

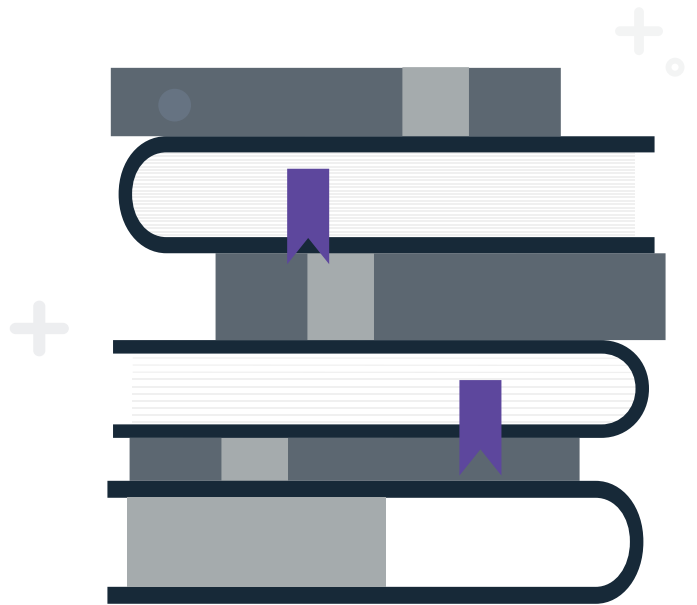
# The Ultimate Study Guide for School Fundraising

Tips and tricks to ace your upcoming fundraising events and efforts.



# Table of contents

- 3** Fundraising Event Checklist
- 5** Go Big or Go Home
- 6** Unique Items for School Auctions
- 8** Four Tips for Your Auction and Fund-The-Need
- 9** How To Incorporate Students in Your Fundraiser
- 10** How To Re-Engage Your Alumni
- 11** Keep Them Hooked



# Fundraising event checklist

Exams can sneak up on you, and so can your next fundraiser! The GiveSmart team prepared an event study guide to help you remember everything you'll need to get an A+ on your school's fundraising events!



## 3 months out

- Pick a venue
- Determine seating/table availability and sponsorship opportunities
- Pick a menu that caters to all of your guests needs – note allergies, vegetarians, etc.
- Prepare a program agenda for the event
- Create an appeal video to show your guests how their donations will make a difference – reserve AV equipment as needed
- Finalize your auction items and have some fun promoting them on social media, in email campaigns and on your website
- Send your special guests a personalized invitation – from your biggest donors to your speakers to your board of directors, a personalized invitation will go a long way
- Put together a committee
- Build your ticket types. GiveSmart's Guest Management feature allows you to sell tickets and sponsorships from the same site that hosts your auction and collects donations, streamlining your finances
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Stay on track –  
check all of the boxes  
to make sure you're  
prepared for your  
next event!

## 1 month out

- ❑ Pick a theme – create a printed brochure and event signage to match the invitation
- ❑ Bundle your silent auction items into themed baskets, and have fun coming up with clever names for each (ex: Movies, to match event theme, etc.)
- ❑ Begin selling tickets

## Post Event

- ❑ Send appreciation letters to speakers, sponsors, donors and volunteers
- ❑ Use GiveSmart’s Dashboard – before, during, and after your event – for real-time insights on auction items, tickets sold, revenue achieved, balances left unpaid, and more
- ❑ Review and pay bills
- ❑ Send handwritten thank you letters
- ❑ Get feedback from donors, guests and volunteers
- ❑ Reconcile payments
- ❑ Head to the Reports tab in your GiveSmart Admin Homepage for event and financial statistics, easy-to-read charts, downloadable reports
- ❑ Start brainstorming for next year

## 2 weeks out

- ❑ Do a “run-through” with all of your volunteers and employees
- ❑ Print display sheets for you auction items through GiveSmart. If you often have last minute items added to your auction then it’s best to leave this until the day before your event. On your Admin Homepage head to **Items > Select Items you need display sheets for > Bulk Actions > Generate Item Sheets**



# Go big or go home

There's no better way to get in the spirit of raising funds for your school than to host your event right on campus! You can show off new school features and play up the nostalgic feeling among alumni and current/past parents that might motivate them to give a little more than planned.

## The necessities

**Caterer:** This is one of the most important vendors when holding an event on-campus. Finding a caterer that will also provide servers (if a plated dinner) would make your work easier.

**Bar services:** Your donors will be expecting to have something to drink – both alcoholic and nonalcoholic – at your event.

**Florist/Decor:** Flowers are the traditional centerpieces used at gala dinners, but buying items that you can reuse, such as decorative lanterns or vases with floating candles, would save you money in the long run. Another option is to prepare to auction or raffle off the centerpieces!

**DJ/Band:** Keep your guests entertained and the atmosphere up.

**Photographer:** Whether it's a staff member or a professional photographer, you'll want to make sure someone is there solely to capture pictures of the event.

**Designer/Printer:** To design and print everything from your invitations to your event signage.

**Mobile Technology:** Offer an easy way for everyone to support you from anywhere. Contact GiveSmart for more information!

## Fun additions

**Servers:** If the caterer does not provide servers, you may want to hire a company who will do so. To save on cost, student volunteers are always a great route.

**Lighting:** Set the mood by renting an uplighting system. This will help transform your gym or cafeteria.

**AV team:** If you don't have volunteers or staff to help with your audio and visual needs, hiring a company will help make your event go off without a hitch.

**Room block at a local hotel:** If you know people will be traveling for your event (i.e. reunions), book a block of rooms at a local hotel, and provide a transportation option to and from.



# Unique items for school auctions



Very specific groups of people attend school fundraisers and bid on their auction items. It's a good idea to pinpoint items that will entice these groups, which include parents, teachers, alumni and members of the community at large. Our fundraising experts have put together a list of items that have performed well at school events.

## Prime Parking Spot

Parking close is a commodity for most schools who have limited parking spaces for students and/or faculty.

## VIP Pickup Pass

Being treated like a VIP for the day or year is something worth bidding on for parents and students alike.

## Pre-Planned Parties

A class party is one of more exciting parts of school that students look forward to and winning one in an auction makes for a fun way to reward fundraising.

## Student Artwork

Parents love to display their kids' artwork. Make this an instant buy item or part of your silent auction.

## Bikes (for all ages)

Promotes healthy activity and being outdoors, two things schools are constantly trying to find a way to promote more.

## Sign-up parties

Sign up parties are instant buy items that generate a lot of interest! From spa days for moms to golf outings for dads to pool parties for students, sign-up parties are some of the most popular items we've seen.

## Teacher's Day Off

Bid to help your favorite teacher get an extra day off.

## Dinner with the Principal or President

Instead of being sent to the Principal's Office for some type of misbehavior, your family can join the Principal of your school for a fun meal.

### **Dress Down Days**

Schools with uniform requirements can let parents bid on a dress down day for their children.

### **Front Row for School Play/Concert/etc.**

Getting the front row is always an experience, especially if a parent's child is the star in the play.

### **Principal for a Day**

Give a student the chance to spend the day in the principal's office – and not because they're in trouble.

### **Experience with Favorite Teacher**

Ask your teachers to come up with an activity – like a pizza party or after-school gym class – that parents can bid on for their children.

### **Graduation Package**

Anything that could come in handy for graduation day, from front-row seats, a premium parking pass, free cap and gown, or even a coupon for a hair salon so the graduate can look their best on their big day.

### **Major sports tickets**

These always do well! Not only will this appeal to all of your event attendees, but parents love spending money on their kids, and this is a great family activity.

### **School Sports Package**

A package with school spirit wear, season passes to football and basketball games, and more!

# Four tips for your auction and fund-the-need

These four tips might feel like cheating, but we can promise that they won't get you in trouble. Instead, they'll help ensure your event runs smoothly and that you "pass" with flying colors.

## 1 Get pledges for bigger donations before the event

Your fund-the-need can be the most profitable part of your event if you set it up properly. It's ok to approach your biggest donors beforehand to let them know you're planning a fund-the-need, and see if they would be willing to pledge an amount to donate that night. You'll have a good idea of which price point would be a good place to start (i.e. if someone pledges \$10,000, you know it's safe to start there). Knowing that you're going to get that donation will make you feel more confident. Their donation might even inspire others to give at the same level.

## 2 Get your donors excited about the fund-the-need

**Paddle Raise:** Use peer pressure to your advantage. When guests see others at their table raising their paddle it can entice them to do the same. You can even create a competition to see which table has the highest percentage of participation.

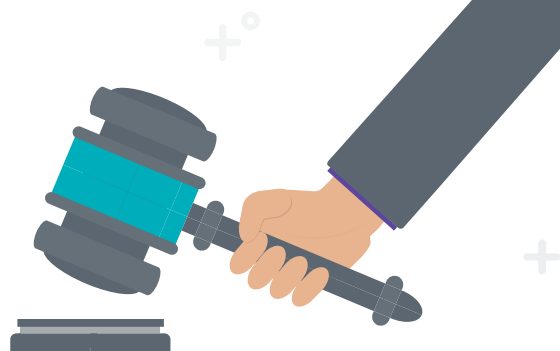
**Electronic Donation:** GiveSmart can make your life simple by sending out a text message with a link to your donation levels. Have your auctioneer encourage guests to click through the link on their phone and donate.

## 3 Offer live auction items to the top two bidders

Some items, like dinner with your school's Principal or President, are easy to duplicate. If there are two individuals willing to pay \$2,000 for the chance to dine with the head of your school, why turn one down? Determine these items in advance and play it by ear the night of the event. If there's enough interest, give the item away twice. Instruct the auctioneer to ask the runner up if they will pay their highest bid amount for the same prize.

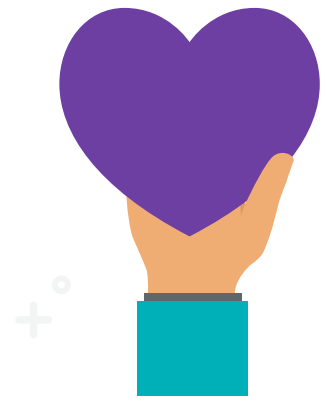
## 4 Be creative and specific

Adding more pictures, details and descriptive language will entice your guests to bid on that item. Spending an extra five minutes of choosing a fun title and writing creative copy could be the difference between making \$200 and \$700.





# How to incorporate Students in your Fundraiser



Arguably, your best ambassadors are your students. You can tell your donors that your students are the best as often as you want, but they're not going to believe you unless they can see it for themselves. Incorporating your students into your fundraising events is a great way to show your donors that their investment is worth it.

**Musicians:** Set the right mood. Have members of your school orchestra play during your dinner or cocktail hour.

**Speakers:** Putting a well-spoken student in front of donors is the best way to show your guests how their donation will make a difference. If proceeds from your event will fund a student scholarship, have a student recipient speak about how it made a difference for them and their family. If it's for a new school gym, have an athlete share how it will impact them.

**Technology assistance:** Place your students around the venue to help donors who aren't the most tech-savvy. They can help the GiveSmart staff show your guests how to bid on items. Guests will be impressed by their knowledge and love the chance to talk to some of the students.

**Coat check:** Working the coat check station is an easy job for students. It's also an easy way for your donors and students to interact.

**Photographer:** Whether it's a staff member or a professional photographer, you'll want to make sure someone is there solely to capture pictures of the event.

**Raffle sales:** Have your students walk around the event to sell any raffle items (tickets, heads or tails, etc.). This is an easy way to give your donors the chance to ask questions and learn more about the school through the eyes of the students.

**Auction off student artwork:** Place members of your golf team on a designated hole, where guests can play against them for a fee for the chance to win a special prize (i.e. free raffle tickets). You can even have them act as a caddy.

Getting your students in front of your donors will remind them how their donations are going to help educate bright young men and women!

# How to re-engage Your alumni



## 1 Keep them in the loop

Social media is one of the easiest ways to share updates about your school with alumni and community. Post about sports teams, upcoming theater and music productions, outstanding academic achievements, robotics competitions, math league, debate club, favorite teacher's offering new courses, etc. Are you students producing photography and videos? Ask permission to post their work, tag them on Instagram, and share on Facebook. Sharing and cross tagging will help build followers and extend your online presence.

## 2 Acknowledge success after graduation

You want your alumni to continue to care about your school once they graduate, so you should continue to care about them. From sharing articles and congratulating alumni on social media or in your newsletter to mailing personal, handwritten notes from the development office and/or principal/president, there are a ton of ways to acknowledge their accomplishments. Think outside the box! Invite successful alumni back to campus to speak to your students or put an ad in a program book if an alumnus is going to be honored at an event.

## 3 Actively seek and listen

Let your alumni know you hear them: respond to comments on social media, ask for feedback after events, reply to emails, ask them to participate in surveys. This shows alumni they are being included in decisions, and that their opinions are taken into consideration when spending donated dollars. Open lines of communication are imperative to continue growing.

## 4 Invite to FUN-raisers

Face-to-face interactions are still the best way to engage alumni, despite the internet's sweeping reach. Bring alumni back to campus with sports nights, career days, art shows, theater productions, concerts, reunions, or happy hours. It's important to keep these events social with a focus on community versus fundraising. Perhaps you charge a small cover for the happy hour, tickets to the concerts, or entrance fees to student shows. Donation boxes are also handy at these events so that you don't miss an opportunity to collect a donation. Keep the donation boxes in a highly visible location, such as by the ticket window, on the bar, or at the exit.

# Keep them hooked

## Shadow days

Getting out into the field is the best way for students – high school and college – to learn about potential careers and to connect with alumni. It sets a foundation for potential mentorships and it keeps alumni invested with current students.

### Tips:

#### Be selective

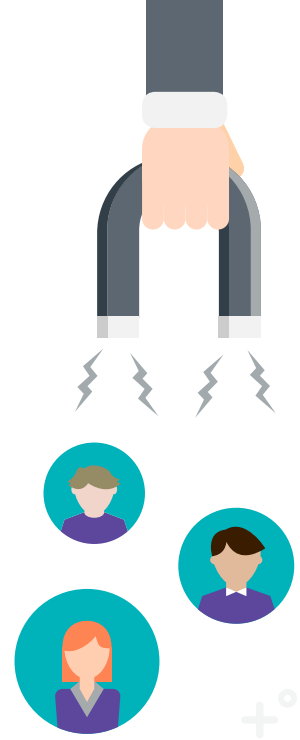
The students who shadow alumni should be a good representation of your school and willing to learn. If you have student ambassadors they would be a good place to test the program to start.

#### Keep it exciting

Partner alumni and students who express similar interests. Survey students to learn about what sort of jobs they're interested in shadowing, and also provide options they may not have thought of. If students are not interested the program will not sustain.

#### Keep it short

It's important to be respectful of alumni's time, so keep the shadowing to two hours. From here, it's up to the discretion of the alumni and students if they want to make shadowing a regular occurrence, or perhaps even an internship!



## Organized trips

If your school offers travel opportunities to students, why not organize similar trips for alumni? This is a great way for alumni to reconnect, or meet for the first time, over a common interest and alma mater. These trips can be anything from theater and art in New York City, fishing off the coast of Florida, wine tasting in Sonoma, golfing in Scotland, or studying Renaissance art in Florence, Italy.

## Stay in touch

Send monthly e-newsletters or have current students work on a quarterly magazine. It's important to share schools news with current students, the surrounding community, and alumni. You can use these publications to recognize success milestones, life events, publicize upcoming events, encourage sign ups for trips, share who made the Dean's List, and more.



For more information  
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