

# HOW TO LOBBY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

## Community Voices for Public Education

March 2012 (Updated March 2020)

### GOALS

1. **Board member knows who we are, what our agenda is, and that we will be a force they will need to reckon with in the future**
2. **Board member understands our spring campaign demands**
3. **Identify whether the board member will be a champion, ally, fence sitter, soft opponent, or hard core opponent of our campaign goals.**
4. **Build a relationship with the trustee**

### REQUESTING A MEETING

- **Determine who your school board trustee is.** Click [here](#) for maps of HISD Board of Education district boundaries and a list of schools in each HISD trustee district.
- **If possible, have someone who knows the trustee personally set up the meeting.** If the Trustee recognizes the person from before, s/he is more likely to be receptive to meeting. Any sort of connection, i.e. as a taxpayer, voter, parent, or parent/person already involved in public education, will help. In contrast, going through HISD can be much slower.
- **If you don't know someone who knows the trustee personally, contact Board members through the district.** Click [here](#) for a list of email addresses for HISD Board of Education Trustees, or contact Board Services Manager Vermeille Jones to schedule the meeting. She can be reached at [vermeille.jones@houstonisd.org](mailto:vermeille.jones@houstonisd.org), [BoardServices@houstonisd.org](mailto:BoardServices@houstonisd.org) or 713-556-6121. Persistence may be necessary.
- **Explain why CVPE or your organization is requesting this meeting:** to discuss issues related to high stakes testing and funding of schools and want to know where the trustee stands on several ideas for addressing these issues.

### BUILDING YOUR DELEGATION

- **Aim for having 3 – 5 persons participate in the meeting.** 2-3 persons is a minimum, 5-8 persons is a maximum, and 3-5 is the optimum number of participants.
- **Recruit a group of people that is unified, representative, and compelling.** An ideal delegation would include 1-2 teachers, 1 - 2 parents, a student, and one member of a respected organization in that community. Include people with compelling stories and who might have influence with the Trustee (i.e. someone who knows and is recognizable to the Trustee from prior work).

## PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- **Have a pre-meeting with those who will attend.** Finalize the agenda, identify who will speak at the meeting, and what each person will say.
- **Assign roles.** Here are some possibilities:
  - Meeting leader: Makes introductions, runs the meeting, keeps track of time and the agenda
  - Story teller: Shares a compelling CVPE-related story
  - Delivery person: Presents leave-behinds such as fact sheets and materials signed by members such as petitions, postcards, and letters
  - Pitch person: Makes the “ask”
  - Meeting recorder: Takes notes on what happened and what you promised to do—very important when follow-up time comes

## SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA (approximately 30 minutes)

- **Introductions (3 minutes)**
  - Make clear that we represent stakeholders (community member, parent, educator, taxpayer) involved in and concerned about public education.
- **Introduce CVPE (5 minutes)**
  - Explain CVPE's mission, the proposals that we want the school board to back, and the activities we are undertaking to achieve them. Review the “About CVPE” section of our website for background information on the values we think should guide public education, what is wrong with dominant educational policies, etc.
- **Educator tells story (3 minutes)**
  - The story should highlight the problems our proposals our meant to address and why our proposals make sense.
- **Parent tells story (3 minutes)**
  - The story should highlight the problems our proposals our meant to address and why our proposals make sense.
- **Deliver materials (3 minutes)**
  - CVPE brochure
  - Supporting articles, op-eds, blogposts, etc. (See our Facebook group)
- **Make the “ask” (5-10 minutes)**
  - Ask the trustee where s/he stands with regard to our proposals.
  - Assess the trustee as a champion, ally, fence sitter, soft opponent, or hard core opponent.
  - If a champion or ally, ask what concrete action s/he will take to support them.
- **Review next steps (3 minutes)**
  - Reinforce that we will be working toward our goals here in Houston as well as in Austin and that we intend to force and influence on HISD.
- **Thank you (1 minute)**

## NEXT STEPS AND FOLLOW UP

- Email a report about the Board member to [houstoncvpe@gmail.com](mailto:houstoncvpe@gmail.com)
- Send a thank-you note — handwritten or email.
- Provide any materials you promised to provide.
- Schedule another meeting, if that was discussed.