Principal Tool Kit
Introduction

We've designed this tool kit for public school principals who want to learn more about DonorsChoose and encourage their teachers to take full advantage of our platform.

You’ll find information about DonorsChoose practices and policies, answers to frequently asked questions, examples of ways leaders like you have helped their teachers benefit, and training materials for your teachers.

We’re committed to making it as easy as possible for public school teachers to get resources for their classroom, and we hope that this information empowers you to champion DonorsChoose at your school.
About NASSP
The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student’s potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council.
About DonorsChoose

Already well-versed about DonorsChoose? Skip ahead to learn best practices directly from principals or four easy actions that will set your teachers up for success!
Teachers Ask. We Deliver.

Education takes a community, and DonorsChoose is ready to work with your school, teachers, and advisers to get the additional materials and supplies that help students thrive. DonorsChoose is a 501(c)3 public charity founded by a Bronx public high school teacher. Since 2000, we've been trusted by teachers, donors, and school administrators across the country.

Through our platform, teachers and advisers request the exact materials and experiences they know will bring learning to life for their students. For some, that means some extra paper and pencils. Others want to expand their classroom libraries, sports teams, extracurricular activities, or student orchestras. Many dream even bigger, proposing robot kits for their students, flexible seating furniture for their classrooms, and professional development opportunities to further their teaching.
Teachers at verified schools request specific items.

We vet every single project that teachers post.

Donors and foundations contribute to these requests.

We order the items and ship them to the school.

We notify the school in advance of every shipment.
590,000 classrooms have had projects funded

$990,000,000 has been given to support classroom projects

40,000,000 students have benefitted from DonorsChoose projects

11,000 public school districts have received resources through DonorsChoose

84% of America’s public schools have had at least one teacher create a project

National Fundraising, Local Impact

Unlike any other education funding platform, 75% of the dollars given to classrooms each year come from people and organizations outside of educators’ personal networks, making our site especially useful for educators in low-income communities.

Since our founding, our corporate and foundation partners have given more than $450 million to support classrooms. And by engaging a community of donors passionate about supporting classrooms, we connect educators with individuals they would never otherwise meet through traditional fundraising efforts.
DonorsChoose is an **accountable, transparent** way for teachers to get funding for classroom needs and for projects that **bring learning to life.**

*Arne Duncan*
Former U.S. Secretary of Education
Most schools remain under-resourced to meet the learning goals to which students aspire, but the success of DonorsChoose reminds us that a well of public generosity is available for projects that are well-articulated and connected with larger goals.

JoAnn Bartoletti
Executive Director, NASSP
Crowdfunding
Best Practices
What Is Crowdfunding?

Public schools have long relied on donations to enrich students’ academic experience and to fund materials that system budgets cannot always afford.

Historically, schools have raised such donations from the local community, often through PTO/PTA fundraisers. In many instances, teachers also spend their own money (on average $500 per year) on school supplies.

Today, online crowdfunding makes it possible for schools to raise more money for classroom resources regardless of the size of their PTO/PTA.
Why We’re the Leading Crowdfunding Site for K–12 Education

Plenty of websites let educators raise money from their local networks. But on DonorsChoose, teachers, librarians, and school counselors and therapists can reliably get funding from outside their personal community. Our network of over 4 million donors loves to support educators they’ve never met.

As the largest crowdfunding site dedicated to public schools, DonorsChoose meets a singularly high standard of transparency, accountability, and security. We send materials, not cash, to teachers and advisers, and we always keep principals in the loop.
Why We’re the Leading Crowdfunding Site for K–12 Education

Our dedication to efficacy and transparency has earned us the highest possible rating from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent charity evaluator, for 13 years straight. This achievement is held by fewer than 1% of nonprofits.
COVID-19 Response

Distance Learning Projects
Coronavirus threatens to further widen educational inequity in America. In an effort to help teachers and students during this unprecedented time, DonorsChoose has established a way to let teachers request resources for shipment to an address of their choosing—whether that’s to the teacher’s home, a central district office, or directly to a student.

**Distance Learning Projects**

- **97%** of teachers are worried that coronavirus will negatively impact their students’ learning.
- **68%** of students lack sufficient resources to learn from home while schools are closed, as estimated by our surveyed teachers.
- **92%** of teachers do not have the resources to run a remote learning program.
Supporting Distance Learning During COVID-19

The 2020–21 school year holds many unknowns for teachers and students alike. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, many schools will remain closed, others will use a “hybrid” schedule of distance and in-person learning, and some schools will reopen completely. Over the past months, our team has devised a way to help teachers and students get the resources they need, no matter where they are.

Traditionally, when a project request was fully funded, we would purchase and ship materials directly to the verified school address. Now, teachers verify their teaching status with a school email address and can select the shipping address that works best for them at completion of the project—whether that’s to a central district office, the teacher’s home, or directly to a student.
Principal Power

This upcoming year poses an increased need for resources with limited school budgets to meet them. DonorsChoose can help you get the resources your students need to learn, whether they’re at home or in the classroom.

Beyond helping your school get additional learning supplies, principals can leverage DonorsChoose to:

- Help teachers explore innovative new resources in the classroom
- Offer more professional development opportunities for your teachers
- Make teachers feel engaged in the classroom
- Engage parents and your greater community
- Recover from a schoolwide disaster

The majority of funded teachers say their students are more engaged, happier, and more excited to learn thanks to the supplies they received. In a recent survey of DonorsChoose teachers, 74% said funding received through our platform played a role in their decision to stay in the teaching profession.
Partnering With Your Teachers to Dream Big

Although principals can’t create DonorsChoose projects, any full-time teacher or adviser at a U.S. public school or charter school can. Along with traditional classroom educators, this also includes:

- Librarians and media center specialists
- Guidance counselors and social workers
- National Honor Society and National Student Council advisers
- School nurses

In addition to classroom resources, principals can encourage their staff to create projects that contribute to the broader school community. Some of these such projects include:

- A professional development conference to learn about innovative pedagogy practices
- New volleyball team equipment for the whole school to use
- Travel to a state convention for student council members
- A high-quality MakerBot so students across the school can engage in engineering
Case Study: Filling Funding Gaps and Promoting Equity

Dan Donovan, Principal
Danbury High School, CT

Principal Dan Donovan encourages his teachers to use DonorsChoose to obtain materials and experiences they know their students need to succeed. Since 2007, donors of all stripes have given $270,000 to enhance the instructional program at Danbury High.

Support from the Dalio Foundation and other corporate and foundation partners enable Danbury teachers to get even more out of DonorsChoose. Over the years, Danbury High teachers have used DonorsChoose to support schoolwide initiatives. Through regular professional development sessions and support from school leadership, the math department funded TI-83 calculators, the English department funded docu-cams, and the special education department worked together to fully outfit sensory rooms for over 30 students with special needs in intensive classes. “About 80% of the materials you find in our sensory rooms were obtained through DonorsChoose,” said Principal Donovan.

“DonorsChoose allows us to get materials that we would not be able to get otherwise because of our budget.”

—Dan Donovan, Principal, Danbury High School
Case Study: Collaborating With the Community

Mildred Charley-Green, Principal
Northwood High School, MD

Principal Charley-Greene takes every opportunity to empower and applaud her teachers’ creativity in using DonorsChoose to support Northwood High School’s mission. She works directly with teachers, encouraging project proposals that align with the schoolwide focus on equity, powerful instruction, and shared accountability. She sees DonorsChoose as a learning tool not only for her teachers, but for other principal leaders in her community. By promoting DonorsChoose to other secondary school leaders across her district, Principal Charley-Greene is sharing best practices with her local professional learning community.

“DonorsChoose fulfills those desires that funding hasn’t caught up to yet.”

—Mildred Charley-Green, Principal, Northwood High School
Case Study: Community Partnerships

Mark McHugh, Principal
McClintock Middle School, NC

Principal Mark McHugh credits the school’s strong community partnership, which created McClintock Partners in Education (McPIE), with success on DonorsChoose.

McPIE has been the primary funder for projects ranging from STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) and robotics to family nights for the community. McPIE encourages community members to donate directly through DonorsChoose. To Principal McHugh, using DonorsChoose is the best way to be good stewards of donations received from the community. By tapping into funding opportunities, McPIE is getting more “bang for their buck” and making a larger impact. Principal McHugh shared three tips for principals seeking to leverage DonorsChoose:

1. Work with veteran teachers to train new teachers on how to leverage DonorsChoose to post projects.
2. Encourage teachers to post often and create a funding momentum within your school.
3. Harness outside community support and watch your school’s success take off from there!

“By leveraging DonorsChoose, and taking advantage of match funding from corporations and foundations, we can be better stewards of the donations we receive from the community.”

—Mark McHugh, Principal, McClintock Middle School
DonorsChoose was featured in the December 2019 issue of NASSP’s Principal Leadership Magazine.

Check out the article to learn more about how Principal Joe Simo and school leaders across the country are leveraging crowdfunding to support their teachers and students.
Engaging Your Teachers and Advisers
Four Steps to Best Engage Your Teachers and Advisers

**Step 1**
Host a **staff professional development teacher training**. Have a DonorsChoose teacher expert help run your training and share their firsthand experience.

**Step 2**
While you’re gearing up for the **back-to-school season**, send regular email reminders or include information in your school newsletter so teachers and advisers can take advantage of two of our biggest funding months: **August and September**.

**Step 3**
Let your teachers, media specialists, and advisers know when there are DonorsChoose **match offers and funding opportunities** from our corporate or foundation partners.

**Step 4**
Share the success your teachers and advisers are having at regular staff meetings. Educators are most likely to use the site after seeing how it has supported their colleagues.

*Why wait?* DonorsChoose is open 365 days a year.
Host a Teacher Training

- Training preparation checklist, including follow-up tips
- Google Slides or PowerPoint Slides for training your teachers on how to post a classroom project on DonorsChoose

Leverage Your Staff

Empower other members of your staff to help teachers maximize their participation:

- DonorsChoose veteran teachers can host trainings.
- Your professional development team can keep teachers up to date on match offers and funding opportunities.
- Assistant principals can sign up for notifications when teachers post new projects.
- Professional learning communities and teaching teams can work together to create similar projects for their classrooms.
5 Ways to Harness the Power of DonorsChoose

Principals across the country are collaborating with educators, using DonorsChoose to bolster school initiatives, access new funders, and so much more:

1. **Support Educators, Increase Retention**
2. **Advance School Priorities**
3. **Access a National Network of Funders**
4. **Raise Your School's Profile**
5. **Engage Students**
1. Support Educators, Increase Retention

When educators feel celebrated by their colleagues and administrators, they’re more likely to stay in the teaching profession.

DonorsChoose can be a way to show that support. Almost **three-quarters of our teachers say DonorsChoose played a role in their decision to stay in the teaching profession.**

94% of teachers report their funded projects increased their effectiveness in the classroom.

Hosting a Teacher Training in your district is an easy way to get started. This [training preparation checklist](#) and these [training slides](#) will get teachers up and running on DonorsChoose.

District leaders across the country shared their teachers’ fundraising successes on DonorsChoose last school year. These two posts champion teacher innovation and hustle.
2. Advance District Priorities

You can use DonorsChoose to amplify district initiatives and goals, giving educators an opportunity to think creatively about the supplemental materials that can take their lesson plans—and the district’s priorities—to the next level.

Whether you’re focused on student leadership, working toward 1:1 technology, or looking to expand your extracurricular offerings, you can encourage teachers to create project requests in line with these initiatives.

Atlanta Public Schools
Every Student: College and Career Ready

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) wanted to empower educators working toward the district mission “Every Student: College and Career Ready,” without tapping into district general funds. District leadership and the Office of Partnerships & Development encouraged teachers to create DonorsChoose requests that bolstered the district’s strategic plan through e-blasts, trainings, and social media.

APS uses special revenue from vending machines and employee parking contributions to run a mini-grant program. Educators create DonorsChoose project requests focusing on college and career prep, and the APS team selects winners based on mission alignment, innovation, and demonstration of need. Each winning project receives a $500 donation.
3. Access a National Network of Funders

Unlike any other education funding platform, **75% of the dollars given to classrooms come from people and organizations outside of educators’ personal networks**, making our site especially useful for teachers in low-income communities. Our national corporate and foundation partners include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Google.org, PNC Bank, and Staples. Through DonorsChoose, you can help teachers get extra resources to help their students thrive, regardless of the size of your PTA or the wealth of your local community.

A Nation of Support Recovering From Hurricane Harvey

When Hurricane Harvey destroyed Houston ISD’s Mitchell Elementary School in Texas, district leaders had to act quickly so educators could start the school year with everything they needed.

With the support of district leaders, Mitchell Elementary School staff turned to DonorsChoose. Through our platform, Mitchell educators were connected with donors across the country looking to help.

Throughout the 2017–18 school year, corporations and foundations gave **$9 million to districts in support of disaster recovery**, with citizen donors giving even more.

Rockport-Fulton High School was just one of more than 550 schools to receive funding for disaster recovery projects this year.

“It really pumped up the faculty, and lots of projects posted as a result.”

—Principal Rogers, Rockport-Fulton High School
4. Raise Your District’s Profile

Your educators are always going above and beyond for their students, and using DonorsChoose to get additional classroom resources is just one way they do that.

By showing the public that your educators are working hard to ensure their students have the most learning opportunities possible, you can garner media attention and increase your district’s reputation on local and national levels.

#BestSchoolDay: Turning a National Story Into a Local Achievement

In March 2018, Ripple, a San Francisco-based technology company, donated $29 million to fund every project on our site in a single day. As Ripple’s donation gained national attraction from outlets like The New York Times, so too did the benefitting districts. The DonorsChoose team sent districts detailed impact reports from the day, along with a templated press release, which resulted in dozens of districts—like Charleston County School District and Boston Public Schools—featured in local media outlets across the country.
5. Engage Students

Every class is as different as the students in it. Educators know what will excite their individual students best, whether that’s a new Chromebook, an exciting class trip, or a special STEM project. By empowering educators to think outside the budget, you can help them bring learning to life for their students.

Impact of Gates’s Grants: Academic Achievement and College Readiness

We work with partners who are excited to inspire and support teachers creating innovative classroom solutions. One such partner is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has donated more than $26 million to teachers through DonorsChoose since 2009. The Gates Foundation invited educators to create projects supporting academic achievement and college readiness. In a post-campaign survey, teachers who received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation reported that the Gates-inspired projects had an even greater impact on student outcomes.

- **93%** reported improved cognitive skills
- **92%** reported increased content knowledge
- **91%** reported improved academic behaviors
Signing Up for Notifications
Tools for School Principals

We stand ready to work with your school to ensure you’re always aware of your teachers' use of DonorsChoose!

Get notified the moment any of your teachers posts a project. When a project request is posted, DonorsChoose can email your team, allowing administrators to reach out to teachers directly if revisions are needed. Read more and sign up for these automated emails at www.donorschoose.org/principals.

Receive notifications before materials ship. DonorsChoose notifies each principal by fax whenever materials are shipped to one of their classrooms. If we also have your email address, we can make sure you receive these notifications electronically. Update your contact information in our database at www.donorschoose.org/principals.
How to Talk to Your District Leaders About Crowdfunding

You can be a DonorsChoose trailblazer for your district. We’re here to help make sure district administrators have what they need to understand the benefits of our site and to set all teachers and advisers up for success.

Here are some links you can pass along to your superintendent, grants officer, or technology team so all of the schools in your district can do even more with DonorsChoose:

- DonorsChoose District Partnership Program
- District administrators page
- DonorsChoose 101
- K–12 Crowdfunding best practices
- Controls for school districts
District Partnership Program
DonorsChoose District Partnership Program

This free program allows school district leaders to maximize the DonorsChoose platform for their students' benefit and make it a more intentional part of their district's national philanthropic engagement strategy. Districts of all sizes benefit from the program, including members like Atlanta Public Schools, Austin Independent School District, Baltimore City Public Schools, Compton Unified School District, Hillsborough County Public Schools, and Oklahoma City Public Schools. In total, District Partnership program member districts have raised more than $160 million in resources.
DonorsChoose District Partnership Program Benefits

- **Customized district landing page** to highlight all projects and impact
- **First notice** of funding opportunities to support your district’s students
- Ongoing **communications collaboration**
- **Training resources** for educators
- **In-depth reporting and analysis**
Contact us anytime!

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