Back to School Crowdfunding Toolkit

AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

DonorsChoose.org
Support a classroom. Build a future.
Dear AASA members,

District leaders know better than almost anyone that school system budgets rarely cover everything a school needs.

Eighteen years ago, when I was teaching history in the Bronx, I founded DonorsChoose.org to give educators a way to bring their classroom dreams to life.

Since then, teachers from 11,000 school districts across the country have requested resources on our site. Our community of 3 million individual donors, companies and foundations have donated more than $700 million to classroom projects across the country.

We’ve partnered with AASA to help you tap into this funding.

We hope this Toolkit will inspire you to:

1. **Find out how much your district has raised and sign up for ongoing reporting**
2. **Learn how school district leaders are harnessing DonorsChoose.org to support their district priorities.**

Thank you for reading on!

Charles Best
Founder & CEO
DonorsChoose.org
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How it works

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.
National Fundraising, Local Impact

Unlike any other funding platform, 75% of the dollars given to classroom projects on DonorsChoose.org come from people and organizations outside of teachers’ personal networks, making our site especially useful for teachers in low-income communities.

Our corporate and foundation partners have provided more than $300 million of classroom project funding. And by engaging a community of donors passionate about supporting classrooms, we connect teachers with individuals they would never otherwise meet through traditional fundraising efforts. That’s why Dan Domenech, executive director of the AASA, calls us the “PTA equalizer.”
“DonorsChoose.org is the crowdfunding platform of choice for Atlanta Public Schools—it combines the generosity of our community with education enthusiasts across the country to ensure all our students are college and career ready.”

“DonorsChoose.org helps to fill the financial support gaps to classrooms that public school funding is unable to fill. Teachers love the autonomy to seek out resources for their classrooms or projects they are working on to support student learning.”

“As a district leader, I want my teachers to be able to innovate. DonorsChoose.org helps ensure that they have the classroom resources to do so, while making it easy for people across America to support Philadelphia classrooms.”

“I’m always heartened to see folks from across the country — who don’t personally know our teachers — giving to our district. Not only does it help teachers give more to their students, but it makes teachers feel supported and appreciated.”

Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen
Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools, GA

Dr. William R. Hite
Superintendent, The School District of Philadelphia, PA

Diane Tremblay
District Administrator, Barron Area School District, WI

Dr. Nikki Woodson
Superintendent, MSD Washington Township, IN
Why We’re the Leading Crowdfunding Site for K–12 Education

As the largest crowdfunding site dedicated to public schools, DonorsChoose.org meets a singularly high standard of transparency, accountability and security. We send materials—not cash—to teachers and we always keep principals in the loop.

Our dedication to efficacy and transparency has earned us the highest possible rating from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent charity evaluator for 13 consecutive years. This achievement is held by fewer than 1% of nonprofits.
How We Stack Up To AASA Crowdfunding Best Practices

From transparent reporting to student privacy, our policies are centered on giving district leaders the necessary information and controls to support teachers using our site. We’ve worked with AASA to ensure these policies serve the unique needs of the public schools we support.
## Financial Transparency & Accountability

### Crowdfunding Best Practice

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<th>1. Materials, not cash</th>
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<td>Purchase and send resources directly to verified schools instead of sending cash to teachers.</td>
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<th>2. Transparency at every step</th>
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<td>Publicly display details about each material that was funded and explain fees and overhead costs.</td>
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<th>3. Capture impact</th>
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<td>Require teachers to report how the resources were used in the classroom and how students benefitted.</td>
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### DonorsChoose.org Policy

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<th>✓ Materials, not cash</th>
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<td>Any U.S. public school teacher that works with students at least 75% of the time is eligible to use our site. Once a project is funded, we order the requested items, verify the school’s address, and ship the resources to the school.</td>
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<th>✓ Transparency at every step</th>
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<td>We vet every project teachers create and every project page displays the cost of each material being funded. Donations to DonorsChoose.org overhead are optional.</td>
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<th>✓ Capture impact</th>
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<td>Every donor gets a thank you letter from the teacher, photos from the classroom and a report of how each dollar was spent.</td>
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## Integrity controls

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<th>Crowdfunding Best Practice</th>
<th>DonorsChoose.org Policy</th>
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| **1. School ownership of funded materials**  
Purchase and send resources directly to verified schools instead of sending cash to teachers. | ✔️ **School ownership of funded materials**  
Resources funded through DonorsChoose.org are considered property of the public school. |
| **2. District visibility and reporting**  
Notify principals when items are being shipped to schools in advance of every shipment. We can set up detailed reporting to districts upon request. | ✔️ **District visibility and reporting**  
We alert the principal and other registered teachers at the school in advance of every shipment, and we can set up quarterly reporting for district offices upon request. |
Privacy & Safety

Crowdfunding Best Practice

1. **Student protection**
   Implement mechanisms for protecting student privacy, tailored to the unique needs of public school students.

DonorsChoose.org Policy

- **Student protection**
  We work with safety experts to create strict protective guidelines for projects and student photos, and we ensure our site is free from student-identifying information.
How to Sign Up for District Controls

We stand ready to ensure you are always aware of how educators in your district are using DonorsChoose.org.
Custom Reporting on Your District's Use of DonorsChoose.org

To see the impact of DonorsChoose.org in your district, [sign up here](#) for a free impact report. You can also opt to receive regular reporting on all the projects posted and/or funded in your district, including line-item breakdowns of every material delivered.
Populate Your IT / Technology Guidelines in the DonorsChoose.org System

Whenever any of your teachers creates a request for computers or tablets, we’ll remind them of your district’s technology requirements. Read more about the capabilities and fill out this form to display your district’s technology guidelines in the DonorsChoose.org project creation flow.
Get notified the moment any of your educators posts a project

When a project request is posted, DonorsChoose.org can email your team, allowing administrators to reach out to teachers directly if revisions are needed with plenty of time to make changes before the project appears on our site. Subscribe for updates.
5 Ways to Harness the Power of DonorsChoose.org

District leaders across the country are collaborating with educators, using DonorsChoose.org to bolster district initiatives, access new funders and so much more.

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

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

DonorsChoose.org can be a way to show that support. Almost three-quarters of our teachers say DonorsChoose.org 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 your teachers up and running on DonorsChoose.org.

Superintendent Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen writes letters of congratulations to all teachers who have a funded project, and regularly takes to Twitter to celebrate with them.
Advance District Priorities

You can use DonorsChoose.org 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 towards 1:1 technology or looking to expand your extra curricular 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 wanted to empower educators working towards the district mission “Every Student: College and Career Ready,” without tapping into district general funds. APS Superintendent Dr. Meria J. Carstarphen and the APS Office of Partnerships & Development encouraged teachers to create DonorsChoose.org requests that bolstered the district’s strategic plan through eblasts, trainings and social media.

APS uses special revenue from vending machines and employee parking contributions to run a mini-grant program. Educators create DonorsChoose.org 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.
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 educator’s personal networks**, making our site especially useful for educators in low-income communities. Our national corporate and foundation partners include The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Google.org, PNC Bank, Staples and Target. Through DonorsChoose.org, 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, 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.org. Through our platform, Mitchell educators were connected with donors across the country looking to help.

Throughout the 2017–2018 school year, corporations and foundations gave **$9 million to districts in support of disaster recovery**, with citizen donors giving even more. Mitchell Elementary School was just one of more than 550 schools to receive funding for disaster recovery projects this year.

“There really aren’t words to describe what that feels like. To lose everything, and have people you don’t know willing to help you… it gives you hope.”

—Ms. Wells, Mitchell Elementary

Happy Holiday PWE!
Thank you for your donation allowing us to buy books for our classroom. It’s so nice having a mini library within our own classroom filled with books we actually want to read. I plan on reading all of them! The hurricane has definitely shook up our little town, so your contribution is much appreciated. Thank you so much again!

Sincerely,
Hailey
Raise Your District’s Profile

Your educators are always going above and beyond for their students and using DonorsChoose.org 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.org 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.
Engage Students

Every class is as different as the students in them. Educators know what will excite their individual students best, whether that’s a new YA novel, an exciting class trip or a special art project. By empowering educators to think outside the budget, you can help them to 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, who 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 reporting 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
District Administrators Hub
DonorsChoose.org/administrators

Contact us anytime!

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