Suggestions for Getting Classroom Grants & Donations

Looking for additional funds for your classroom? How do you get started? If you ask, will they give? Following are some hints and ideas for making a compelling case.

Seeking donations
Donations from a local company can come in the form of In-kind Goods/Services, such as printing up tee-shirts for a sports team or donating a computer, or Cash. If you can succinctly state your need and the reasons why a business should help out ("what's in it for them"), a local company might just match your project funds.

Remember, the folks that sell it might not be the best ones to approach to give it. A business that is seemingly unrelated to your project might be just the one that gives. For example, say you need flower seeds and clay pots. If the local garden shop turns down your request for a donation, try your insurance broker or branch bank for cash to help buy what you need.

Before you head out to talk to local business people, friends and family about why they should want to donate to your classroom, take a few minutes to develop your tools. We recommend coming up with an "elevator speech" and writing a solicitation letter before talking to prospective funders.

Time is Money: Say a lot in a short amount of time!
The "elevator speech" is a brief, carefully constructed statement used by sales people, entrepreneurs and job seekers to tell people the most important information quickly. Click on Ride an Elevator to Fame and Fortune (http://www.saleslinks.com/sideline/99c/11v1.htm) to read about the six elements of an "elevator speech" and to try out their "elevator speech" generator which you can adapt to your situation and print out.

Where are your "elevators"? Where will you run into folks who can help you out…the gym? A PTA meeting? The grocery store? The bowling alley? A neighborhood cookout? It's all fair game.

Drafting a solicitation letter
Preparing short solicitation letters for a foundation, a corporation, or a local civic group can be more difficult in some respects than writing a big proposal. This letter should relay the request and describe the project and its outcomes concisely, but persuasively.

Applying for Grants
There is plenty of information on the Internet about grants and how to apply for them. It is a tough funding climate right now, so the better prepared you are, the better your chances. On the right side of this page are some web sites to start off your search. Some websites to check include:

- Grants Alert: http://www.grantsalert.com/
- ESchool News: http://www.eschoolnews.com/funding/
- Technology Grant News: http://www.technologygrantnews.com/grant-index-by-type/school-grants.html
- Search "grants for schools" to find corporate funding opportunities

Don't forget the power of looking locally. There are thousands of small private or community-based foundations that give smaller grants in their region. Ask your local businesses whether they have a small grants program for local schools or classrooms; both national chains and independently owned businesses often have a regular schedule of contributions.
To find foundations in your region, search at the Foundation Center's web site (http://fdncenter.org/). On the left side of the page, look for the "Foundation Finder" button. Search for your state or city first. That will bring up foundations that are based there as well as those that give to programs in your region. When you check out a foundation web site, first look to see if they give money to education projects. The Foundation Center has many documents with recommendations on how to write successful proposals.

Talk to your school district grants office or check the district web page to see if anyone has compiled a list of local grant and donation resources.

If you or your school district are thinking about applying for an National Science Foundation Grant, be sure to review the NSF "A Guide for Proposal Writing" which is available on-line as a .pdf doc or in HTML format. GuideStar.org provides a grantwriting tips and wisdom in its "Grantwriting 102: Tips from Successful Grantwriters" feature.

**Plan Your Project**
If you are thinking about developing a bigger grant project, don't wait until you sit down to write proposal to plan the project. There's great project planning basics information at the Tucson-Pima Public Library website (http://www.library.pima.gov/research/grants/guide.php) that will help you get organized. Get the scoop from a grant-seeking pro with David G. Bauer's Grantseeking Primer for Classroom Leaders.

**Interesting Articles**
The Funding Center section of the eSchool News web site is a rich resource, especially for technology funding. Features include upcoming grant deadlines, funding news and advice on planning and writing your grant proposal.

**Links for donations**
"Business needs to help students in the classroom"
Article to print out and take with you when you "pitch" a local business.

iLoveSchools.com is a free matchmaking service for education! Teachers request materials and supplies while school supporters search for a school in need of their gifts of money, new or used goods or other educational supplies. iLoveSchools.com supports any institution that educates children, including pre-schools, home schools and private and public schools.

**Links to sites with great links**
SchoolGrants: Excellent site with tons of resources that offers a vast array of information to elementary and secondary school grant seekers at no cost.

eSchool News' Grants and Funding Clearinghouse: Register for on-line section for free to explore ongoing grant awards and opportunities and get insights on grant seeking.

Teachers Network's Grants: "How To": This nationwide, non-profit education organization has lots of resources. They also list specific grants in the Science and Technology sections.

National Science Teachers Association: A source of lots of information about grants, awards and fellowships…you just have to dig it out. When you click on the NSTA Calendar section of their web site, look on the right side of the page for "Events by Category." Check under Awards/Competitions and Grants/Fellowships.