



## FUNDRAISING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Online fundraising sites are becoming an increasingly popular method of raising money to support public schools. Such sites can be valuable tools for schools, school employees, booster clubs, and foundations to raise funds to support educational programs and activities. However, to avoid potential pitfalls, it is important for school districts to establish policies and protocols that provide clear direction to individuals who use such sites to raise funds on behalf of specific schools. This guide provides practical tips and recommended best practices for developing school district policies regarding the use of donation-based crowdfunding sites for fundraising purposes.

### GENERAL POLICY POINTERS

- If your school district allows the use of online donation sites for school fundraisers, ensure that there is a process in place for individuals to request administrator approval of the fundraising campaign.
- The application process should require individuals who wish to raise funds for the district or a specific school to submit all details of the fundraising campaign to a designated district administrator for review and approval in advance of the campaign, including:
  - The proposed website to be used
  - The proposed amount of funds to be raised
  - A description of the intended use for any funds raised or materials donated
  - A complete copy of the language to be posted on the fundraising site
  - A complete copy of the school employee's profile to be listed on the site
- To ensure that student privacy rights are protected, include clear language in district policies that prohibits district employees from posting or publishing personally identifiable information of district students when conducting an approved fundraising campaign. If employees request to post photos or videos of students as part of the campaign, ensure that appropriate parental consent has been obtained prior to posting.
- Require that the fundraising campaign description include a statement that all donations are voluntary and are not a condition of any student's participation in school activities.
- Clarify that any and all funds or materials received through the campaign will become the property of the district and will remain with the district if the teacher transfers or otherwise terminates his or her employment.
- Maintain inventories of donated items to ensure that the district accurately tracks donated items that have become the property of the district.
- If district employees wish to fundraise for instructional materials, including educational technology (such as laptops, tablets, etc.), ensure that employees are aware these donations must meet district criteria for the selection of instructional materials.
- Establish a district protocol for monitoring approved online fundraising campaigns to ensure compliance with applicable law and district policies.
- Review the terms and conditions of various fundraising websites and consider limiting district authorization of donor campaigns to specific fundraising websites.
  - Some donation sites are tailored specifically to schools and allow funds raised or items donated to be delivered directly to the school administrator or school site, which can help eliminate the risk of misuse of the site and can help districts monitor and track donations received.
  - As educational organizations, districts may be exempt from certain federal and state tax requirements. As a result, a donor that donates money or property to a district may be able to claim certain tax deductions. If questions arise regarding how a donor should report a donation on a tax return, advise the individual donor to seek advice from legal counsel and/or a tax professional.

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