

SCHOOLS GROW INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT ON FUNDRAISING

Many principals experience fundraising fatigue, but rely more than ever on the revenue

ALEXANDRIA, VA—March 29, 2007—Rising operating costs, shrinking budgets, and enrollment booms have left many schools increasingly dependent on fundraising. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) recently conducted a nationwide survey of more than 1,000 K-8 principals on the value of fundraising. The surveyed principals hail from low to high socioeconomic areas in urban, rural, and suburban schools in every state and the District of Columbia.

Principals were asked how and why they hold fundraisers, and almost all (94%) said they rely on fundraisers to supplement monies received from district, state, and federal sources. The fundraising revenue is used to pay for classroom equipment and supplies, field trips, and playground equipment, among other items.

“For many principals, school fundraising provides a means to an end,” says NAESP’s executive director, Vincent L. Ferrandino. “The revenue that’s generated from fundraisers provides them with sorely needed resources for their students and teachers.”

The most common yearlong fundraising methods are: collecting food box tops and labels (63%), retail store affiliations (42%), supermarket receipts (25%), and sales from the school store (21%).

Eighty-five percent of the principals who responded have seen an increased need for schoolwide fundraisers within the last decade; 56 percent have concerns about this increase; and 64 percent would stop fundraising if they could. Many believe fundraisers have become too much of a distraction to the school’s instructional day. A common theme in many of the principals’ comments is that fundraisers place too much pressure on young children to sell products and can also be burdensome to teachers, parents, and community members.

“Until our schools begin receiving the appropriate funding necessary to purchase these resources, which in many cases are very basic items that all schools should have, we will continue to see an increase in the number of fundraisers,” says Ferrandino.

One principal who responded to the survey worried about the impact on families. “More and more, we are required to raise funds on our own to support our schools and this creates a huge inequity between the haves and have nots.” Another noted that schools should focus on creating more business development and partnerships, not more fundraisers. While one principal felt they were good for school spirit, she worried if holding them took away from the focus on academic instruction; another believed that it did “take away from the real business of education—teaching children.”

Nevertheless, 87 percent of the principals admit that there is a valuable return on investment from holding fundraisers and 76 percent are planning to conduct at least one to five fundraisers for the 2007-08 school year.

Other notable findings:

- In 67 percent of the schools, PTAs/PTOs are responsible for fundraising.
- Thirty-five percent report that their school’s average annual earnings from fundraisers are between \$10,000-25,000. Although a much smaller percentage, 3 percent have seen average annual earnings from fundraising exceed \$75,000.
- Twenty percent hold 5-10 fundraisers a year; and 3 percent hold 10-15.

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Established in 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) serves 30,000 elementary and middle school principals in the United States, Canada, and overseas. NAESP leads in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children.