

Recommended “Healthy” Fundraisers and Fundraisers to Avoid

Recommended “Healthy” Fundraisers (See Table 1)

- **Walk-a-thons and “fun runs.”** Increasingly popular, walk-a-thons and 5Ks promote physical activity and can raise significant funds.
- **Book fairs.** This popular fundraiser promotes literacy while raising revenue.
- **Non-food product sales.** The possibilities are endless. Fundraising companies help schools sell jewelry, toys, personal care products, plants, candles, and many other products.
- **Scrip/Schoolpop.** Scrip or schoolpop is a gift card for use at local grocery stores, clothing stores, coffee shops, or other retail stores. Schools purchase scrip at a discount from those retailers. There is no added cost to parents, who purchase the scrip for the full face value and spend it, like a gift card, at participating stores. Schools make money because they get to keep the difference between the discounted price they pay the retailer and the full face value that parents pay them.
- **Sale of school-related promotional items.** Sales of T-shirts, sweatshirts, pens, pencils, book covers, water bottles, and other items branded with the school logo can help build school spirit and raise funds.
- **Gift wrap sales.** Ask gift wrap companies for catalogs that do not include candy and other low-nutrition foods in addition to wrapping paper.
- **Recycling fundraisers.** Recycling companies purchase used items, such as clothing, printer cartridges, and cell phones, from schools.
- **Healthy food sales.** Schools can sell healthy food products such as fruit, spices, bottled water, or granola bars.
- **Grocery store fundraisers.** Grocery stores give a percentage of community members’ purchases to a designated local school.
- **Scratch cards/discount cards.** Participants scratch dots on cards to designate a donation amount. In exchange for making the indicated donation to the school, participants receive discount coupons from local businesses.
- **Ask parents for a donation at the beginning of the school year.** Many parents prefer to pay an upfront donation to the school to reduce the number of other fundraisers during the rest of the school year. Parents can pay the fee in one lump sum or in installments over the school year.
- **Auctions.** Auctions can be very profitable, though also labor intensive, and ideally include several big-ticket items donated by local businesses.

- **Car Washes.** Car washes also promote school spirit and physical activity.
- **Cookbook fundraisers.** Schools collect recipes from students, staff, and prominent community members to create a cookbook, which is sold to members of the community.

Fundraisers to Improve

- **Convert sales of foods and beverages through a la carte and vending machines from low-nutrition to healthier foods and beverages.** Many schools are finding that they can raise just as much money selling healthier products through a la carte and vending as they did by selling soda and junk food. In addition, the revenue raised by schools through a la carte and vending is likely offset by decreases in sales from the National School Lunch Program, through which schools receive reimbursements from the federal government.
 - **A la carte.** A la carte food and beverage items are sold individually – in place of or alongside of reimbursable meals – in school cafeterias. A la carte sales generally constitute the largest source of food and beverage sales outside of school meals. Since only children with spending money can purchase a la carte items and reimbursable meals are free to low-income students, the sale of a la carte foods can stigmatize the reimbursable school meals.
 - **Vending.** Overwhelmingly, the snacks (85%) and beverages (75%) available from school vending machines are of poor nutritional quality. The average amount of sugary drinks high school students consume out of school vending machines is enough so that over four years of high school, a student could gain an extra 9.6 pounds.^A Though school beverage contracts appear to be lucrative, the funds raised usually represent less than 0.5% of school districts' budgets; school beverage contracts raise an average of just \$18 for schools and/or districts per student per year.

Fundraisers to Avoid (See Table 1)

- **Bake sales.** Cookies, cakes, and other sweet baked goods are leading sources of calories, sugars, and saturated and trans fats in children's diets. This unhealthy, time-consuming, and relatively unprofitable fundraiser also requires parents to pay twice: once for the ingredients for the baked goods and a second time when they give their children money to buy those baked goods.

^A If the calories are not compensated for through physical activity or reduced intake of other calories.

- **Candy, cookie dough, doughnut, pizza, or pizza kit sales.** Enlisting school children to sell products for junk-food manufacturers sends kids the wrong message about the importance of healthy eating.
- **School fundraisers at fast-food restaurants.** A restaurant offers a school a cut of the sales on a week night designated for the fundraiser. This is a marketing opportunity for the restaurant to drum up business and associate its brand with the school. Nutritionally, such fundraisers are of concern because the majority of choices available at most fast-food restaurants are too high in calories, saturated and trans fat, or salt and include few fruits, vegetables, or whole grains.
- **Label redemption programs that include many low-nutrition products.** For these programs, students' families are asked to purchase products from particular companies and then turn the labels (or other proof of purchase, such as box tops) into the school, which redeems them for school supplies or money. In both the Campbell's Labels for Education Fundraising Program and the General Mills' Box Tops for Education Program, 80% of eligible products are of poor nutritional quality.

Table 1. Healthy v. Unhealthy Fundraising Options Available to Schools

RECOMMENDED^B Healthy Fundraisers	AVOID Unhealthy Fundraisers
A la carte and vending machine sales that meet nutrition standards ^A	Bake sales
Auctions	Candy, cookie dough, and doughnut sales
"Bakeless" bake sales (i.e., parents donate the amount of money to the school that they otherwise would have spent at a bake sale; no baked goods are sold)	Fundraisers at fast-food restaurants
Book fairs	Label redemption programs that include products of poor nutritional quality
Bottled water sales	Pizza or pizza kit sales
Calendars, stationery, greeting cards, and picture frames	Sale of foods and beverages of poor nutritional quality through a la carte, vending, or school stores ^C
Candles, ceramics	
Car washes	
Cookbook fundraisers	
Coupon books and scratch cards	
Fruit sales	
Fun runs, walk-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, golf tournaments, sporting events	
Grocery store fundraiser	
Holiday decorations/ornaments, novelties	
Jewelry, clothing, accessories, and personal care products	
Magazine subscriptions	
Plants and flowers	
Raffles	
Recycling of clothing, cell phones, and printer cartridges	
Safety and first aid kit sales	
Scrip and gift checks	
Spices	
Toys	
Wrapping paper	

^B See Appendix A for the contact information for fundraising companies that sell these products.

^C See Table 3 for nutrition and portion size standards.