

## 10 Sure-Fire School Fundraisers

Parents from around the country donate their top moneymaking strategies.

By Caralee Adams | September , 2009

**'Net Profits**

These sources provide tools to help you organize online fundraising efforts.

- **OneCause** enables schools to receive a portion of the money online shoppers spend at various websites. [onecause.com/schoolpop](http://onecause.com/schoolpop); (888) 200-2088
- **cMarket** helps schools and non-profit organizations create, market, and manage online fundraising auctions. [cmarket.com](http://cmarket.com); (866) 621-0330
- **eScrip.com** gives schools a percentage of the funds you (and other online shoppers) spend at partner merchants' stores, such as Macy's, Safeway, and Barnes & Noble. [eScrip.com](http://eScrip.com)
- **Scholastic** offers tips on managing fundraisers. Visit [www.Scholastic.com](http://www.Scholastic.com). Enter "fundraising" in the search box.

Did you find the notice for the first bake sale of the season inside your child's backpack yet? It's in there, and you can expect many more such requests for donations this year—perhaps more than at any other time in recent memory. With school budgets buffeted by the Great Recession, many schools are looking for ways to make up shortfalls.

We all wish we could fill every request, but let's face it, our family budgets are stretched, too. For those of you in charge of a fundraiser, that can make asking others for financial help a bit sticky. To aid the cause, we asked parents from around the country to tell us about the fundraisers that worked for them. They shared innovative ideas or twists on traditional ones. Most have little overhead cost, do not ask much of others, and yield solid profits. Whether you're running the show or planning to give (your money or your time), try sharing a few of these ideas with your fellow parents or PTA.

### 1. Raffle Off Teachers

*Donated by Kristen Elerding, Iowa Falls, IA*

Ask teachers to offer their time and an activity they could do with one or two students, says PTO president Elerding. In Elerding's school, teachers donated an afternoon playing Guitar Hero, baking cookies, dissecting a frog, visiting an animal shelter, and chaperoning a trip to the movies, among a number of other cool activities. Raffle tickets

sold for \$1 each and generated much excitement—with kids vying for the winning ticket. "Seeing teachers out of the classroom changes students' perception of them," says Elerding. "It's good to see teachers as social people in the community."

### 2. Turn Your Playground into a Garage Sale

*Donated by Anne Buckley-Johnson, Bridgewater, NJ*

The Bradley Gardens PTO in Bridgewater organized two gently used clothing sales and a toy sale not only to raise money, but also as a service to the community. Some parents were skeptical about the idea, but were soon won over by its success in sales—\$7,000 in all, says Buckley-Johnson, a sale organizer. This idea was a good alternative to asking for cash, especially in an area hit hard by the economy. Donations poured in, and customers lined up before the doors opened. Time-saving advice: Require that clothing donations come sorted by size and gender, and price items to sell.

### 3. Get Cash for Trash

*Donated by Cindy Sherwood, Ladera Ranch, CA*

Recycling brings in easy money and lets children help save the planet. During the year, students and parents collect old cell phones and used ink cartridges in a drop box at Oso Grande Elementary School in Ladera Ranch and ship them to Planet Green in exchange for cash. A competition between the upper and lower grades motivates kids to pitch cans and bottles into recycling bins, says organizer Sherwood. The monthly winner gets two new bouncy balls for recess. The bottom green line: \$1,200 a year for the PTA.

### 4. Create a Community Carnival

*Donated by Renee Kannapell, Bethesda, MD*

Westbrook Elementary School in Bethesda has a 65-year-old spring carnival tradition. It's such a popular community-building event that although faculty members aren't obligated to participate, each one volunteers

every year. The secret: Have a theme and add fresh attractions annually. This year, they added karaoke, line dancing, and a young children's area. The carnival generates \$10,000 to \$14,000.

## 5. Reach Out Online

*Donated by Jackie Miller, Scottsdale, AZ*

Knowing it would take something different to get families to respond to a fundraiser in this economy, the Anasazi Elementary School PTO in Scottsdale took its annual auction online and netted an impressive \$40,000. The key was hiring a private firm to help organize the event and entice new customers from outside the school. Miller, the chairperson of the auction, says hot items donated by local businesses included jewelry, weeks of camp, rounds of golf, and sports memorabilia auctioned on consignment.

## 6. Spell Out Success

*Donated by: Kristi Kiefer, Des Moines, IA*

Academic fundraisers are a great two-fer: Raise money and get kids excited to learn, says Kristi Kiefer, the parent coordinator of the Spelling Challenge at Hanawalt Elementary School in Des Moines, IA. Each year, teachers at the school choose a list of 10 to 20 words for each grade level. Family and friends pledge a certain amount for each word the student spells correctly on a test, taken two weeks later. Teachers announce the total number of words spelled correctly, and the students celebrate with a party. Last year, the Spelling Challenge raised \$7,800 for new laptops.

## 7. Sell Masterpieces—On a Mug

*Donated by: Suzy Sanders, Bethesda, MD*

Selling student creations can earn your school big bucks—especially if you time it right. Each year, students at Bannockburn Elementary School in Bethesda, MD, create watercolor paintings and then reprint them on everything from T-shirts to mugs to pillowcases. This year, they put the items up for sale just before Mother's Day and raised \$1,700. Kids were so proud to see their artwork splashed on something special, and holding the sale before Mother's Day gave families the perfect gift idea, says Suzy Sanders, mother of first-grade twins at the school and coordinator of the Original Works program.

## 8. Kiss a Pig

*Donated by: Astrid Ramirez, principal, Walnut, CA*

You'll generate endless hilarity—and a good bit of cash—with this money-making idea. Oswalt Academy in Walnut, CA, hosted a Kiss the Pig fundraiser in which students and community members voted for which teachers, one per grade level, would have to wear a pig nose and kiss a 90-pound pig during an all-school assembly. Each vote cost one dollar, and the teacher with the most votes . . . won? The fundraiser brought in \$4,200 for the K-8 school. No pig readily available for your school? How about a brown cow?

## 9. Host a Dance-Off

*Donated by: Cindy Parmer, Pasadena, TX*

Schools in Pasadena, TX, staged a "Dancing with the Principals" competition, sponsored by the district's education foundation and involving more than 16 campuses. Each school held its own fundraiser for its dance team, and then all convened at a gala affair at a downtown hotel. Students, parents, and members of the community cheered on their school leaders—even the district superintendent—as they attempted to swing, salsa, and tango their way to victory. Judging was based on the couple's smooth dance moves, as well as the amount of money each school raised. The grand total: \$60,000, clinching a repeat performance in 2010.

## 10. Laugh at The Leader

*Donated by: Christy Schaad, Bailey, CO*

Is your principal the kind of person who would let students duct-tape him to a wall or don a penguin suit for a day? If so, take advantage of his willingness to do something zany and offer it as a reward for your fundraising project. Every year Paul Sandos, principal of Deer Creek Elementary School in Bailey, CO, promises to pull off some stunt if his students raise \$10,000 in pledges for their school-wide half-mile run. So far, he has shaved his hair into a blue-and-white Mohawk, been slimed with green goo, and let students squirt him with water guns as he hung suspended from the school's roof. The kids love it and get so into the hype, says Schaad, PTA president.

## BONUS:

### Get 'Em to Invest

*Donated by: K.J. Anderson, debate club advisor, Washington, DC*

When the debate team at Wilson High School in Washington, DC, wanted to raise money, it made an upscale pitch to the community: "Take Stock in Talk." For \$10, businesses, parents, and teachers buy a share of "stock" to invest in the team and receive an official-looking certificate in return. "People who might typically refuse to make a cash donation are intrigued by the idea," says K.J. Anderson.