

THE ADVOCATE



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Hands-on science projects inspire one student to share her enthusiasm for learning with others.

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Activity Connection

High school band boosts fundraising benefits by tuning into community needs.

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Cultural club celebrates ancestries while promoting leadership, service, and a positive climate.

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Promote the Value

Heart Stories + Head Stories = Sustainable Funding Solutions

BY KATHLEEN WILSON SHRYOCK

While many educators acknowledge the value of extracurricular, cocurricular, and after-school activities in helping students thrive, securing sustainable funding for these programs can be a daunting task. Although the cost for a viable activities program in most districts is less than three percent of the overall budget, it can be difficult to claim these dollars when finances are already stretched to the limit. But for stakeholders who believe in their programs and are willing to invest elbow grease and advocacy, funding is available, obtainable, and worth the effort.

An important first step in raising funds is to develop an intimate knowledge of your program. Advocates must be able to articulate the initiative's mission, specify funding needs, and present statistics that prove the program's positive impact. Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance, believes that a mix of these ingredients provides the perfect fundraising formula. "Start with a clear understanding of what you want to accomplish and why," said Grant. "Funding is key, but without a strong mission, activities that align with your vision, and a passion for what you are doing, it will be difficult to attract funders."

As an advocate for after-school programs, Grant presents important facts about the benefits to convince potential supporters that high quality after-school programs are worth more than the dollars invested. "Not only are we saving three dollars for every one dollar invested just on increased graduation rates and reduced juvenile incarceration, but the infrastructure of an after-school program leverages other resources—including public dollars, private donations, and volunteers—to help support our students," said Grant. "Most importantly, the social, behavioral, academic, and professional skills that students acquire through these programs help them succeed in life and contribute to our economy as productive workers." →



When you bring your students to the Board of Education meeting or engage students in meaningful service, it is powerful. The community bears witness and becomes invested in saving and supporting the program.

Laura Piening



“These days, there is a lot of asking being done but not a lot of strategic asking. Strategic asking involves combining facts and figures—the head story—with powerful examples of how your program is making an impact—the heart story.”

Laura Piening, director of development at AVID Center, agrees that reliable outcome-data combined with enthusiastic advocacy is critical to securing funds. “There is always money, but you have to be persistent and optimistic,” she said. “These days, there is a lot of asking being done but not a lot of strategic asking. Strategic asking involves combining facts and figures—the head story—with powerful examples of how your program is making an impact—the heart story.” For Piening, the head-heart combination includes success stories that illustrate AVID’s ability to change a school’s culture by providing all students with the tools they need to successfully prepare for college and career.

Once the program’s mission has been defined and the benefits itemized, the serious search for sources of funding can begin. Grant programs through federal, state, and local agencies are competitive and complex, but the payoffs can be substantial. Success requires making the time to review available grant opportunities through **grants.gov** or individual agency sites. Special attention should be given to eligibility requirements and profiles of past grantees.

Philanthropic and corporate funders are another potential resource. These funders are often interested in education-related initiatives and have a vested interest in preparing a more-qualified future workforce. Grantmakers for Education joins philanthropies from across the country in a common quest to improve the grant-making process for education initiatives. Their site offers resources for program directors who are interested in learning more about funding priorities in the field and what it takes to successfully apply for a grant.

When pursuing grants, Piening suggests making the task easier for your grant writer by preparing documents that clearly define how your program lines up with the source of funding. Also create templates or Microsoft Word documents that include pertinent facts, figures, and key information about your program that can be readily inserted into an application.

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) provides federal resources to ensure that career and technical programs are academically rigorous and up-to-date with the needs of business and industry. Perkins Basic State Grant funds are provided to states for allocation to secondary school districts, postsecondary institutions, and as funding for local programs. Steve DeWitt, deputy executive director at the Association for Career and Technical Education, encourages potential grant recipients to study the state-specific details of the Perkins Act and then to think about how the program in question aligns with the act’s requirements. Many skills-development programs, such as those offered by Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), are dedicated to preparing young people for careers and developing a competitive workforce.

Although grants through federal, state, and local governments or other agencies can be an important source of funding, DeWitt suggests that sources within the local community are indispensable. “Many local businesses and organizations see education as a priority. Anything that promotes leadership and community service is a way to improve the training and employability of tomorrow’s workforce. A conversation with a local Kiwanis club, the Chamber of Commerce, or an area business can lead to a discussion about local needs and common goals. It is also a great opportunity to connect student activities with what is happening in the community.” DeWitt points

Crowdfunding: Discover More Dollars

SEAN LYNCH, a manager at the Association for Career and Technical Education, indicates that crowdfunding is one creative way that people can use technology to raise money. Through crowdfunding, program managers raise funds by seeking financial contributions from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. Lynch believes that the big benefits that students gain by participating in career and technical education initiatives can be used as a convincing backdrop to any crowdfunding campaign.



Kickstarter.com is a platform and a resource for people wanting to raise funds for their creative projects. Since Kickstarter’s launch in 2009, more than seven million people have pledged \$1 billion and funded 70,000 creative projects.

Indiegogo.com allows advocates for student activities to bring their case directly to the public. Since 2008, millions of contributors have funded thousands of projects, large and small.

out that community relationships and interaction with local organizations can lead not only to funding prospects but also to service opportunities, in-kind donations, volunteer support, and a chance for students to learn about potential careers in their own backyard.

The Council on Foundations can be a valuable resource for education supporters who are looking for local sources of funding. This nonprofit organization includes approximately 1,600 independent, community, public and company-sponsored foundations, along with corporate giving programs. The Web site offers information on their members as well as useful fundraising strategies.

Piening believes that community connections represent the future of funding, especially because of recent changes in school budgeting and government support. She points out that when you work with supporters at the local level, you are building relationships with people who have a direct stake in education within your own community.

A focus on relationships is critical to securing funding that is sustainable. When a grant or other resource dries up, it's too late to begin the search for new funds. Piening stresses the importance of long-term planning. "You have to have the conversation in advance. Once you get a grant, start negotiating for sustainability. Prove the value of your program to the decision makers. Be proactive in securing their commitment. Show that you are an advocate for the students, the district, and the community."

The Afterschool Alliance uses Lights On Afterschool, an annual nationwide event, to help administrators and program directors reach out to local funders and spread the word about the importance of their initiatives. "This event is a fantastic way for Afterschool program sponsors to raise awareness about the important role that these programs play in the lives of children and families in the community," she said. "The event provides an opportunity to invite potential funders and local policy makers, and to start to develop relationships that may lead to future funding opportunities."

A key and often-underused ingredient in building effective connections with key stakeholders and funders is the students themselves. Allowing funders to see students in action through presentations, meetings, school-based activities, and community-service initiatives can be more effective in securing support than all the statistics in

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the world. "When you bring your students to the Board of Education meeting or engage students in meaningful community service, it is powerful," said Piening. "The community bears witness and becomes invested in saving and supporting the program."

DeWitt agrees that including the students in the quest for funding is important and sets up mutually beneficial opportunities for students and community leaders to invest in each other. "Our students have a lot to say. When students become involved in the funding process, project-based learning occurs. The students are promoting their own activity, so their efforts have more meaning. And they are making important connections between school, community, and future opportunities. This process helps to overcome the disconnect to both school and community that many kids experience after they graduate."

In today's education arena, budget cuts and changes in priorities can make it a challenge to secure sustainable sources of funding. But with persistence and passion for the cause, convincing facts about the program's benefits, and hard work on the part of students and advisers, it is possible for program directors to find the dollars to support education-related initiatives. The payoff is in the continuation of high quality student-activities programs that help students thrive and, ultimately, benefit our schools and communities by contributing to a new generation of competent citizens. ●

VIDEOS LIKE AVID's "People Like Me" can help potential funders connect the heart story with the head story. To view this and other videos from AVID, click a4sa.org/AVIDvideos.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about career and technical education funding from the Association for Career and Technical Education, go to a4sa.org/ACTEResources.

FUNDING RESOURCES



AVID Advancement Via Individual Determination is dedicated to closing the achievement gap by preparing all students for college and other postsecondary opportunities. AVID's helpful funding tips focus on diverse funding, building relationships, and community support.



COUNCIL ON FOUNDATIONS
The Council's mission is to provide the opportunity, leadership, and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance, and sustain their ability to advance the common good. Review the council's site for potential funders in your community.



A GUIDE TO STEM FUNDING FOR AFTERSCHOOL This comprehensive guide from the Afterschool Alliance details sources of funding and provides effective strategies for the funding of afterschool programs. Although it was designed with STEM in mind, a number of the tips apply to any education-related program.

a4sa.org/resources



GRANTMAKERS FOR EDUCATION
This organization offers information for education stakeholders who are interested in learning more about funding priorities in the field, grant opportunities, and an understanding of what funders are looking for in potential grantees.



FOUNDATION CENTER
This center has a large database designed to connect people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. While the database requires a membership, many libraries have a membership that their patrons can use.



PERKINS EDUCATION ACT
Under the Perkins Act, federal funds are made available to help provide vocational-technical education programs and services to youth and adults. The vast majority of funds appropriated under the Perkins Act are awarded as grants to state education agencies.

From STEM Clubs to Careers in Science

BY MARIAH JENKINS

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD a special enthusiasm for learning. I remember waking up extra early for school in third grade so that I would not miss a word of our morning homework review. It wasn't until seventh grade that I gained a certain zeal for the sciences. I loved lab days and could not wait to present research projects to the rest of my class.

So when my seventh grade science teacher asked us, "Who wants to participate in the after-school science club?," my hand shot up into the sky. I danced in my chair until a flyer for the California Academy of Sciences' Science Action Club landed on my table. Science Action Club is an after-school program that takes place at San Francisco middle schools, aimed toward getting middle schoolers involved with science outside of the classroom. Among other fun activities, youth are given the opportunity to participate in authentic scientific research. See the video link.

After the first Science Action Club meeting, I was hooked. The club provided me with hands-on, relevant learning. In school, I often wondered how important all of our work really was. I would sit and ask "How is this going to help me in the real world?" or "When will I actually need to know all of this?" For me, Science Action Club answered those questions.

It is one thing to be told, "Researchers recorded data because it is an important part of their studies" or "Coleopterists study these beetles." And it is another thing to be handed a net and told to go out and collect the beetles yourself. I realized that learning can be more than getting a lecture and answering questions about it. I was shown that you can experience learning outside of the classroom and on your own.

Two years passed in the Science Action Club when I heard about another youth program at the California Academy of Sciences, called Careers in Science. By this time, I had realized that science was what I wanted to do with my life. That same science teacher I had in the seventh grade gave me an application and said that this was a program that I might be interested in. "Teach, Learn, and Conduct Science" was spelled out in bold at the top of the flyer. I was thrilled.

Careers in Science is an intensive, multi-year program aimed at supporting underrepresented youth to enter the science community. I was told that interns teach on the public floor, go on trips, and get training from actual scientists who work at the Academy. This program sounded too good to be true, so I eagerly applied. And when I got the call that I was accepted, I was squirming in my chair with excitement again.

As an intern, I have been given the opportunity to participate in a variety of "project groups" taking an in-depth look into specific STEM fields that interest us. These groups are made up of three to six youths working together on a specific project.



What makes the Academy youth programs special for me is how unrestricted we are. The programs give me a glimpse into the real world and make a career in science seem attainable and a likely possibility for me in the future. We help our peers around the world consider and debate about something that we think is important. That is something that I could not do anywhere else. Some examples of topics that we wrote about include e-cigarettes, sexism in the science community, and nature versus nurture.

In regular school, we are all expected to work in the same way. We are all tested, graded, and evaluated the same. We are given lessons and then told to move on. Some young people thrive in school, while others find it hard to stay interested.

I think that if everyone had the chance to experience informal education, our world would be in better shape. I feel that if everyone got to develop the same passion for learning that I did, through after-school clubs in something they care about, kids would be less likely to drop out. And staying in school gives them a chance to better the world.

For someone like me who grew up in a hardworking, single-parent home in the middle of San Francisco, the thought of becoming a scientist is not something that would ordinarily seem reachable. But now I know it is. For that reason, and many more, I am thankful I raised my hand that day in my seventh grade science class. ●

TO VIEW the video about Mariah Jenkins' experience, go to www.edutopia.org/blog/stem-everywhere-informal-learning-clubs-careers-mariah-jenkins.

Band Boosters: Fundraising with Purpose

WHILE THE BENEFITS of participating in student activities far outweigh the costs, the reality is that activities programs require funding to survive. Fees for uniforms, transportation, and supplies can be significant. Traditional sales of wrapping paper and candy bars can make a dent in the balance sheet, but these initiatives don't generate much long-term value. For band members at Olathe South High School in Olathe, KS, fundraising events are more than just a way to make money. By combining hard work with service, students are able to cover expenses, build community connections, and learn valuable life skills.

Chad Coughlin, director of bands, explains that a variety of opportunities allow students to earn money while participating in service learning. A portion of fundraising proceeds are typically placed in a general band fund, but students who volunteer can also earn money for their individual band accounts. With some events, parents and family members are invited to volunteer alongside the students.

At a recent fundraiser organized through Compass Rose Events, the band provided the volunteers needed to staff the local Procter & Gamble Company picnic. Students set up tents and inflatables, and staffed games. In exchange, Compass Rose made a donation to the band. Students that worked the event received a per-hour credit to their own accounts, reinforcing their efforts.

Coughlin believes that a hands-on approach to fundraising goes beyond simply earning money, and is mutually beneficial to students and the community. In an age where young people can easily become isolated behind their electronics, real-world service opportunities promote face-to-face communication with peers and community members. In addition, the positive connections built by hard-working students can overcome negative perceptions about young people that the media often focus on.

"When our students work out in the community, it creates a positive impression of our program and the students in it," said Coughlin. "This impression is reflected back to the kids. They see the positive benefits and develop a more intrinsic motivation for participating in community service.

Many of the stories that our community hears about today's youth tend to be negative. I think this is a disservice to the majority of high school students. In general, band students are the cream of the crop. The community needs to see these kids in action. I think they serve as positive representatives of their generation to the older members of our community."

Coughlin is always on the lookout for fundraising opportunities that would be a good fit for his program. He receives e-mails, letters, and phone calls from different fundraising sources on a weekly basis. He sifts through each one looking for prospects that complement the band. Sometimes opportunities come through former students or neighbors who live near the high school. "We now offer a menu of different fundraisers. Students can participate in those that interest them," said Coughlin. "I think it is important to find activities that fit your group and that the students and their parents will buy into."

In the past, band members have volunteered at a neighborhood pumpkin patch, district athletic competitions, the Color Run 5K, the Ironman Triathlon, and large events for local hospitals and businesses. ●



Olathe South High School band members and their families volunteer at the Color Run 5K in Kansas City, MO.

PHOTOS BY MICHELLE LEGG

Cultural Connections

AS THE CAMPUS HOME to more than 4,200 students from all over the world, Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School (FDR) in Brooklyn, NY, is a melting pot. Collectively, the student body speaks 51 different languages and boasts a fascinating mix of eclectic traditions. With so much diversity, it might be difficult for students to find common ground. But students are discovering that cultural clubs can help young people celebrate their roots while creating community connections.

The Chinese Cultural Club (CCC) at FDR is one group that provides students and staff with an opportunity to share their unique cultures. Throughout the year, the CCC sponsors events designed to bring students from all cultures together as one community. FDR's Multicultural Show, sponsored by the CCC, is a much-anticipated annual tradition. The Asian community makes up 35 percent of the school's population, so many of the acts offer a glimpse into Asian culture.

In addition to the multicultural show, the CCC sponsors an annual karaoke competition. Students have an opportunity to perform, and an audience of their peers votes for the top entertainers. The CCC also spends time mingling with other school clubs, including the anime club and the origami club. And the group publishes an annual booklet that spotlights Chinese culture through student-created drawings and compositions. Not only are students sharing their culture and promoting new social networks through these activities, but they are developing important skills in time management, event planning, and media presentation as well.

The CCC also provides valuable services to the school community. CCC members serve as peer mentors and tutors. The group offers discussions about college planning and scholarship application, and members volunteer as translators during parent-teacher conferences.

With thousands of students in attendance at FDR High School, it is easy for students to get lost in the crowd. But when students and staff make the time for cultural connections, they can foster a school community that celebrates diversity and promotes a sense of unity. ●

Tell the Story!

STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFER A TREMENDOUS RETURN ON INVESTMENT

DETERMINE THE PERCENTAGE OF YOUR DISTRICT'S OVERALL BUDGET THAT IS DEVOTED TO STUDENT ACTIVITIES. LET STAKEHOLDERS IN THE COMMUNITY KNOW HOW THIS COMPARES TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 1 - 3 PERCENT.

COMPARE AND SHARE DATA ABOUT THE ACTUAL VALUE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS AND FUND-RAISING DOLLARS CONTRIBUTED BY STUDENTS IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL CAUSES.

REMINDE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, PARENTS, AND ADMINISTRATORS THAT STUDENT ACTIVITIES DEVELOP CORE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN WAYS THAT TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM DOES NOT.

BE A CATALYST FOR DEVELOPING FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES, CORPORATE SPONSORS, AND COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS.

EMPHASIZE THE BENEFITS OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES INVOLVEMENT WHEN ASKING FOR SUPPORT FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES, CORPORATE SPONSORS, AND COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS.

STRESS THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF SHORT-TERM FUNDING CUTS BY POINTING OUT THE MISSED BENEFITS AND LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

\$300 BILLION
estimated savings to the U.S. if the number of students who drop out in just one year were converted into graduates



Promote the Value.
Alliance for Student Activities
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THE ADVOCATE

The Advocate is published ten times a year by the Alliance for Student Activities, a nonprofit corporation whose mission is to promote the value of student activities through advocacy, training, resources, and networking.

a4sa.org

Submissions of student activities research and other inquiries are welcome. Contact advocate@a4sa.org

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