30 – 60 minutes and should be held in a space that’s comfortable for the person you’re meeting. You are looking for people with potential to become leaders and who want to become involved. These meetings are about relationships, not just about the issue.

2. **Why do 1:1 meetings?**
   We do one-on-one meetings in order to:
   - **Talent Scout:** Spot leaders and identify people with potential
   - **Identify Issues:** Discover people’s passions and identify issues they are willing to act on.
   - **Build a Web of Relationships:** Develop fruitful relationships with people and a shared vision of positive change.
   - **Get Commitments:** Ask a person to do something specific for your school or group.

3. **Who do we do 1:1 meetings with?**
   Relational meetings can be done with people who are leaders or aren’t yet leaders but who you think have potential; those who are actively involved in their community; people who are referred to you by others; people who strike you as interesting.

4. **1:1 Meetings are NOT...**
   - 1:1 meetings are not the time to sell anything; recruit someone for a project; preach to them; judge or psychoanalyze them. If you find yourself doing these things - stop!
Steps of a One on One Meeting

1. Opening / Credential
   - Start out by introducing yourself if you don’t already know each other
     “I am working with a group of parents at PS 111 to develop a vision of how we can build a community school.”
   - Why are you meeting with this person and how did you get their name.
     “I wanted to follow up since you were so involved at the parent meeting.”
     “My friend Joan said you had really great ideas on how to improve our school.”

2. Breaking the Ice
   - Be friendly! Start out with the usual conversational questions.
     “How was your weekend?” “What did you think of the event the other night?”
   - Start with easier questions that get the conversation going, like:
     “How long have your children gone to this school?” “How long have you lived here?”
   - Share points of connection you have with the other person.
     “I live a block away from you and my grandmother grew up on your street.”

3. Storytelling and Listening
   - Ask and listen – What events or decisions have shaped or influenced them? Where are they coming from? What is important to them? What issues most concern them?
   - In order to establish a relationship you need to share some things about yourself and your experiences. Look for common ground.
   - Share your vision – What do you want to be a part of building and organizing towards?
   - Ask for their vision -- Reflect on what you have in common and what is different.

4. Agitate
   - Be willing to agitate and push people around matching their actions to their vision:
     “Why haven’t you done something about these concerns you have?”
   - Push people to make a commitment by showing why this issue is important, and tying it to the interests and passions they have expressed.

5. Proposition
   - Get a commitment to a specific action that matches their interests and talents, like attending a meeting or event, or connecting you with someone else to talk to.

6. Follow Up
   - Watch the time so that you do not go over the time you set.
   - Thank them for meeting with you and be clear about how you will follow up.
     “I’ll call to remind you about the parent association meeting on Monday at 7 pm.”