
BEST

SCHOOL

FUND-RAISERS



Parents and teachers share creative ideas that go beyond raffles and car washes and keep the fun in fund-raising



Send Your Teacher Packing

The School: St. Bernadette's Catholic School in Springfield, Virginia.

The Project: **Surprise Teacher Getaway Raffle.** Nearly half the school's 380 students entered favorite teachers and staff into a drawing that featured a parent-donated four-day vacation.

The Payoff: \$3,370 toward interactive whiteboards.

WHEN MARY FEDOROCHKO describes the raffle her school held last year as a “double whammy,” she means it in the best possible sense: it was an easy, effective fund-raiser and a token of teacher appreciation that was, well, more than just a token. The raffle tickets — which the kids decorated with heart stickers, “Good Luck!” messages, and smiley faces — said “Please send _____ on vacation.” Families bought them for \$5 each, filled in a teacher’s name (and their own on the back), then entered them in the vacation drawing.

The Fedorochko family donated the use of their own vacation home for the grand prize. The lucky teacher, Mrs. Fellingner, was also treated to lunch with the student whose family bought the winning ticket, delighted third grader Graydon Monroe, courtesy of a local country club. Another prize was awarded to the class that sold the most tickets.

With nearly half of school families participating, minimal work, and happy kids and teachers, this fund-raiser was truly a win-win solution. Mary expects it to become an annual event. “It’s just the perfect overall morale booster,” she says. “And you should have heard Mrs. Fellingner scream when her name was drawn!”

Mary’s tip: Invite the teachers to take a short break while a volunteer goes class to class explaining the raffle to students. (“We told the kids to say we talked about global warming,” she says.)



Keep On Truckin'

The School: Cheverly Weekday Nursery School (and Mothers' Day Out program) in Cheverly, Maryland.

The Project: **The Cheverly Truck Touch.** Kids buy \$3 tickets to explore a fleet of construction, emergency, safety, and farm vehicles parked in the school lot.

The Payoff: About \$3,000 a year toward lower tuition.

TODDLERS GO GA-GA for motor vehicles, an obsession the Cheverly Weekday Nursery School capitalizes on with a fund-raiser that's wheeled in eager participants for ten years running. "We get a special exemption from the town for the noise," confesses Katie Troyner, a caterer and self-described "volunteer-a-holic" who helps assemble the happy jam of vehicles — this year more than 30 garbage trucks, school buses, police cars, classic cars, ambulances, fire trucks, backhoes, and more — for the siren-blasting, lights-flashing, hands-on event.

Reaching out to her community (and its motor vehicles) comes naturally to Katie. "I just drive around town, and whenever I see a cool vehicle, I ask the owner if he or she would be willing to bring it! I saw 'College Hunks Hauling Junk' and called the 800 number, and they came!"

The event also offers games (such as hosing out a pretend fire), prizes, and concessions, with almost everything donated. "We only had to buy a few things, like the ketchup and mustard," says Katie, whose own 6-year-old daughter, Logan, loves blasting the police siren — almost as much as she loves eating the snow cones.

Katie's tips: Outfit volunteers with orange safety vests and walkie-talkies. Ask vehicle owners to stay with their trucks and to supervise the visiting children. Solicit donations of food and prizes from local businesses.



Write the Book on Local Fun

The School: Woodland Montessori School in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

The Project: *Kids' Community Guide: Cool Things to Do With Kids in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.* The school publishes and gives away this 50-page family guidebook, raising money through ad sales.

The Payoff: \$8,000 for playground equipment last year alone.

"It's SO ABSOLUTELY TREMENDOUS," says Eileen Frueh, chair of *Kids' Community Guide*, the annual publication that she jokingly calls her third child. "It serves three purposes: Raising funds for the school, generating free PR for the school, and providing an essential resource for the community."

The idea for the guide came to Eileen when she first moved to the area and, with two young children, often found herself wondering what to do. Where were the swimming pools? Where did you go roller-skating? With her background in publications development, she decided to share the answers she got, and raise money for her kids' school in the process. An unpaid college intern interviewed parents for the guide's content (in exchange for job experience and a great reference), Eileen edited entries for uniformity, and a committee sold more than 80 ads. The guide was then laid out by a professional graphic designer, and 5,000 copies were printed and distributed to local businesses, among other outlets.

Now families in Harrisonburg know where to turn for advice about local arts, sports, hiking, camping, and more. And a local school has a new playground. "It's a fantastic fund-raiser," Eileen says, "especially since it taps into a different money pool than the school parents."

Eileen's tip: Visit local businesses to sell ads face-to-face.



On With the Show

The School: McKenzie Elementary School in Wilmette, Illinois.

The Project: **Annual Variety Show.** Audiences filled the house five times last year (at \$6 a head) to watch parents and school staff perform themed music and dance numbers.

The Payoff: \$13,000 toward PTA-sponsored enrichment activities.

NOW IN ITS 28TH YEAR, this playful tradition is all about entertaining a very demanding audience: children. “The adults think it’s fun too,” notes volunteer Mande Mischler (the one with the taped mouth, above). “I mean, you get to see your neighbors make fools of themselves! But it’s really for the kids.”

Last January, after figuring out such basics as who would direct the show and what its secret theme would be — they settled on “Ready, Set, Game!” — the 70-plus member cast got to work writing and rehearsing the 15 or so songs for the hour-long production. When it opened in March, a rap number about Quidditch, a football spoof called “Referee” (set to Aretha Franklin’s “Respect”), and a loser version of “We Are the Champions” (parents wore hockey jerseys and blacked out their teeth) were favorites, as was an all-mom tap number. Including the volunteers who sold tickets, ushered, and worked on sets and costumes, more than a third of the school’s families played a role in the event.

“For weeks after the show, my kids sing the songs and reminisce about seeing their gym teacher dance,” Mande says. “Honestly, it’s as much a community builder as a money maker.”

Mande’s tips: Keep rehearsals to one night a week by splitting up the skits over five nights and asking adults to sign up accordingly. And don’t get too hung up on perfection: less talent means more laughs!



Walk Like a Tiger

The School: Farmersville Elementary in Bethlehem Township, Pennsylvania.

The Project: **The Tiger Trek.** Students earned pledge money by walking laps around the school soccer fields for half an hour; walkers who brought in \$20 or more were entered in a drawing to win sports equipment.

The Payoff: \$12,000 for the PTA to fund school upgrades and enrichment programs.

NAMED FOR THE SCHOOL'S MASCOT, the Farmersville Tiger, the Tiger Trek was inspired by a March of Dimes walk that Cathy Shay completed as a child. "I felt a sense of accomplishment crossing the final checkpoint," she remembers. "I wanted to pass that feeling on to my three sons."

The program she came up with raises funds, self-esteem, and fitness. "With all the talk about childhood obesity and body mass index, I knew a healthy walk would be the best fund-raiser for us," Cathy says. And she was right. The 557 walkers strutted right past the event's \$10,000 goal.

Volunteers designed the pledge-collection envelopes and lap-recording cards, picked out a small sneaker charm for each walker, shopped for raffle prizes, and ordered T-shirts and water bottles for top walkers and pledge getters. On the day of the walk, 50 adults were on hand to mark off laps at checkpoints, run the water stops, direct classes to the proper fields, and take pictures.

As for the young Farmersville Tigers? "They loved the walk!" Cathy gushes. "The fifth graders wanted to do it again the next day!"

Cathy's tip: Maximize participation by planning the event for a school day.



Fund-raising Classics



Wide World of Pledge-a-thons

The idea: Do just about anything — but collect money for it.

If you can do anything at all, then you can do that thing a lot — and collect pledges in the process. Here's a list of ideas for marathon-style events.

★ **Bike-a-thons and trike-a-thons:** Older kids complete miles and younger ones laps around a track. One Tricycle Rodeo in Upland, California, even had the trikes decked out like steeds, with the tots in full cowboy regalia!

★ **Miracle Marathons:** Kids log a cumulative 26.2 miles of walking, running, or other exercise over a designated period of time.

★ **Serve-a-thons:** Students volunteer a number of hours to clean up city parks, visit nursing homes, or perform other acts of kindness.

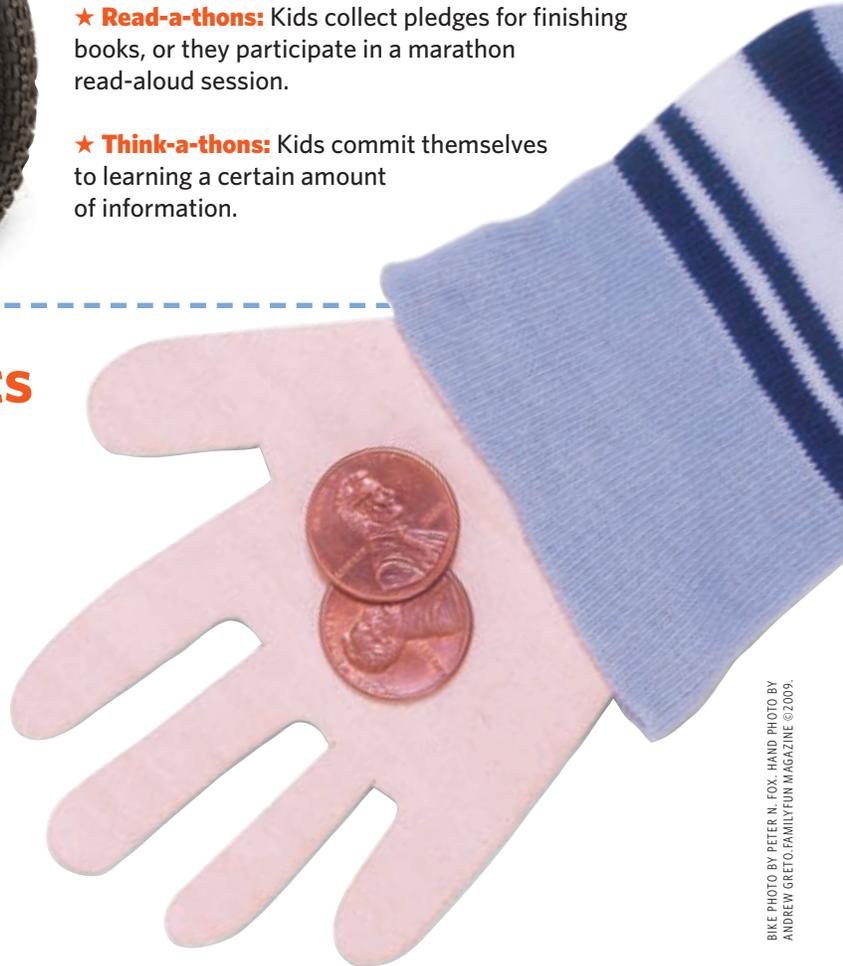
★ **Read-a-thons:** Kids collect pledges for finishing books, or they participate in a marathon read-aloud session.

★ **Think-a-thons:** Kids commit themselves to learning a certain amount of information.

When "War" Makes Cents

The idea: Use a classroom competition to rake in bucks by the bucketful.

A penny war combines the simplicity of a donation jar with the fun of a good-natured prank. It's a fund drive parents have praised as remarkably effortless. Classrooms compete against one another by collecting pennies in labeled milk jugs; the classroom with the most at the end of the week wins. Where's the prank? Students can sabotage other collections — and yet benefit the school — by filling the jars of their rivals with silver or paper money: every nonpenny cent gets subtracted from the penny total. Some schools tally daily totals to fan the flames of friendly rivalry; others wait until the end and award the winning class a prize. Either way, it's one coin-op competition the school can bank on.





Fund-raising Classics

More Bake Sale Bucks

The idea: Use easy tricks to increase your bake sale profits.

★ **Package it right:** Seal brownies, snack mixes, and other treats in clear plastic wrap or bags. Ask your child to tie them up with curling ribbon and add a handmade label. Or set out cookies, unwrapped, in a cloth-lined basket or tray.

★ **Soar to new heights:** Maria Olia of Newton, Massachusetts, suggests arranging boxes under a colorful tablecloth so all the baked goods are attractively displayed at a variety of heights.

★ **Entice them with free samples:** If baked goods arrive crumbled, don't toss them out. Set out a plateful as free samples.

★ **Make eating easy:** Provide a basket of forks and napkins so folks can instantly enjoy their purchases. Ask one parent (or a local business) to donate cartons of milk, juice, or water.

★ **Think "bakery sale":** Charge about 50 percent of your local bakery store prices. Also, price items in 25-cent increments to simplify change making.

★ **Sell single servings:** A whole cake may sell for just \$8, while individual slices can sell for \$1 to \$2 each, netting you \$10 to \$16.

★ **Make prices easy to view:** Ask kids to make a mini sign for each item that lists the price. Or make one big price poster and set it up on an easel.

★ **Ask for donations:** Instead of pricing each item, ask for donations (people can be surprisingly generous).

★ **Have an End-of-the-Day Sale:** When the bake sale is winding down, cut your prices in half. Mark the sale prices with a red pen or bright stickers.



Slime and Punishment

The idea: Inspire schoolkids to raise money by appealing to their principals!

Most students have a story about the self-sacrificing fund-raising antics of their principal. To these brave leaders and the many others who ran laps, got soaked in dunking booths, took kids to lunch, and auctioned off their priceless time, skills, or pride for the common good, we salute you. A few of our heroes:

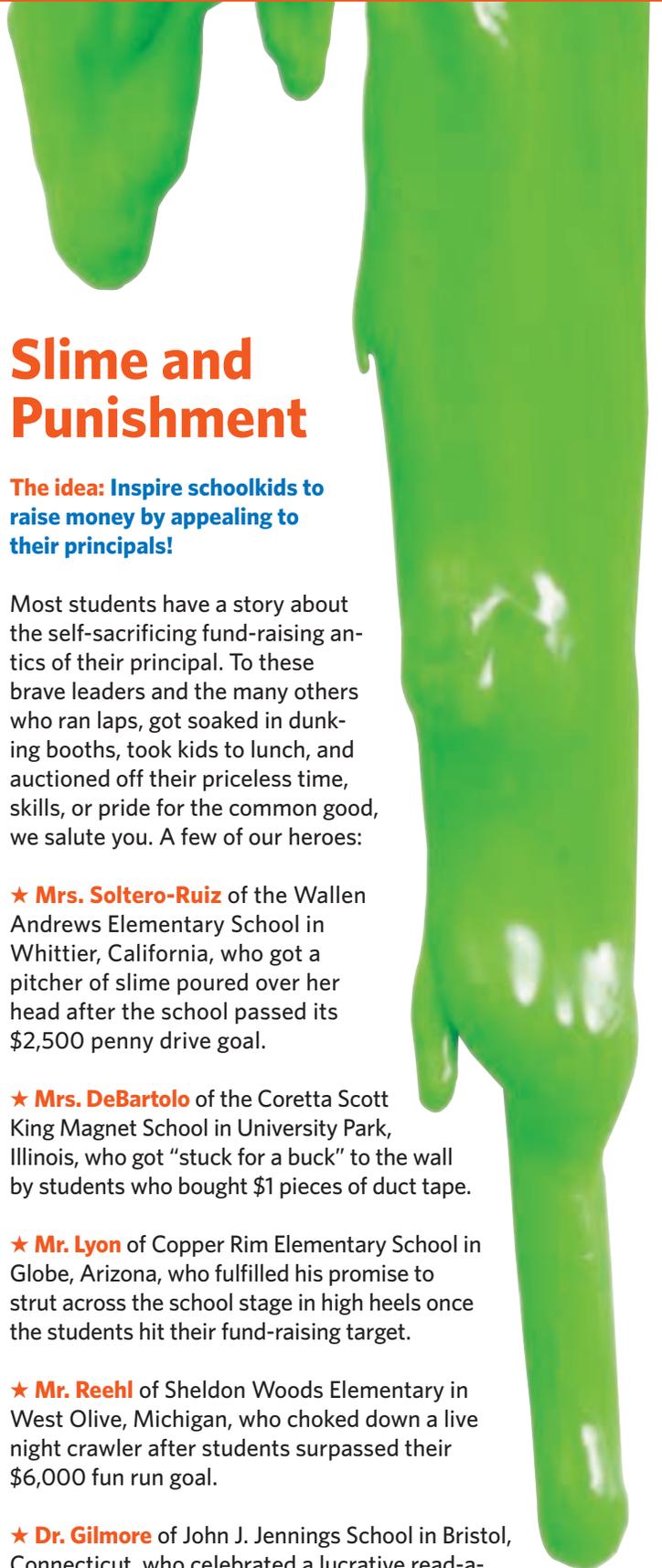
★ **Mrs. Soltero-Ruiz** of the Wallen Andrews Elementary School in Whittier, California, who got a pitcher of slime poured over her head after the school passed its \$2,500 penny drive goal.

★ **Mrs. DeBartolo** of the Coretta Scott King Magnet School in University Park, Illinois, who got "stuck for a buck" to the wall by students who bought \$1 pieces of duct tape.

★ **Mr. Lyon** of Copper Rim Elementary School in Globe, Arizona, who fulfilled his promise to strut across the school stage in high heels once the students hit their fund-raising target.

★ **Mr. Reehl** of Sheldon Woods Elementary in West Olive, Michigan, who choked down a live night crawler after students surpassed their \$6,000 fun run goal.

★ **Dr. Gilmore** of John J. Jennings School in Bristol, Connecticut, who celebrated a lucrative read-a-thon by kissing a pig.



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