



Fundraising Guide: Schools

Tips and tricks to ace your upcoming fundraising events and efforts

Over the past year, in particular, educators like you have demonstrated time and again how vital you are to your communities and students. You are a source of safe routine, needed social and emotional support, and in some cases, their only dependable meal. Thank you for all you do!

There is no doubt you and your peers have been stretched to the absolute limit. We know. There are critical resources that are on the chopping block because funding is being stretched too thin.

Fundraising during this time may have been pushed down on the priority list. But, did you know many schools have truly had success in achieving their fundraising goals?

This guide highlights elements you could add to raise more critical funds, ways to engage your donors, real life examples to emulate, and tips for your planning. There are creative things you can implement now to grow your reach and hit your goals.

All of the resources shared - blogs for further reading, webinar recordings, and more are indexed at the end, for your reference.

GiveSmart's mission is to help nonprofits reach their fundraising goals while creating an engaging, exciting, and positive giving experience for their donors. All. Year. Round. For more on GiveSmart, [visit here](#).

As it pertains to your fundraising plan, is your organization...

- ☐ Sticking with what we've always done & how we've done it
- ☐ Expanding fundraising with new campaigns we've ironed out
- ☐ Exploring new giving opportunities and looking for new ideas
- ☐ Feeling uncertain on what direction we are taking

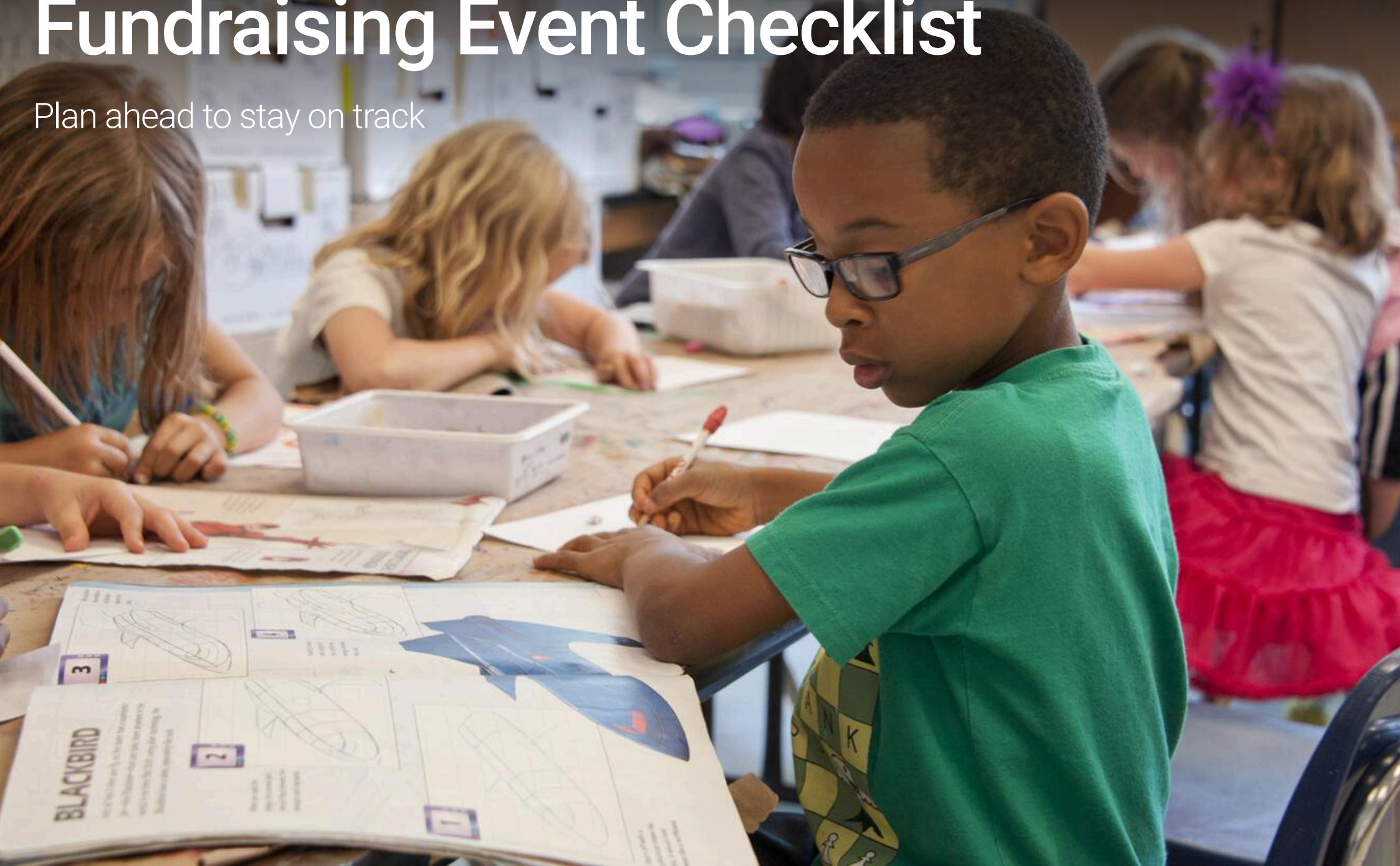
See results

"Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."

—Albert Einstein

Fundraising Event Checklist

Plan ahead to stay on track



3 Months

- Pick a venue
- Determine seating/table availability and sponsorship opportunities
- Prepare a program agenda for the event
- Create an appeal video to show your guests how their donations will make a difference – reserve AV equipment as needed
- Finalize your auction items and have some fun promoting them on social media, in email campaigns

and on your website

- Send your special guests a personalized invitation – from your biggest donors to your speakers to your board of directors, a personalized invitation will go a long way
- Put together a committee
- [GiveSmart](#) allows you to sell tickets and sponsorships from the same site that hosts your auction and collects donations, streamlining your finances

1 Month

- Pick a theme – create a printed brochure and event signage to match the invitation
- Bundle your silent auction items into themed baskets, and have fun coming up with clever names for each (ex: Movies, to match event theme, etc.)
- Begin selling tickets

2 Weeks

- Set up [online auction](#) registration and ticketing, if applicable
- Reach out to local media sources to continue promoting the event
- [Segment](#) your donor communications
- Do a “run-through” with all of your volunteers and employees

Post Event

- Gather in-kind donations
- Send event details and itinerary to guests
- Finalize logistics for the run of show
- Promote and build excitement about the event on social media
- Ask local media to repost and share campaign live, if possible
- Plan for the worst; have a back-up plan in case of emergency

Exams can sneak up on you, and so can your next fundraiser! The GiveSmart team prepared an event study guide to help you remember everything you'll need to get an A+ on your school's fundraising events!

GiveSmart can help you with your campaign by managing your ticketing, online auctions, and donation processing. We also feature peer to peer, recurring donation, merchandise store, and other fundraising elements to help you reach your goals!

Go Big or Go Home



There's no better way to get in the spirit of raising funds for your school than to host your event right on campus! You can show off new school features and play up the nostalgic feeling among alumni and current/past parents that might motivate them to give a little more than planned.

The necessities

- **Caterer:** This is one of the most important vendors when holding an event on-campus. Finding a caterer that will also provide servers (if a plated dinner) would make your work easier.
- **Bar services:** Your donors will be expecting to have something to drink – both alcoholic and nonalcoholic – at your event.
- **Florist/Decor:** Flowers are the traditional centerpieces used at gala dinners, but buying items that you can reuse, such as decorative lanterns or vases with floating candles, would save you money in the long run. Another option is to prepare to auction or raffle off the centerpieces!
- **DJ/Band:** Keep your guests entertained and the atmosphere up.

- **Photographer:** Whether it's a staff member or a professional photographer, you'll want to make sure someone is there solely to capture pictures of the event.
- **Designer/Printer:** To design and print everything from your invitations to your event signage.
- **Mobile Technology:** Offer an easy way for everyone to support you from anywhere. Contact GiveSmart for more information!

Fun additions

- **Servers:** If the caterer does not provide servers, you may want to hire a company who will do so. To save on cost, student volunteers are always a great route.
- **Lighting:** Set the mood by renting an up-lighting system. This will help transform your gym or cafeteria.
- **AV team:** If you don't have volunteers or staff to help with your audio and visual needs, hiring a company will help make your event go off without a hitch.
- **Room block at a local hotel:** If you know people will be traveling for your event (i.e. reunions), book a block of rooms at a local hotel, and provide a transportation option to and from.



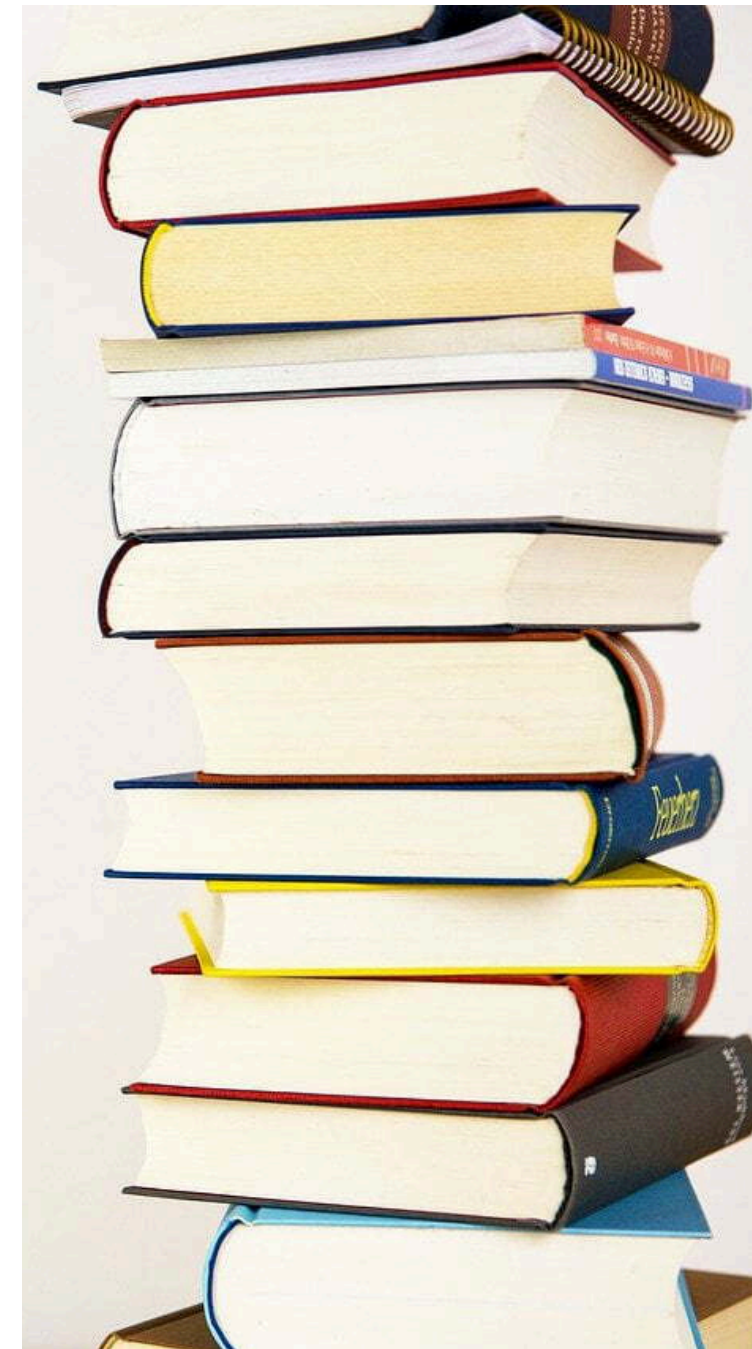
Unique Items for School Auctions

Very specific groups of people attend school fundraisers and bid on their auction items. It's a good idea to pinpoint items that will entice these groups, which include parents, teachers, alumni and members of the community at large. Our fundraising experts have put together a list of items that have performed well at school events.

- Prime Parking Spot: Parking close is a commodity for most schools who have limited parking spaces for students and/or faculty.
- VIP Pickup Pass: Being treated like a VIP for the day or year is something worth bidding on for parents and students alike.
- Pre-Planned Parties: A class party is one of more exciting parts of school that students look forward to and win-ning one in an auction makes for a fun way to reward fundraising.
- Student Artwork: Parents love to display their kids' artwork. Make this an instant buy item or part of your silent auction.
- Bikes (for all ages): Promotes healthy activity and being outdoors, two things schools are

constantly trying to find a way to promote more.

- [Sign-up parties](#): Sign up parties are instant buy items that generate a lot of interest! From spa days for moms to golf outings for dads to pool parties for students, sign-up parties are some of the most popular items we've seen.
- Teacher's Day Off: Bid to help your favorite teacher get an extra day off.
- Dinner with the Principal or President: Instead of being sent to the Principal's Office for some type of misbehavior, your family can join the Principal of your school for a fun meal.
- Dress Down Days: Schools with uniform requirements can let parents bid on a dress down day for their children.
- Front Row for School Play/Concert/etc. Getting the front row is always an experience, especially if a parent's child is the star in the play.
- Principal for a Day: Give a student the chance to spend the day in the principal's office – and not because they're in trouble.
- Experience with Favorite Teacher: Ask your teachers to come up with an activity – like a



pizza party or after-school gym class –that parents can bid on for their children.

- Graduation Package: Anything that could come in handy for graduation day, from front-row seats, a premium parking pass, free cap and gown, or even a coupon for a hair salon so the graduate can look their best on their big day.
- Major sports tickets: These always do well! Not only will this appeal to all of your event attendees, but parents love spending money on their kids, and this is a great family activity.
- School Sports Package: A package with school spirit wear, season passes to football and basketball games, and more!

Curious as to which items perform the best in your region? We looked at LOTS of data and broke it down.

**Ultimate Silent Auction
Study**

Four Tips for Your Auction and Fund-The-Need



These four tips might feel like cheating, but we can promise that they won't get you in trouble. Instead, they'll help ensure your event runs smoothly and that you "pass" with flying colors.

1. Get pledges for bigger donations before the event

Your fund-the-need can be the most profitable part of your event if you set it up properly. It's ok to approach your biggest donors beforehand to let them know you're planning a fund-the-need, and see if they would be willing to pledge an amount to donate that night. You'll have a good idea of which price point would be a good place to start (i.e. if someone pledges \$10,000, you know it's safe to start there). Knowing that you're going to get that donation will make you feel more confident. Their donation might even inspire others to give at the same level.

Looking to refine your corporate giving? Check out GiveSmart's Corporate Donation Guide.

2. Get your donors excited about the fund-the-need

Paddle Raise: Use peer pressure to your advantage. When guests see others at their table raising their paddle it can entice them to do the same. You can even create a competition to see which table has the highest percentage of participation.

Electronic Donation: GiveSmart can make your life simple by sending out a text message with a link to your donation levels. Have your auctioneer encourage guests to click through the link on their phone and donate.

3. Offer live auction items to the top two bidders

Some items, like dinner with your school's Principal or President, are easy to duplicate. If there are two individuals willing to pay \$2,000 for the chance to dine with the head of your school, why turn one down? Determine these items in advance and play it by ear the night of the event. If there's enough interest, give the item away twice. Instruct the auctioneer to ask the runner up if they will pay their highest bid

amount for the same prize.

4. Be creative and specific

Adding more pictures, details and descriptive language will entice your guests to bid on that item. Spending an extra five minutes of choosing a fun title and writing creative copy could be the difference between making \$200 and \$700.

How To Incorporate Students in Your Fundraiser

Arguably, your best ambassadors are your students. You can tell your donors that your students are the best as often as you want, but they're not going to believe you unless they can see it for themselves. Incorporating your students into your fundraising events is a great way to show your donors that their investment is worth it.

- Musicians: Set the right mood. Have members of your school orchestra play during your dinner or cocktail hour.
- Speakers: Putting a well-spoken student in front of donors is the best way to show your guests how their donation will make a difference. If proceeds from your event will fund a student scholarship, have a student recipient speak about how it made a difference for them and their family. If it's for a new school gym, have an athlete share how it will impact them.
- Technology assistance: Place your students around the venue to help donors who aren't the most tech-savvy. They can help the GiveSmart staff show your guests how to bid on items. Guests will be impressed by their

knowledge and love the chance to talk to some of the students.

- Coat check: Working the coat check station is an easy job for students. It's also an easy way for your donors and students to interact.
- Photographer: Whether it's a staff member or a professional photographer, you'll want to make sure someone is there solely to capture pictures of the event.
- Raffle sales: Have your students walk around the event to sell any raffle items (tickets, heads or tails, etc.). This is an easy way to give your donors the chance to ask questions and learn more about the school through the eyes of the students.
- Auction off student artwork: Place members of your golf team on a designated hole, where guests can play against them for a fee for the chance to win a special prize (i.e. free raffle tickets). You can even have them act as a caddy.



How To Re-Engage Your Alumni

Keep them in the loop

Social media is one of the easiest ways to share updates about your school with alumni and community. Post about sports teams, upcoming theater and music productions, outstanding academic achievements, robot-ics competitions, math league, debate club, favorite teacher's offering new courses, etc. Are you students producing photography and videos? Ask permission to post their work, tag them on Instagram, and share on Facebook. Sharing and cross tagging will help build followers and extend your online presence.

Acknowledge success after graduation

You want your alumni to continue to care about your school once they graduate, so you should continue to care about them. From sharing articles and congratulating alumni on social media or in your newsletter to mailing personal, handwritten notes from the development office and/or principal/president, there are a ton of ways to acknowledge their accomplishments. Think outside the box! Invite successful alumni back to campus to speak to your students or put

an ad in a program book if an alumnus is going to be honored at an event.

Actively seek and listen

Let your alumni know you hear them: respond to comments on social media, ask for feedback after events, reply to emails, ask them to participate in surveys. This shows alumni they are being included in decisions, and that their opinions are taken into consideration when spending donated dollars. Open lines of communication are imperative to continue growing.

Invite to FUN-raisers

Face-to-face interactions are still the best way to engage alumni, despite the internet's sweeping reach. Bring alumni back to campus with sports nights, career days, art shows, theater productions, concerts, reunions, or happy hours. It's important to keep these events social with a focus on community versus fundraising. Perhaps you charge a small cover for the happy hour, tickets to the concerts, or entrance fees to student shows. Donation boxes are also handy at these events so that you don't

miss an opportunity to collect a donation. Keep the donation boxes in a highly visible location, such as by the ticket window, on the bar, or at the exit.

For more on connecting with your donors online, [check out this webinar](#) on cultivating and maintaining donor relationships.



LOVE TO
LEARN

Keep Them Hooked

Shadow days

Getting out into the field is the best way for students—high school and college – to learn about potential careers and to connect with alumni. It sets a foundation for potential mentorships and it keeps alumni invested with current students.

Tips:

Be selective

The students who shadow alumni should be a good representation of your school and willing to learn. If you have student ambassadors they would be a good place to test the program to start.

Keep it exciting

Partner alumni and students who express similar interests. Survey students to learn about what sort of jobs they're interested in shadowing, and also provide options they may not have thought of. If students are not interested the program will not sustain.

Keep it short

It's important to be respectful of alumni's time,

so keep the shadowing to two hours. From here, it's up to the discretion of the alumni and students if they want to make shadowing a regular occurrence, or perhaps even an internship!

Organized trips

If your school offers travel opportunities to students, why not organize similar trips for alumni? This is a great way for alumni to reconnect, or meet for the first time, over a common interest and alma mater. These trips can be anything from theater and art in New York City, fishing off the coast of Florida, wine tasting in Sonoma, golfing in Scotland, or studying Renaissance art in Florence, Italy.

Stay in touch

Send monthly e-newsletters or have current students work on a quarterly magazine. It's important to share schools news with current students, the surrounding community, and alumni. You can use these publications to recognize success milestones, life events, publicize upcoming events, encourage sign ups for trips, share who made the Dean's List, and

more.

Success Stories

Read on for examples of successful campaigns.



Mabry Elementary PTA

Mabry Elementary PTA took their annual wine tasting virtual, and they for sure centered around a theme of hope during the extended uncertainty that was 2020.

By creating a hybrid experience of sorts -- a virtual program with an "in-person" wine element, they were able to keep their traditions and the fun alive. Guests are able to have at home, together but apart experience.

Ticket tiers:

Large Ticket: \$75 - 3 bottles of wine and an invitation to the virtual wine tasting.

Small Ticket: \$100 - 3 bottles of wine plus a cheese and cracker sample plate and a wine tasting.

All of your donations, your support and making the glass more than half full

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There is something for everyone! Bid high and often... Buy items and support Mabry Elementary PTA. Join us for an evening lesson on 'Old World vs New World' wines including tastings of Champagne and a comparison of a Bordeaux and a California Cabernet.

Online Auction Schedule:

October 26th - Donated Items

November 2nd - Classroom Baskets and Mabry Experiences

Start bidding: Enjoy your kids classroom baskets, Mabry experiences and donated items from golf getaway weekends to local fitness venues to local date night out.

St. Joseph Regional High School

By utilizing donation management software, St. Joseph Regional High School was able to keep up the momentum with their Annual Day of Giving.

They have challenges throughout the day - challenges to alumni classes, enough donations to get a match, etc - and because each were unlocked, they got a day off of school. Because they kept their traditions alive, they are setup for continued success.

[LATE](#) at the top of the page or use the Challenge link to SJR's 5th Annual Day of Giving. Thank you!

Now that tuition covers just 85% of the cost to educate a student at SJR, Challenge Gifts will help bridge that gap and allow us to continue to provide education for our Green Knights.

DONOR BOARD

Tremendous support has seen 832 donations, totalling \$201,613 in just 24 (eh) hours!

Congratulations and THANK YOU!

Challenge Gifts were unlocked and, per Mr. Bruno's decree, there will be no school at SJR on Fri, May 24.

Hosted By



Bishop O'Gorman Catholic Schools

A "Donate from every State" challenge is a GREAT way to engage supporters, former parents, alumni, and more from all over to support your school. The goal of the challenge is to get at least one donation from every state.

The key to success is to update your donor list and social media throughout the challenge period with updates, states your missing, and more. Make it even more fun by having "Champions" for your cause who try to fill their own maps!



Donate From Every State!

The Bob Burns Dakota Bowl has been an O'G tradition for 42 years! This event supports all eight of our Bishop O'Gorman Catholic Schools and staff. Help keep this tradition alive and donate now!

Due to limited attendance at the game, we are extending our fundraising efforts with a Donate From Every State campaign. We are asking our alumni and supporters to donate from all across the country in support of the Knights

<input type="button" value="\$25"/>	<input type="button" value="\$50"/>	<input type="button" value="\$100"/>
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<input type="text" value="Other"/>		

German International School Chicago

Many nonprofit organizations are successful at getting donors to contribute to their causes — the first time. The challenge is to get them to open their wallets on an ongoing basis for recurring donations.

People who give a second and subsequent time tend to increase their donation amounts.

[Recurring donors give 42% more per year than those who make a one-time gift.](#)

For more on *How to increase recurring donations*, please [visit the GiveSmart blog](#).



[Donate Now](#)

Your Gift Means So Much.

As an independent, nonprofit school, we rely on charitable donations to help us meet our mission of providing our students with a rigorous world-class dual-language education in a supportive and individualized learning environment. This year, we are coming together as a community to tackle the challenges our new normal has created, and ensuring we can continue to safely provide our students with a world class education. The GISC Annual Fund will provide the critical revenue support needed to meet this moment.

How would you like to donate?

One-Time

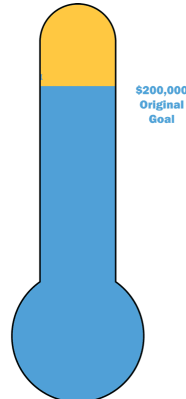
Monthly

Boston Arts Academy



Having a variety of giving levels available to donors allows for increased engagement opportunities. This virtual campaign demonstrates what each giving level allows the school to do - from providing for students' needs, all the way up to establishing a scholarship.

\$250,000 Goal



\$275,611

Total Raised

\$5,000 Community with Social Responsibility Sponsor

Benefits Highlights:

Acknowledgment during BAA's virtual graduation celebration on June 8, 2020
Opportunity to establish a named scholarship

\$2,500 Artist-Scholar Sponsor

Benefits Highlights:

Dedicated social media promotion
Opportunity to establish a named scholarship

\$1,000 Citizen Sponsor

Benefits Highlights:

Opportunity to establish a named scholarship

Gifts for Urgent Student Needs & Milestone Celebrations

\$2,500 Provides a full technology pack to a graduating student.

\$1,500 Pays for a starter Mac laptop for a graduating student.

\$1,000 Funds a student's college deposit.

\$500 Provides a care package that will be distributed to each Class of 2020 student.

\$100 Provides a BAA yearbook to one graduating senior.
Each member of the Class of 2020 will receive a yearbook.

\$20 Supports a general scholarship fund for graduating seniors.

Brookwood School

Brookwood *love* FUND

The 2020 - 2021 school year is full of a great deal of uncertainty and additional costs, and Brookwood School did a special fundraising campaign to ensure needed resources could be sustained and families supported.

Think about what your school could use specified funding for -- a program, extra curricular activities, unexpected expenses, and more.



TOGETHER, WE HAVE RAISED

\$64,596.21

FOR THE BROOKWOOD LOVE FUND



The **Brookwood Love Fund** is an emergency fund, established in response to the unexpected needs of our families and our school during this challenging time, will help support and retain our current families as well as provide tools and resources for our talented faculty as they develop strong curricular programs for our students. This Fund is our community's way of supporting the three things that matter most to Brookwood: **families, teachers, and programs.**

We ask all members of our community to consider how they want to participate in a way that is meaningful to them. Our collective generosity will make Brookwood stronger as we face the future together.



Index

Hopefully, the wheels are turning, and you are thinking of new, engaging ways you can fundraise in support of your mission. We shared a lot throughout the guide, and it is all indexed here (as well as some additional resources), for your reference.

Webinars

- [*Connect Online Today: Cultivating and Maintaining Authentic Donor Relationships*](#) > How to engage your alumni

Blogs

- [*Corporate Donation Guide*](#)
- [*Harnessing the power of social media*](#)
- [*How nonprofits can use social media insights*](#)
- [*Tips for emailing your donors*](#)
- [*How to increase recurring donations*](#) > Success Stories

White Papers

- [*Donor Segmentation Guide*](#)
- [*Ultimate Silent Auction Study*](#) > Unique Items for School Auctions

Articles

- [*Which fundraising event is right for your organization?*](#) > Success Stories

Fundraising Examples

- [*Online and Virtual Event Success Stories*](#)

Technology

- [*GiveSmart*](#)
- [*Mobile Bidding*](#)
- [*Online Donations*](#)
- [*Silent Auction*](#)
- [*Ticketing*](#)

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