

APPROACHING HIGHER OFFICIALS

According to FERPA, a school official includes a teacher, school principal, president, chancellor, board member, trustee, registrar, counselor, admissions officer, attorney, accountant, human resources professional, information systems specialist, and support or clerical personnel. These are all individuals who can help you address issues in your school, but it can be intimidating to make the first contact. Below are some dos and don'ts for approaching your school officials.

Do ... research your school's policies first.

Read your school's handbooks or do online searches for relevant policies on the school Web site. Taking the time to learn your school's policies can better equip you for a conversation with a school official.

Do ... Follow procedures and chains of command.

When expressing concerns about what's happening in your schools, be sure to follow the proper procedures outlined in school handbooks or on the Web. You don't want to give the school board or review committee a reason to dismiss your concerns later on simply because you didn't follow proper procedures at the start.

Also be careful to follow the chain of command, starting first with the teacher or appropriate educator in charge of the particular program you are concerned about—then, if necessary, request meetings with the principal and so on.

Don't ... work alone.

When discussing concerns with school officials, it's a good idea to bring at least one other concerned student or parent with you. This provides you with a witness and moral support. It also demonstrates to school officials that you're not the only one with concerns.

Do ... document all communication.

Keep a detailed documentation of your interactions with school officials through written notes and emails. If it's appropriate, you can record conversations, as well.

Don't ... complain without offering potential solution.

Be prepared as much as possible with some positive solutions or suggestions for what the schools can do.

**QUESTIONS? FEEL FREE TO EMAIL US AT
INFO@NYLC.ORG.**