

# Fundraising



## Objective

*Conduct profitable fundraisers that engage students in meaningful ways and promote health.*



## Key Messages

**Many food fundraisers used in schools undermine the health of students and families.**

- Label redemption programs often promote foods of poor nutritional quality, and schools make very little money while companies get free marketing. For example, a school that collects 1,200 soup can labels earns six sets of nine Crayola colored pencils, valued at \$12. At \$1.20 per can of soup, families have to spend \$1,440 –or 120 times the actual cost of the pencils –to earn this reward.<sup>1</sup>

- Tie-ins with fast food restaurants provide a marketing opportunity for those restaurants but do not benefit the students or family members and offer little profit for the school.
- Selling unhealthy foods for student fundraisers provides inconsistent messaging on health and wellness because it conflicts with key health messages and activities that the school promotes, including nutrition topics taught in the classroom and the benefits of physical activity and participating in athletics.

**Practical, science-based nutrition standards can provide guidance to promote a healthy school environment.**

- As of July 1, 2014, schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are required to follow the USDA's Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards (see "Key Resources" section below) which regulates the food sold during the school day, including fundraising events.
- In Minnesota, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may apply for exemptions from this rule, but the aim is to completely phase out exemptions.<sup>2</sup>

**Healthy fundraising is easy, fun, meaningful and profitable.**

- Fun runs, walk-a-thons, read-a-thons, book fairs, sock hops, jump rope contests, recycling fundraisers, push-ups for pennies, plant sales and auctions are just a few examples of fundraisers that demonstrate the school's commitment to both education and wellness.
- Revenue from healthy fundraisers can equal or surpass what can be earned from food fundraisers because a large portion of the profits will not be directed to a company. For example, in ISD 192, Akin Road elementary school's Tiger Trot Run/Walk raised \$10,000 (t-shirt expense was \$1,600 ); Riverview Elementary's walk-a-thon made nearly \$8,000; North Trail Elementary's read-a-thon earned \$1,500.



## Key Strategies

- **Determine which type of fundraising supports the message you want to promote.** For example, a bike-a-thon sends a strong message that people value children being physically active.
- **Adopt a policy or practice to replace unhealthy fundraising with healthy fundraising.** Healthy food items, non-food items, and active fundraisers are great alternatives to unhealthy food sales. For fundraisers that take place during the school day, utilize the USDA's Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Foods that do not meet the USDA's Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards cannot be sold to students on campus during the school day, unless if the LEA applies for and receives an exemption. In Minnesota, these exemptions are awarded on a case-by-case basis.<sup>2</sup>
- **Adopt a policy or practice that excludes the acceptance of unhealthy food donations.** There are many other types of donations from parents and local businesses that can help make your event successful. See implementation resources for ideas.
- **Distribute fundraising guidelines and alternative options to school staff, student groups, and parents.** Provide information as to why those guidelines and options are important to the health and well-being of students.
- **Pilot an active fundraiser such as a walk-a-thon. Involve staff, parents, and students in planning a pilot event.** See implementation resources for suggestions and ideas to plan and implement your fundraiser.
- **Explore grant opportunities to help fund costs associated with healthy fundraising events.** For example, look into mini-grant opportunities with Fuel up to Play 60.



## Sample Policy Language

“To support children’s health and school nutrition education efforts, fundraising activities will focus on non-food activities or will use only foods that meet the Institute of Medicine standards.”

“The school district will develop a list of ideas for acceptable fundraising activities and disseminate the list of healthy fundraising options to schools and student organizations as a resource.”

“The nutritional needs and health of students will take precedence over profit generation.”

“Schools will encourage fundraising activities that promote physical activity.”

“The superintendent, with the assistance of the School Wellness Committee, will create and promote a list of non-food fundraising activities, specifically those involving promoting physical activity. Schools will be required to use the non-food activities identified in the list in at least 50% of fundraising activities.”



## Success Stories

### Akin Road Elementary, ISD 192, Farmington, MN Tiger Trot Run/Walk 2011

A Farmington Elementary school made a commitment to student wellness and positive family engagement by shifting school fundraising from candy and junk food sales to organizing a run/walk event. The “Tiger Trot Run/Walk” was not only a blast for the 400 students and their families who participated, but it also successfully raised over \$10,000 in one day! There were a number of key components that made this event successful:

- **Student and family involvement:** every student who raised \$25 received a free t-shirt, and any student who raised over \$100 received a medal and was recognized in class – and invited to have lunch with the principal!
- **Donations from local running stores:** running bibs, start/finish banners, a large time clock and paper products for food and water were donated by local running stores, Sam’s Club and Saver’s.
- **Teacher volunteers:** 36 teachers assisted with the water station, punching stamps as each students completed a lap. The teachers also sold water bottles and cheered on participants.
- **Pre-event promotion:** students posted flyers and posters around the school, and each morning announcement “commercials” were broadcast over the public address system. A “mystery person” dressed up as a gingerbread man made a guest appearance at the event. (It’s still a mystery who was in that costume)!

---

### North Trail Elementary, ISD 192, Farmington, MN Read-a-Thon 2013

Reading, one of the basic tenets of a good education, can also be an engaging fundraising opportunity! North Trail Elementary School, with a student enrollment of approximately 600 students, coupled their annual read-a-thon with a fundraiser that generated over \$10,000. In the 10 days leading up to the read-a-thon, students asked for pledges motivated by the incentive that the top two students would get to be “principal for the day.” Donors were motivated by knowing that all of the funds would help keep the school library open during the summer months and stock the library with new nonfiction, research and autobiography books for students to use.



## Resources for Implementation

- **Alliance Alternative Fundraising Ideas:**  
<http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/healthwellness/pdfs/healthiergenfundraisingalt.pdf>
- **A+ Fundraisers for High Schools:**  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cdp/fantastic-fund-hs.pdf>
- **Sweet Deals: School Fundraising can be Healthy and Profitable:**  
<http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/schoolfundraising.pdf>
- **Healthy Fundraisers: Promote Family Health and Well-Being**  
<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/fundraisers-family-health-f1.pdf>
- **DonorsChoose.org:** [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org)
- **Smart Snacks in Schools USDA's All Foods Sold in Schools Standards:**  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods_flyer.pdf)
- **Smart Snacks in School Fundraisers: Guidelines to the national regulation**  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods\\_fundraisers.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/allfoods_fundraisers.pdf)
- **Minnesota Department of Education: Fundraisers and Smart Snacks in Schools:**  
A guide to the fundraising regulations in Minnesota <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/FNS/SNP/055542>

### Sources:

1. Center for Science in the Public Interest. (2007). *Sweet Deals: School Fundraising can be Healthy and Profitable*. Accessed February, 2013.

*Smart Choices is a partnership of the Dakota County Public Health Department and school districts in Dakota County committed to making the healthy choice the easy choice by creating opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity before, during and after school.*

*Smart Choices is made possible by funding from the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota through the Center for Prevention. Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® of Minnesota is a nonprofit independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.*

Dakota County  
Public Health Department  
1 Mendota Road West, Suite 410  
West St. Paul, MN 55118-4771  
651.554.6100  
[www.dakotacounty.us](http://www.dakotacounty.us)



December 2015