



**Fundraising** facts are taken from a 2005 survey by the Association of Fund-raising Distributors and Suppliers.

- Product fundraising programs (such as cookie dough or wrapping paper sales) raised almost US\$1.7 billion worth of programs, services and equipment for schools
- Schools and school-related groups like parent-teacher organizations comprised about 83% of overall fundraising sales
- 50% of school fundraising sales are made by elementary school volunteers
- The average product fundraiser generates more than US\$2,500 for schools and nonprofits; fundraisers that yield US\$10,000 or more are common

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## Taking fundraising to the next level

**Clothing drives. Bake sales. Walk-a-thons.** Fundraising for technology may conjure images of knocking on neighbors' doors or soliciting at the supermarket all day – earning less than pocket change. But many schools are embarking on fundraising activities that are fun and creative, and generate tens of thousands of dollars for classroom technology products. These schools are reaping benefits beyond extra income – they are building stronger communities and are controlling how they spend their money.

Schools like P.S. 87, Lone Mountain Elementary and Arroyo Elementary have inspirational stories that can help other educators discover innovative ways to fundraise for technology products – ideas that are easy to implement and have successful end results.

### Letting creativity in

Jean Joachim knows firsthand how to make fundraising a success. When her son started kindergarten at P.S. 87 on the upper west side of Manhattan, she became a member of the elementary school's local Parent Teacher Association (PTA). In the 10 years she volunteered there, the PTA raised an average of \$200,000 a year. The fundraising efforts began quite humbly with bake sales but soon evolved into catered auctions, street fairs, an annual Halloween harvest festival and a multitude of other lucrative events.

The PTA made sure to involve the community, network with local businesses and look for fresh volunteers. She says that the growth of their fundraising events came from the constant generation of new ideas.

"People just kept taking it to the next level. One of the things I liked about P.S. 87 was the enthusiasm and the creativity of the people that would get involved. New people would come every year and nobody did one thing forever."

The success of the fundraising, and the spirit and enthusiasm of the community prompted Joachim to write *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Ultimate School Fund-Raising Book*, to help other schools with creative fundraising ideas.

### Building community spirit

Creative fundraisers, such as an alumni night, not only raise substantial amounts of money, but also create strong relationships between the school, parents and the rest of the community, according to Joachim.

"I like to think of fundraising as building a sense of community in the school.... The fundraising created community, and the sense of community increased the fundraising."

Denise McGloughlin, principal of Lone Mountain Elementary in Scottsdale, Arizona, agrees. The school and its parent-teacher organization (PTO) have fundraising events to raise needed dollars, but some fundraisers are simply a chance to bring everyone together.

"Community building is our goal with our PTO events. In fact, with our movie night, our emphasis is to gather together and watch a movie. We don't raise a whole lot of money with that – probably raise \$2,000, if even that."



Not only are the community-building events successful at Lone Mountain, but their major fundraising events are too. Their fall festival is the biggest fundraiser of the year and raised \$20,000 last year. The carnival-like event is a family affair with games, an auction and basket raffles. The proceeds from the fall festival, which has been taking place since the school opened six years ago, has helped the PTO finance teacher professional development, textbooks and SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards.

McGloughlin says government funding cannot supply them with the amount of money they require, so they rely on their PTO to help them provide an optimum learning environment. The school started fundraising for SMART Board interactive whiteboards two years ago, and they now have two per grade level, as well as one in the library, the art room and the computer lab.

“We fundraise for the resources that our students need. SMART Board interactive whiteboards support our teachers teaching to the state standard. Our PTO purchases reading books for us, or they pay for teachers to attend workshops. We do not spend our money frivolously – it is spent on stuff that is going to enhance our kids’ learning or the environment here at Lone Mountain.”

### Keeping the momentum

Joachim says that it’s easier to convince people to volunteer when the event is to raise money for the school’s basic needs because everyone wants to see the school succeed. During her time as a volunteer at P.S. 87, the PTA’s fundraising efforts paid for the entire salary of the librarian and all the books, as well as extra help in the guidance counselor’s office and paraprofessionals for kindergarten classes. When volunteers see the accomplishments they’ve made by putting their time and energy into a fundraiser, it keeps them motivated, Joachim says.

“If you have a fundraiser and you raise \$500, everybody gets excited about it. And the next one you go on, maybe you raise \$1,500. It motivates people to get going. And the more you do and the more success you have, then you can see new gym equipment, new playground equipment, whatever you need. When you see the tangible results of your hard work, it makes it easier to volunteer and come up with another idea.”

At Arroyo Elementary, a SMART Showcase School in Santa Ana, California, there’s no shortage of volunteers. Principal Maggie Villegas says that every parent volunteers for the school in some capacity. And providing parents with information about the fundraiser helps gain support for the event.

“I think the key is that everybody has a good understanding of how their dollars are being spent. In our case, when parents have that information, our experience has been that they step right up and help make things happen,” Villegas says.

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**Jean Joachim**, author of *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Ultimate School Fund-Raising Book*

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**Denise McGloughlin**, principal of Lone Mountain Elementary

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**Maggie Villegas, principal of Arroyo Elementary**

The school began fundraising for SMART Board interactive whiteboards two years ago, after Villegas' brother, also an educator, introduced her to them. Arroyo Elementary hosted an open house where parents could come and see a SMART Board interactive whiteboard, and purchase low-cost raffle tickets. Various businesses in the community donated items to raffle off. The event was a success, and combined with a spring golf tournament, the school had raised the money to reach their goal – a SMART Board interactive whiteboard in every classroom.

The entire community came together for the elementary school's interactive whiteboard fundraiser. When Villegas sees students using the SMART Board interactive whiteboards, she can't help but think, "without those great efforts of everyone contributing, it couldn't have happened."

Both Villegas and McGloughlin recognize the hard work of the school's volunteers and show their gratitude. McGloughlin says the school has a volunteer parking spot of the month and a volunteer appreciation breakfast. Villegas mentions her school's volunteers in a weekly bulletin, and she also presents volunteer awards.

### Looking for opportunity

Involving the outside community can be beneficial to your events as well. P.S. 87 went to many local businesses to generate support, such as Barnes & Noble®.

"One woman in our community got Barnes & Noble to have a P.S. 87 school night there. We got a lot of publicity and brought parents and everyone there. Barnes & Noble designated three registers for P.S. 87, and we got 10 percent of the take from those three registers for that evening. We made \$10,000 one night," says Joachim.

Villegas believes that her school having sponsorship from the businesses in Santa Ana creates strong relationships, and benefits both the businesses and the school.

"We are a small tight-knit community, so it's great for the businesses to have a chance to show such a wide audience of people that they are in support of our schools. At the same time, they obviously have products that are of interest to us as well, so it's a benefit, I think, for both ends."

### Focusing your efforts

For schools new to fundraising, McGloughlin says that starting slow is the best approach. "Take it slow. Don't overwhelm your parents with fundraisers. Find one or two big things that are going to bring in the bucks for you, and just don't do a lot."

Both Arroyo Elementary and Lone Mountain Elementary try to limit the number of fundraising events they have. The money from a couple of large fundraisers is enough to support their education goals for the year.

Joachim says that you must remember your reasons for fundraising and count every success you have. "Don't be discouraged. Whatever you do, if you are a few dollars ahead from when you started, that's a success. And every event you do, you learn how you could do it better. Keep trying new things, and be cheerful about it. Have fun, have a good time! Don't let it become too serious. You do the best you can, and it's all about the kids, basically. Know that their education is important enough to spend time doing things for the school."