

# communicator

The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

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### Special Insert:

Be a Friend of the NAESP Foundation

Check Out NAESP's Newest Member Benefit

## Fundraisers Affected by Slumping Economy

**E**conomic uncertainty has individuals all over the country, and abroad, tightening their purse strings, which can have a significant impact on school fundraisers and the programs supported by them. Principals, PTAs, and PTOs are already reporting lower-than-expected fundraising sales or anticipate marked decreases in fundraising revenue as a result of the current economic crisis.

According to a fundraising survey conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals in 2007, 76 percent of schools surveyed hold one to five fundraisers per year, and one in five schools reaches out to its families and communities up to 10 times annually. Given the fact that this time of year is when gift wrap sales and holiday bazaars abound, schools face an uphill battle to match the sales they reached just a year ago through the very same fundraisers.

NAESP's survey also found that 85 percent of responding principals noted an increased need for school-wide fundraisers within the past decade and 56 percent have concerns about this increase. This concern is likely to intensify, if it hasn't already, as principals confront the need for more fundraisers in a time of economic turmoil. In 2007, 35 percent of responding principals reported annual revenue of \$10,000 to \$25,000 from school fundraisers; determining how much of that revenue these

schools will earn in the coming year is anyone's guess.

"Our fundraising efforts have shown a significant decrease, including sales of school pictures, [at the] book fair, and general donations," said Kathleen Petersen, principal of Santa Clara Elementary School in Utah. "We recently canceled a fundraiser at the request of parents."

Petersen isn't the only one forced to cancel events. The Springfield



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Principals find that individuals aren't giving as much toward school fundraisers as they used to because of tough economic times.

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## Fundraising

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School District in Illinois called off its casino night fundraiser in October because fewer than 100 of the \$25 tickets were sold in advance of the event. The goal was to sell at least 250 tickets.

Principal Sandy Kalin anticipates about a 25 percent decrease in revenue from fundraising at Bethel Lutheran School in St. Louis. "Families are more reluctant to participate in fundraisers because of the uncertainty of the economy," she said. It's gotten so bad for the school's Parent Teacher League (PTL) that it is difficult to even find volunteers to join the league because "parents do not want to ask other parents to participate in fundraisers," Kalin explained, adding, "They do not want to be committed to raising a specific amount of money."

### Consequences

Schools aren't just up against lower fundraiser sales these days, they also must contend with a consequence of the housing/mortgage

crisis: As the values of homes have decreased, so has property tax revenue, a portion of which is allocated to school districts.

Considering the current state of circumstances, principals must find alternative means to fund the projects and programs supported by such monies. To make up the difference in anticipated funds, Petersen said, "We will have to cut programs."

Texas principal Elena C. Hines said that as a result of a projected decrease in her school's major fundraiser, "We will plan a more conservative budget and have asked the committee heads to see where they can trim their budgets for next year without eliminating programs."

The NAESP study found that principals rely heavily on fundraising revenue to purchase classroom equipment and supplies, field trips, and playground equipment, among other items.

At Bethel School, money raised by the PTL goes toward classroom supplies, as well as the school's Thanksgiving feast, Christmas party, and end-of-year picnic, Kalin explained. "These items may have to be elimi-

nated if we cannot raise enough funds during the remainder of the year," she said.

### Purposeful Events

"In today's economic climate, it's more important than ever to do a few and do them well when it comes to school fundraising," said Jon Krueger, general manager for the Association of Fund-Raising Distributors & Suppliers (AFRDS).

Kansas principal Ed Albert's school appears to be in line with Krueger's suggestion. "We don't have a group of fundraisers. We focus on one per year, which is our carnival in the spring," Albert said. "I do not expect a big drop in funding from fundraising."

According to research conducted last year by AFRDS, the majority of parent groups at elementary schools say selling popular consumer items is the most profitable schoolwide fundraiser. To be most successful, Krueger suggests that "schools and school groups limit the total number of school fundraisers and instead focus on the programs that generate the most money and require the fewest volunteers."

—Vanessa St. Gerard



## Convention Update: Housing Registration Opens; Speakers Added

Convention housing registration is officially open! Find a great deal at a number of New Orleans hotels for your stay during NAESP's 88th Annual Convention and Exposition, April 2-6, 2009. Book now and register to take advantage of early-bird registration discounts!

The convention program is also filling up with a number of great Author Presenters and Distinguished Lecturers, including leadership coach Elle Allison, curriculum design expert Lynn Erickson, reading specialist Donalyn Miller, and at-risk children's advocate Stephen Peters. Read the full list of confirmed speakers, as well as their bios, at NAESP's convention Web site.

These and other important convention updates can be found at [www.naesp.org/annual\\_convention.aspx](http://www.naesp.org/annual_convention.aspx). The site is updated regularly, so make sure to check back often for the latest information about what we have in store for you in New Orleans in April.