**Twelve Tips for Connecting with K-12 Donors**  
A new posting from [Taylor Kremer](http://www.edweb.net/TaylorKremer_1334188) (Marketing Projects, Inc.)

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If your district’s needs are like so many others across the country, learning how to connect with major donors is critical if you want your share of the fundraising pie. Connecting with these donors in human terms and making them friends of the schools is one of the major tasks of public school fundraisers in the 21st century.

When approaching potential major donors, you are making a human connection that hopefully leads to a desired gift. Here are 12 ways to connect:

**1. Recruit volunteers in your community to work on the fundraising committee.** Include prominent citizens; corporate and business executives; people with money; school administrators, including the superintendent; and principals, teachers, school board members, retired teachers, and others who have shown an interest in helping the schools.

**2. Develop a list of prospects.** The prospects become friends when the names become people. Work with the fundraising committee to identify the prospects and match up the volunteers who know the prospects as friends and relatives. Train the volunteers in using the case statement in their presentations.

**3. Identify people within your fundraising committee who have access to wealthy potential donors and make them part of your fundraising effort.** It is easier for people to give to someone they know, rather than to strangers. Preserve friendships and try to separate solicitation from friendships. Those who are experienced givers know how to do this. In fact, they call upon each other for support of their favorite causes.

**4. Bring in an outside consultant or a knowledgeable staff person** to conduct a comprehensive training program on how to connect with major donors in your community and elsewhere, how to use the case statement in your presentations, and how to use a database to compile and keep track of important fundraising information.

**5. When making personal connections with prospective donors, let them do most of the talking.** Show an interest in them. Good listening can give you many insights into their interests and needs. Learning how to turn acquaintances into beloved members of the school community is called “friendraising.”

**6. After you receive a major gift, learn how to solve problems for donors or help them with their interests.** Show them that you care and make them part of your team. Ask for help or suggestions for improvement of your school, school district, or fundraising program.

**7. Maintain integrity in the overall fundraising effort.** If you just go after the money without showing an interest in the prospective donor, the donor will sense that and may not give to your cause in the future.

**8. Remember to send birthday cards, anniversary cards, get-well cards, congratulatory cards, thank-you notes, and the like to major donors.** Thank-you notes via e-mail might be appropriate for some people, but not for others, especially older people.

**9. Pay attention to donors’ children, and praise them when appropriate.** Parents love to hear good things about their kids from other people. Also, the kids of major donors will someday inherit the family’s wealth from their parents and be looking for places to give. Why not your school or district?

**10. Learning how to become good stewards of donors’ monies is very important and reassuring.** Donors want to know that their money is being invested wisely. If problems should arise, it’s important that you keep donors informed about their gifts and deal honestly with them.

**11. Begin thinking about naming rights as well as memorial gifts.** Colleges, universities, and private schools everywhere are doing this, so why not the public schools? If John Smith wants to give you $3 million for the creative and performing arts center, why not suggest naming the building the John Smith Creative and Performing Arts Center?

**12. Do not ignore small donors**. Learn how to turn the casual small donor into a major donor. The small donor of yesterday can become the big donor of tomorrow, especially if the donor suddenly inherits a lot of money or properties.

This piece originally appeared in [Inside Philanthropy](http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/k-12-education/2015/1/29/think-big-twelve-ways-to-connect-with-major-donors-for-k-12.html).

**About the Author:** Stan Levenson, Ph.D., has been involved in K-12 fundraising for more than 40 years. One of the foremost K-12 fundraising writers in America, his most recent book is [The Essential Fundraising Guide for K-12 Schools](http://www.amazon.com/Essential-Fundraising-Guide-K-12-Schools/dp/1500999970/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421864072&sr=1-1&keywords=the+essential+fundraising+guide+for+k-12+schools). His website is <http://grantsandgiftsforschools.com/index.html>.