

## W-2: Pursue additional time and resources

## Invest “Gate Keepers”

**Identify “gate keepers” who control time and resources**

The list of potential “gate keepers” in your school, district, and community is long and varied: fellow teachers, committee chairs, school administrators, secretaries, janitors, school social workers, district superintendents, university professors, and local politicians – just to name a few. Reach out to your veteran colleagues for assistance in identifying who in your school, district, or community is responsible for making decisions about the time, services, and resources available to you and your students. While at first glance it might appear that your school principal is the individual who ultimately controls the key constraints you are working to remove, many corps members have found that school janitors and secretaries are the folks who can literally and figuratively open doors for them. Casey Parks (New Mexico '03) used his strong relationship with the office secretary at his high school to secure extra filing cabinets for his classroom organizational system, and to receive unlimited access to printer ink and copy paper – essential material resources that were in high demand and short supply among his colleagues. Not to mention the frequent offerings of popcorn, cookies, brownies, and apple crisp he was on the receiving end of!

**Influence “gate keepers” to help you get what you need**

When working with colleagues and administrators in your school or district to secure additional instructional time or resources for your students, approach these interactions assuming the best in these “gate keepers,” and remember that collaboration always trumps confrontation. Resist the urge to view administrators as the “enemy,” even if they have previously made decisions you believe to have not been in the best interests of your students. In nearly all cases, these individuals have priorities that are aligned with yours – and working to bring these shared beliefs to the surface during your interactions can help you achieve your aims. Don’t underestimate the importance of skillfully navigating school, district, and community politics in your pursuit of student achievement. Ultimately, having superintendents, principals, committee chairs, and janitors in your corner will lead to an increased ability to have a positive impact in your classroom, and this is a reality that you cannot lose sight of.

As evidence of this claim considering the following: some teachers have persuaded other faculty members to restructure the school day – Tammi Sutton and Caleb Dolan convinced the other faculty members in their school to lengthen the school day by forty-five minutes. Jason Kamras (DC '96), the 2005 National Teacher of the Year, convinced his principal to double the length of math classes—a change that led to massive increases in student math proficiency. Nicole Sherrin convinced her school’s faculty to turn an under-utilized school-wide study hall into a math tutorial.

To see what this looks like in action, visit the Illustrations section.