

Fundraising for Schools



Fundraising can be
Fun Raising!

Community Nutritionists Council of BC

Fundraising for Schools



Fundraising is more important than ever as schools today face an increasing demand to do more with less. Everything from car washes to bottle drives to lucrative contracts with vending machine companies are used to support school activities. While making money may be the primary goal, it's important to consider what students learn in the process. There is an obvious disconnect between classroom lessons about nutrition and school vending machines filled with chips, candy bars, and pop.

It makes sense to ensure that fundraising activities reflect the values and healthy choices we want for our children. And schools are good places to model healthy attitudes and behaviors.

We developed this booklet to help you choose fundraising activities that support - or at least don't run counter to - healthy living. The activities were chosen to promote healthy food choices, provide opportunities to be active, and/or contribute to community service.

We have included stories from different parts of the province, lessons learned by fundraising groups, and other helpful tips. This is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the subject and we would like to hear about your fundraising successes and challenges. Please note inclusion of an event or product in this handout does not imply endorsement by our organization.

Thanks go to community nutritionists in the previous Boundary Health Unit for *School Fundraising Ideas* (1996), which provided a starting point for this toolkit.

Community Nutritionists Council of BC
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Fundraising with Healthy Food

Experiment in selling healthier foods at a sporting event

-- Mile 108 Elementary School

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) at Mile 108 School decided to try selling healthier foods at the concession for a volleyball tournament. The PAC uses sports events to raise funds and has traditionally sold mostly non-nutritious foods. The plan to sell healthier foods was in keeping with the school's aim to make healthy eating the easy choice for students.

The Hills Health and Guest Ranch donated money to buy the healthy foods, which were then sold at reduced prices.

Products sold:

- Commercially packaged carrots and dip
- Yogurt tubes (which were frozen)
- 100% fruit juice boxes
- Fruit leathers
- Nature Valley granola bars
- Water bottles
- Pizza pretzels

Hot dogs were sold to ensure the PAC raised some money. None of the other usual items such as pop, donuts, and chips were made available for sale.

Many believed that very little would be sold - and at first the skeptics seemed to be proven right. When the children saw the items for sale, there were groans and comments such as "Oh Yuck!"

But as soon as one child bought a frozen yogurt tube, the items started to sell quickly. The pizza pretzels were the first to go (7-dozen), then the yogurt tubes and veggies and dip. Only 6-dozen hotdogs were sold. More water was sold than juice boxes (both costing 50c each). The only items that did not sell well were the granola bars. A total of \$202.00 was raised.

This information was provided by Lauren Bock, a parent at 108 Mile Elementary School and a practicing RDN in 100 Mile House. *For more information call,*
-- Rose Soneff, Community Nutritionist, at (250) 398-4600.



Lessons learned

- Children will buy healthier items if they are the only choices.
- All it takes is one child to get the ball rolling.
- A generous donation allowed the PAC to sell healthy items below cost. They will find out next time whether healthy items sell well if not subsidized.

Challenges of fundraising with food

The profits from selling food door to door or in canteens and cafeterias are important to schools. PACs often worry that they'll make less money selling healthier items that tend to have a lower profit margin than chips, candy bars, and fried and processed foods. Following are some creative ways schools have raised money while reinforcing positive health messages:

Variations on the theme

- Sell nutritious foods door to door. Examples include fresh fruit, dried fruit, trail mix, organic food, and nuts. Rather than having a set price, ask for donations as the Boy Scouts do with their fall apple sales.
- Hold a raffle for gift baskets with different themes, e.g. an Italian basket with ingredients for dinner for 4, plus a red-checked tablecloth, Italian CD, and Italian cookbook).

More tips

- Promote healthy foods with attractive ads and pictures. Let people know the school supports healthy eating.
- When displaying food, put the nutritious foods in front and less nutritious items at the back.
- Offer samples of nutritious items.
- Aim for 80% of foods on the menu to come from the "serve most often" list (see *School Meal Program Guidelines* under Resources).
- Adapt favorites to make them more nutritious, e.g. serve hamburger on a whole-wheat bun with a side of veggie sticks and dip.
- Price nutritious foods attractively (e.g. water, juice, or milk for \$1 per serving versus soda at \$2).
- Offer incentives such as buy 2 and get the 3rd item free.
- For door-to-door items, try to keep the unit price low (one group tried popcorn sales, but the smallest package was \$18).





Fundraising with Non-food Items

Fundraising for a school choir -- Surrey

To raise money for trips, the choir sold hanging flower baskets and bedding plants from a local nursery. They made \$3500 the first year and \$1,200 and \$1,600 during subsequent years. To determine the selling price, the group added their desired profit to the wholesale cost, e.g. to make \$15 on a basket, they sold it for \$25. The plants sold in March and April were still beautiful by October.



Lessons learned

- Despite this being a good fundraiser, the choir switched to selling chocolate-covered almonds. The fundraising group felt selling chocolate-covered almonds was quick and easy and part way through the year they had raised \$6500. They felt better "hitting up" family and friends when the unit price was lower (i.e. \$3 for a box of candy versus \$25 for a hanging basket). The profit margin is 50% on the sale of chocolate-covered almonds. Most sales took place in front of local supermarkets.
- Perhaps they could have offered bedding plants at \$3 each along with the chocolates.

Fundraising for a band program -- Nelson

To raise money for trips, band members sold gift-wrap supplies in time for delivery before Christmas. The student with the highest sales won \$100, which was a good motivator. However, coordinating the orders was a lot of work for the band teacher and this fundraiser has been discontinued.

Last year the band program did not do any fundraising, mainly because of the teachers' job action. The band teacher reports that parents are tired of fundraising and would rather just pay for the trips. Unfortunately, not all families may be able to afford the additional cost of band trips.



Lessons learned

- The band teacher says the best fundraisers have involved connecting with local businesses. In partnership with a local nursery, they sold plants for Mother's Day at \$18-20 and realized a 45% profit. They tried selling boxes of chicken through a wholesaler but that was less successful due to high unit costs.

- The easiest fundraising projects have involved raffles. A local business will provide a piece of electronic equipment (e.g. TV) at a greatly reduced price. Even after paying for the item, they still can make a tidy profit.

*For more information, contact Judy Toews,
Community Nutritionist, at 250 354-6553.*

Challenges of fundraising with non-food items

It is a challenge to ensure that prices for sale items are comparable to store prices, but high enough to reap a reasonable profit. (Tip: Do your own little market survey by first checking out your idea with some potential buyers.)

Variations on the theme

- Cookbook sales: Some companies transcribe, print, and bind cookbooks. The effort and cost involved in doing this in-house is high, so consider going to a recipe book-making company that can provide a format. You'll need enough volunteers to double check recipes before they go to print. Include stories, captions, or pictures to personalize the cookbooks.
- Other items: Reusable lunch bags, student-made calendars, used books, cooking lessons.
- Singing telegrams: Members of the choir (or enthusiastic volunteers) can sell singing telegrams, which work especially well with high school students around Valentine's Day. Or try balloon-o-grams, which students and parents deliver within the community (attach balloons to something heavy to keep them from floating away).
- Raffle gift baskets with different themes: gardening, children/toys, spa, or kitchen. Sell tickets for up to \$2 each. (Check to see whether you need a license to hold a raffle in your community.)
- A Nelson school raised funds with family photos. A photographer came to the school in October and finished photos were ready for gift giving at Christmas. Each family paid a \$10 sitting fee, which was donated to the school. Because more than 30 families participated, the school also won a free camera.

More tips

- Sell quality products - your reputation is on the line!
- Marketing is half the sales job. If you're selling plants, make the posters in the shape of a plant - they're really eye catching!
- Get a fundraising team together and share the workload right from the start.
- Have fun! One mom was "crowned" the sales queen. Or take pictures at key times in the fundraising event - great for next year's publicity!
- Prevent burnout: Don't expect the same volunteer to take the same role every year.





Fundraising with Community Events

Spaghetti dinner fundraiser -- Rosemont Elementary School, Nelson

The PAC of Rosemont School was looking for an innovative way to raise funds to help replace aging playground equipment. Several other schools in the area had organized successful family fundraising dinners, so Rosemont decided to give it a try.

A core group of six parents made up the planning committee. Serious planning began about a month before the event. The menu consisted of spaghetti, meatballs or vegetarian tomato sauce, tossed salad, dinner rolls/butter, juice, tea, coffee, and baked goods for dessert.

Local stores and bakeries graciously donated a large quantity of food and supplies. Six parents (plus one Italian mother-in-law) made all the food ahead of time, including 400 meatballs, meat sauce, and tomato sauce. They washed and shredded 30 heads of lettuce, mixed salad dressing, and pre-cooked and froze the pasta. Through the magic of lighting, the school gymnasium was transformed into a cozy Italian restaurant. Students volunteered to be servers. Dads assisted with setting up tables and younger students made beautiful macaroni table centerpieces. Italian music played in the background all evening and the school principal handed out door prizes and snapped photos.

Approximately 100 people attended, including parents, grandparents, and children. Their profit was about \$400.

*For further information, contact Helen Lutz,
Community Nutritionist, at 250 354-6305.*

Lessons learned



- Given the effort, the group had hoped to earn more.
- On the other hand, the PAC was very pleased with the support shown by the neighborhood and the whole community. The dinner was loads of fun and effective in boosting school spirit.

Challenges of hosting community events

- Auctions, dances, and theme dinners require much effort to organize, advertise, sell tickets, host, and clean up.

- If food is to be served, food safety rules should be strictly followed to prevent food-borne illness. At least one helper should have *Food Safe* training.

Variations on the theme

- Auctions with silent or verbal bidding: Be sure to include items kids can bid on, too. Items auctioned can range from practical services to fun items. Would you believe someone paid \$1,000 for a phone booth?
- Host a dance. Nanaimo Foodshare, in partnership with the local Latin Dance Club, hosted a Latino Dance night. They made money on ticket sales and also homemade mariachis, which contained donated prizes. The mariachis went for \$20/pair and there was a countdown to the time for breaking them. According to Susan Peach, people plunk down money if they are having fun. Don't be shy about reminding people throughout the evening of the good cause the money is going to. Keep people informed as to how close you are to the goal.
- Approach established groups or clubs to buy a table so members can sit together at a community event. People may be more interested in going if they know friends and associates will be there.
- Ask if your PAC can earn money by taking charge of part of a community event. A local fall fair may be willing to pay the PAC or school to staff the gates, do set-up, cleanup, supervise parking, staff the concession, or prepare the food for the event.
- A local church hosted a Family Fair and had old-fashioned games, such as "Whack the Rat," where kids tried to whack a potato coming out of a tube. Other similar events include school carnivals and talent nights.

More tips

- Make sure the organizing committee has fun too; refreshments at work bees are always welcome. Don't forget to thank this hard-working group publicly at the event.
- Promote healthy foods being served at the event.
- Maximize participation by checking ahead with other community groups to see whether another large event is slated for the same date.
- Advertise in local papers and on local radio stations; don't forget CBC radio programs that promote community events. Put posters up around town at least one month ahead. For the local paper, take an interesting picture (such as a snap of all the meatballs being made) and write your own article to go with it. Attract media attention with a teaser such as a package of pasta tied with a ribbon and a hand-written invitation from a student.
- As a gesture of good will, donate some tickets to local service agencies so that some low-income families may attend.





Fundraising with Pledges

Tour De Cariboo -- Williams Lake

The Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Williams Lake host the *Tour de Cariboo* - a bike ride between Williams Lake and Gavin Lake Camp, a distance of about 75 miles.

People can enter as individuals or part of a team. Each rider is required to take a minimum number of pledges. Months before the event, training sessions are held for novices. This is coordinated with the RCMP, which monitors the route.

At a forestry education camp at Gavin Lake, there is a huge social event that culminates in a dinner. The person with the highest number of pledges receives a grand prize, usually a mountain bike donated by a local sports company.

This event has grown every year and made many thousands of dollars.



Lessons learned

- Fun, fun, fun keeps people coming back. The encouragement and camaraderie among seasoned and new riders is obvious.
- Many people enjoy using this event to push themselves to become more fit; for some, it is the one fundraising event they participate in each year.

Variations on the theme

- Bowl-a-thon, walk-a-thon, dance-a-thon, cross-country-ski-a-thon!
- Have an imaginary destination, such as Hawaii, that people could swim, walk, or run to over a period of time.
- Art Walk. Have students and local artists mount displays all over town. Sell participants a passport outlining the location and a story about each artist. The passport is stamped at each location and then submitted for a draw (the price could be a donated piece of art). Pieces of artwork can also be sold with proceeds going to the school.



Fundraising through Sponsorship

Food for a community dinner funded through a points program

-- *Williams Lake*

It had been a tough year for many families and a community dinner was suggested as a way to bring low-income families together for a fun-filled evening before Christmas. But no organization had the funds to foot the cost of the food. Save-On-Foods charitable donations program came to the rescue.

How does it work? Customers donate Save-on-More points in increments of 1,000 to one of 3 charities (each store has 1 regional and 2 local charities it supports). For each 1,000 points donated to charity, the Overwaitea Food Group will provide \$1 plus a matching \$1 to total of \$2. For example, if 100 people each give 1,000 points to a charity, Overwaitea will give that charity \$200. Cheques are presented to charities on a quarterly basis.

Schools qualify as local organizations. See your local Save-On Food store for an information package.



Lessons learned

Motivate community members to get behind your fundraising effort through articles in the paper, public service announcements, school newsletters, and door-to-door reminders within a school neighbourhood.

Variations on the theme

- Adopt-a-School program. A patron such as a local business supports a school initiative at the workplace by collecting money for a pledge, e.g. cashiers at a chain of pharmacies sell balloon logos for Children's Hospital.
- Sell coupon books for discounts at local retailers.

More tips

- Before entering into a partnership, discuss guidelines for acceptable sponsors. For example, if a school adopts a healthy food policy, it would be contradictory to accept sponsorship from a soda pop company.
- Before starting a project, put in writing the obligations each party agrees to.





Recycling Opportunities

Story from Lac La Hache School -- Lac La Hache

Lac La Hache School participates in a provincial program to recycle juice boxes, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans through Recycling Encorp Systems. The school has placed three large bins supplied by Encorp in the hallway where students put their empties. Once a month, the class that brings in the most items wins a pizza lunch. The funds from recycling are also used for the school's healthy food program.



Lessons learned

- This is a wonderful opportunity to focus on healthy eating while reinforcing a "green school" philosophy.
- The project provides leadership opportunities for students who assist in collecting, organizing, and counting the containers.

Challenges of recycling opportunities

This is a labour-intensive activity!

Variations on the theme

Hold a school flea market to encourage reusing as well as recycling. Charge money for people to rent a table. Good advertising will be important.

More tips

- Establish the collection method and a sorting scheme. Encorp can help you with this. Some collection agencies will give you cardboard flats so that it is easy to count multiples of 24, or they may ask you to use large clear plastic bags. Check to see whether the collecting agency will accept items that are squashed or missing a label.
- Ask that all beverage containers be drained and lids removed.
- Aluminum pull-tabs can also be redeemed for money.
- Advertise for containers in the larger community.
- Phone Telus to see if your school could get a collector's fee for rounding up used phone books for recycling.
- Make a thermometer-style poster to monitor the amount and value collected. To generate enthusiasm, one school showed how many truckloads were collected and the products that can be made from recycled material.
- Get permission from local stores to set up a collection area in the parking lot after a major holiday; advertise this service before the event.





Grants and Foundations

HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living in Northern British Columbia to prevent Type 2 Diabetes)

Local community nutritionist Rose Soneff of Interior Health partnered with Cariboo Chilcotin School District 27 to apply for HEAL funding. The successful proposal yielded \$12,500 to be shared among 4 elementary schools. Each school developed and implemented school food policies aimed at making healthy eating the easy choice.

Each school had flexibility in spending the funds. Money could be used for activities such as promotion or capital expenditures.



Lessons learned

- Find people who have experience in writing grants or take a course on grant writing.
- Learn about the granting agency and its objectives. It is helpful to read about previous recipients - their activities and the amounts they received.
- Rather than have each school prepare a grant, consider consolidating efforts and submitting one application for all the schools. This makes it easy for a funding agency, which may spend as much time looking at a grant for \$2,000 as one for \$20,000.

Challenges of grants and foundation funding

- Funding agencies generally do not offer core funding because they don't want to create dependency. They look for interesting, innovative programs they can help get started. While funding agencies tend not to fund the same program year after year, they always want to know how an applicant will address sustainability.
- Provincial downsizing has meant a huge increase in applications to funding agencies. That means proposals have to be innovative, achievable, well written - and absolutely on target in terms of the funding agency's mandate and philosophy.
- Where partner funding is required (e.g. as with the Vancouver Foundation) it must be identified at the time of application. That doesn't mean that you have to have it in hand, but you have to have some commitment for resources (in-kind is considered) and a strategic plan for acquiring the rest. You can ask for "conditional funding," which is dependent on your acquiring the rest. But remember the funding agency wants to get their dollars out as

expeditiously as possible (they don't want to be holding money which could be put to use, while people hunt for matching funds they may not get).

- While the Vancouver Foundation will entertain proposals from a network of communities, they do not encourage partnerships formed solely for the sake of getting money. They want to encourage success: Sometimes that means one agency; sometimes it means a partnership. Funding agencies like to see people work together to avoid duplication and consolidate services when it makes sense to do so.
- Don't count on receiving repeat funding from one agency. Be sure to look for money close at hand and cultivate local donors.

Variations on the theme

- There is help online to learn how to apply for funding through grants and foundations, e.g. <http://EFSinternet.com>
- At the time of printing, Bigonline Canada at www.bigdatabase.ca is a service available for CDN \$1,795/yr plus GST. This is a searchable database of U.S. and Canadian foundations, grants, government agencies, and corporations. A school district may be able to subscribe for all schools to use.
- Most libraries carry the Canadian Directory to Foundations and Grants, or one can subscribe to the online version, www.ccp.ca/directory/tour

More tips

- Always check the geographical area a funding agency covers, e.g. Van City funds projects only in the Vancouver area.
- A surprising number of grant recipients don't bother with final reports, don't say thanks, or don't give feedback. These are important and likely to become increasingly so.
- Some corporations such as BC Gas only give money where they give service, and they prefer to give money where they'll get the most visible return. This is a case where an application from a network may be attractive to a funding agency.
- Before you contact a funding agency, put together a brief written outline of your request. Generally, funders are too busy to talk at length so make their job easier by being prepared and having something you can give them in writing.
- Funding agencies give money to people, not just causes. Get to know them. Follow guidelines exactly. If you receive funding, keep them informed.





Fundraising with a twist

Stong's Marklets Ltd. Grocery Gift Certificate Discount Program

Stong's Market is a family-run, medium-sized grocery store in the Vancouver area that has served the Dunbar community since 1931. Ralph Stong, a well-known baseball player in Vancouver who played with Nat Bailey, founded the store. The store has always helped fund community teams. In the last 20 years, it has funded schools through a gift certificate program. People who shop at the store use pre-purchased gift certificates and a portion of the purchase price goes back to the community.

How the program works

1. Parents fill out an order form for the number of \$20 gift certificates they wish to purchase.
2. They write a cheque and submit it to the PAC committee by the established deadline.
3. The PAC purchases the certificates, receiving an 8% discount if the total value purchased is \$5,000 or more (i.e. the school makes \$400 on \$5000 worth of certificates). The discount is 6% if the total value is \$1,000 to \$4999. The profit from the sale of certificates goes to the school.
4. Parents use the certificates instead of cash to buy groceries from Stong's. The grocery purchase must equal or exceed the value of the certificate(s) because there is no cash back.
5. Some schools do this once or twice per year and some do it on a monthly basis.
6. According to a manager at Stong's, an average-sized school can make \$5,000 to \$8,000 per year if they do this on a regular basis.

*For further information, contact Leah Hawirko,
Community Nutritionist, (604) 918-7609.*



Lessons learned

- A PAC reports that this is an easy fundraiser once it is established because people don't have to change where they shop or buy things they don't need (e.g. chocolate bars). They can support the school without actually having to be out any cash.
- Schools can partner with a local business to everyone's benefit.

Challenges of commercial partnerships

It's important to discuss any issues around potential partnerships with businesses. For example, a school PAC program had difficulty in partnering

with a fast food outlet that offered to donate \$1 from the sale of every hamburger to the school because it had just adopted healthy eating policies. After much heated discussion, the school asked if the donation could be tied to the sale of milk, 100% juice, or salads.

Variations on the theme

- **Stong's Online:** Recently Stong's has made the move to online service and home delivery. They deliver anywhere in the lower mainland for \$10 or for free if the order is over \$100. This type of certificate program could be expanded to include schools outside the normal shopping boundaries, elderly shoppers, or people who don't have transportation or the time to shop.
- **Safeway's Gift Card Program:** Orders for gift cards for groceries can be placed with the Alberta office at 1-800-757-4942. Different denominations are available because the cards can be electronically loaded with a dollar value. There are no expiry dates. There is a 4% return on sales of \$2,000 to \$4,000.
- **Reverse Raffle:** Sell a specified number of raffle tickets before an event and start drawing tickets at the event. Designate mileposts (e.g., the 20th ticket taken will win a door prize, and the 50th, and the 100th, etc). With fewer and fewer tickets left in the barrel, people can bid on them or share them. For example, if there's 10 tickets left, the 10 ticket holders may choose to split the raffle prize among them, or people in the audience may want to pay a higher price for a ticket that has a greater chance of winning.
- **Tax receipt as the prize:** After a group raises a specific amount of money, a name is drawn and the winner receives the tax receipt as the prize. For a \$10,000 fund, the tax credit would be \$2,900.
- **Diminishing Breakfast Club:** Six people who are supportive of school meal programs and have a wide network of connections are invited to the initial breakfast, which a school hosts. Each guest pays \$5 for breakfast and promises to host a breakfast within 2 weeks, with one fewer people, i.e. 5 people attend instead of 6. Each of the 5 people invited will pay the host \$5; the host collects the money, and donates it to the Diminishing Breakfast Club account. The 5 people in turn each host a breakfast with one less person. This continues until the last guests each invite one person for breakfast and collect \$5 for the Diminishing Breakfast Club. If you assume everyone will host a breakfast as required and each guest will pay \$5, there will be 1,962 participants and they will generate \$9,750.
- **Put a prize in a large container secured with a padlock.** Sell the key along with a bunch of fake keys that look similar. People buy keys for a chance to win the prize.
- **Offer services such as garbage cleanup, car washes, and gift-wrapping.**





Fundraising with Vending Machines

How to keep sales high while making healthy snacks the *easy* choices:

For flexibility in food choices and brands, avoid exclusive contracts with soft-drink companies. Before signing any contract, ask about the product options and agree on which products will take up most of the space in the machine. Soft-drink companies can provide 100% juices and bottled water.

1. Work with a vendor or vendors that will meet your requests, e.g. decrease the number of soda pop options in the machine and support the sale of healthy snacks and drinks.
2. Include 100% juice and water in the pop vending machines. Some schools may decide to exclude all pop products to minimize the barrier to healthy choices. Others will have a combination of choices. Some schools may decide to have a separate pop machine but limit the number of these machines in the school. Decide on a ratio for each product that will promote a supportive school environment.
3. If you sell soft drinks, limit choices to containers of moderate size (12 oz cans instead of the 20 oz plastic bottles). This will provide a balance with the other products available to drink.
4. Be aware of incentives such as banners and advertising on vending machines that promote the consumption of low-nutrient snacks or beverages. Choose a vendor that agrees to use healthy images (e.g. athletes, 100% juice) in schools.
5. Some schools allow only machines with milk, water, juice and healthy snacks to stay in operation all day and disable soda pop machines so that they run only after school hours.
6. Install a milk vending machine with a variety of flavours including plain white milk. Milk machines have proven to be very successful in many schools in the United States. Discuss this option with your local dairy rep. If it is not possible to have a vending machine, school stores can often stock and sell chocolate or plain milk very easily and successfully.
7. Cost the healthy vending choices at more attractive prices than the less-nutritious choices. Increase the prices for soft drinks and high fat/sugar snacks slightly to maintain your profit margin. Work with your vendor to help establish food sales that are sustainable and profitable, while offering a balance of choices for a supportive school food environment.
8. Be aware of the many healthy snack choices available for vending machines to suggest to your vendor. Your local community nutritionist can help.
9. Use marketing strategies such as posters, prizes, and other incentives to promote healthier choices. Marketing and Career Prep classes love this type of project. Community nutritionists are available to work with schools to help them access prizes and develop marketing plans.