

Represent Your Supporters
(Tuesday Evening, Coffee and Cake)

It's 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month, time for your monthly meeting with supporters, whom you lovingly refer to as your "kitchen cabinet." Most of your supporters are neighbors and friends from your little corner of the district, and they all worked very hard on your election campaign.

You are sitting around your dining room table with your supporters, just about ready to start. Everyone has served themselves from the spread of coffee, tea, juice, cake, and fruit salad set out on the counter.

As you look at the folks sitting around your dining room table, you feel proud to represent this fine group. You are the only school board member who lives in the southeastern portion of the district, which is less affluent and more ethnically diverse than the northern portion of the district, where all the other school board members live. Part of the reason you ran for the board was to give voice to folks from your area, who often have not felt they were represented on the board. To your way of thinking, the schools in your neighborhood always seem to lose out compared to those on the north side, so you and your cabinet meet each month to strategize about issues affecting your neighborhood schools.

In advance of the meeting, you e-mailed a list of all the upcoming school board agenda items, and now you pass out a sheet that contains the list to each member of your kitchen cabinet.

"Let's get started," you say to kick off the meeting. "I'd like you to look over the list of agenda items to see which ones are of special interest to you. Also, please feel free to add items that I will get on the agenda. Let's go around the room and have each person point out items that I should be campaigning for on the board."

One cabinet member, Mary Marwood, is worried about the state of the playground equipment at your neighborhood elementary school. "If the play structures were this worn out at Northview [an elementary school in the more affluent part of the district], they would have been replaced years ago," she says in a resentful tone.

"Good point, Mary. I'll talk to Debbie about that." You make a note to lobby the superintendent for new play structures at your school.

Another cabinet member, Tom Thompson, wants more teaching aides in the classrooms at his son's junior high school. "The kids at Highway [Junior High] need extra help that kids at the other schools get at home," Tom states in a somewhat agitated tone.

Vignette # 1

“A report on teacher aides is coming up at our next meeting, and I will definitely work to get more funds for Highway Junior High,” you reply. Now, we’re getting somewhere, you say to yourself as you make another note.

As you go around the table, your to-do list grows, and you feel confident that you are achieving your goal of giving voice to the voiceless of your district. You’ll have your work cut out for you for the next month-including lobbying the superintendent and convincing your fellow board members to support your community.



Discussion Questions

WHAT SHOULD A SUPERINTENDENT DO IN THIS CASE WHERE A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER COMES TO LOBBY FOR SPECIAL INTERESTS?

