

Win—Win Ways to Promote Your Next Fundraiser



Vickie Mabry

We promise ourselves a new pair of jeans (or a double scoop of Chunky Monkey) when we lose those last 10 pounds. We ease our children through agonizing trips to doctors and dentists with the promise of a milkshake or a visit to the park afterward. We gladly deposit our paychecks after two grueling weeks on the job. Yes, incentives are a daily part of our lives. We use them to motivate ourselves and others to take action; reach goals; carry our weight; or in some cases, lose it.

So it is no surprise that incentives have become a daily feature of school life. “We use incentives every day—in everything from reading programs to lunchroom discipline, and, yes, fundraising,” according to one PTSA president of a middle school in Silver Spring, MD.

Indeed, fundraising drives, unlike many school activities, are voluntary and should be promoted as such. Moreover, fundraising drives are particularly challenging, since they usually cost volunteers and supporters time and money, valuable commodities in today’s busy families. To overcome these hurdles, creative school administrators and professional and volunteer fundraisers have devised scores of incentive programs designed to promote family participation in fundraisers. The key, they say, is to focus on quality products and activities that everyone—parents, faculty, and students—can feel good about.

Focus on Goals and Other Hot Buttons When Reaching Out to Parents

Here’s a laundry list of ideas to boost parental support

for your next fundraiser:

- At every opportunity, communicate the specific goal of your group’s fundraising project. Parent response is better if they know exactly how fundraising efforts will help their children.

- Stress the importance of adult supervision and

parental involvement when students are asked to participate. Parents should never feel they must shoulder complete responsibility for school fundraisers, nor should they allow their children to participate without clear guidelines and direct supervision.

- Let parents know that you are sensitive to the limits of their time and pocketbooks by keeping fundraising to a few, high-impact projects. They’ll double their efforts to help if

they know they’re only going to be called upon once or twice a year.

- Provide parents with a complete fundraising schedule at the beginning of the year to avoid surprises. Include launch dates; deadlines for turning in orders/money; and when appropriate, an estimated delivery time for products.
- Use websites, newsletters, outdoor boards, local cable bulletin boards, and homework hotlines to communicate important information to parents and updates on the fundraising campaign.
- Take advantage of special school events to display products, garner extra sales, or provide pertinent information on the current campaign.
- For working parents, organize before- and after-school drop-in programs. Or, identify assignments that can be done from home or over a lunch break.

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