



BECAUSE EDUCATION MATTERS MOST

641 Bloor St W., Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario M6G1L1
T 416.534.0100 F 416.536.0100

Results from People for Education Poll

Conducted on Survey Monkey between May 10, 2007 until May 24, 2007.

Summary of results:

During a two week period in May/07, over 200 people responded to our internet poll regarding fundraising for schools. Here's what you told us:

73% think parents and school should fundraise.

But where do we draw the line?

Over three quarters believe parents and schools **should not** fundraise for *teachers, education assistants, building renovations or classroom supplies and textbooks.*

More Results:

*What do you believe parents and schools **should not** fundraise for?*

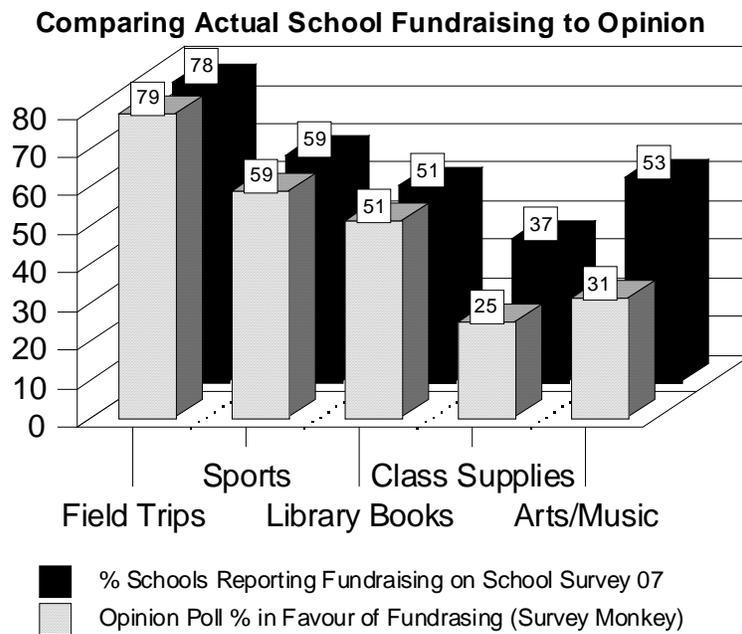
Here is what you told us:

- 90% not for Teachers
- 86% not for Educational Assistants
- 83% not for Building Renovations, Air Conditioning or Heating Systems
- 75% not for Classroom Supplies, Textbooks, or Furniture
- 71% not for Science Labs
- 69% not for Gymnasiums or Musical Instruction
- 68% not for Art Instruction
- 62% not for Computers and Software
- 49% not for Library Books
- 47% not for Musical Instruments
- 41% not for Sports Equipment
- 35% not for Playground Equipment
- 21% not for Field Trips

Comparing Opinions to Reality

Actual fundraising in schools reflects the comfort level of respondents for fundraising to some degree. When the results of People for Education’s Annual Elementary Survey are compared to this opinion poll, opinions match the reality of fundraising practice in schools regarding field trips, sports and library books.

In some areas though, parents and schools are fundraising against their better judgment. There is a significant discrepancy between the reality (the percentage of schools reporting they fundraise for classroom supplies and arts/music) compared to the opinions of respondents regarding whether we should be fundraising for these necessities.



Your Thoughtful Comments:

One hundred and forty-seven people took the time to write personal comments regarding fundraising. Thank you! The vast majority expressed concern about fundraising beyond the “extras” and worried about creating schools with more resources in wealthier neighbourhoods while students in less affluent areas did without. But not everyone agreed, and people struggled with where to draw the line.

It is clear that these conversations need to continue as we grapple with the complexities of school fundraising, how much is too much and where do we draw the line?

Many issues were highlighted. Here are some of the reflections:

Small Schools:

“The numbers of students at small schools are dropping because small schools can’t provide the same extras or sometimes even basic supplies that a large school can. We’re not big enough to fundraise for something like a science lab. The funding formula needs to change. Small schools need more money per student. But putting an end to fundraising will hurt small schools in a big way.”

“I resent raising money for safety equipment such as padding for the wall behind the basketball net (as our parent council just did) or repairing playground equipment for safety purposes. This should be the school board’s concern and expense. I resent raising money for books, school supplies, and art classes these are critical for education and should be paid for out of other funds. I just watched the news and it was pointed out the differences in the amount of money to be raised in different neighbourhoods because of wealth in certain areas. This is also true of small schools, such as ours, who have to rely on fewer families for raising money but still need to provide the same things.”

Arts and Music:

“Children learn in a variety of different ways and ensuring the art and music supplies and instruction receive adequate funding in schools. If funds for these important programs need to come from the fundraising efforts of School Councils, what happens when Council is unable to raise these funds, or chooses to support another initiative?”

“If school fundraising stopped, a lot of the extra programs that the school sets up for the children would have to be cancelled due to lack of funds.”

“I have mixed feelings regarding this question. I do believe that schools should be able to fundraise for visiting artists, scientists in the schools, plays. However, I also believe that children should have access to these programs no matter what school they attend.”

“Fundraising results in inequitable school environments, particularly when funds are used for computers, musical instruments, sports equipment, textbooks etc. It is unconceivable to me that fundraising dollars might be used for building renovations or for teachers - that is for the government to fund. I could support fundraising that is used to help families who are less fortunate pay for school trips or pizza days.”

Positive Aspects:

“Some fundraising may be a good idea in the hopes of building the “school community” – shared goals; shared effort. Many feel good about making a contribution – either \$\$\$ or time – for a positive outcome.”

“While fundraising is a wonderful and positive way for parents to become involved in their child’s education, it is elitist and unfair unless a significant portion of the funds they raise are donated to other schools in need.”

“All efforts to add to the quality of children’s education should be encouraged.”

Excessive Fundraising:

“I agree that fundraising is necessary at some point, but lately it's just been getting ridiculous! It seems every time we turn around the school is sending something home for fundraising or receipt/Campbell's soup labels. I support our son's school whenever I can but it's getting to the point where it's embarrassing to bring ANOTHER form into work to pass around because your son or daughter is too young to do it themselves. Let's not forget the footwork our older children are having to do to raise funds for his/her school when they should be concentrating more on their school work. Fundraising for your school is fine.....in moderation!”

“It has become quite excessive and can be a drain of the family budget.”

“Unfortunately, in the list above, there are very few items that parents are NOT obligated to fundraise for. When there is so little available from the board / province, most of the above items simply would not be funded otherwise. Sad but true!”

“I hate fundraising. I hate that Parent Council is all about fundraising. I hate even more that the ridiculous "funding" formulas are forcing parents into this position. I hate that school boards are sitting on funds for special needs because teachers/ principals and parents don't know how to access them. But I'm not going to let the students in the schools this year and next year do without on a point of principal. I will keep fundraising until the government does its job. And yes, I do realize that the government won't fix the funding until forced and by making up the difference parents are allowing this to continue.”

“We have become inundated with an increased number of school fundraisers over the years. I have been with the Home & School and the School Council for the last 10 years and I am so sick of fundraising for things that I think our tax dollars should pay for.”

“I believe that there is too much fundraising in every level of the community. We pay our taxes to the school system and yet it is not enough. Being the mother of four children the fundraising that is expected can seem overwhelming at times between school, extracurricular activities and the never ending phone solicitors who want your money. There should be another solution to this growing need for fundraising within the school communities.”

“Many parents think it is their duty to raise funds for the school and come forward with lots of ideas for new money-making schemes. We live in a "me, me, me" society and it's all about having the best for my kid and if that means holding fundraiser after fundraiser, so be it. That is certainly not my philosophy.”

“One difficulty is insurance and upkeep. If parents fundraise for, e.g. playground equipment, who will be responsible for repairs and upkeep?”

Widening the Gap; the Moral Dilemma:

“Fundraising works for the rich not the poor.”

“School Council fundraising has become a reality in these in these days of budget cutbacks. However, I believe it should be to enhance the basics not to provide the basics. The moral dilemma comes when you consider the schools with councils who do not fundraise or in communities where parents cannot afford to support fundraising. Are the children then disadvantaged in their education? Should opportunities for fun and additional opportunities be available only to select children within the board?

“Ideally, we should not have to fundraise for our schools but we are so far from a perfect world. When parents fundraise, we end up with great discrepancies between our schools. I must say that in spite of this belief, I have been involved in very huge and successful fundraising efforts for my son's schools over the years - and as a result he has benefited immensely.”

“Fundraising would create pressure on not as wealthy students and parents. Students may compare with each other on how much each of them raised. It may make those students and parents who could not afford the donation have a low self esteem and feel not as welcomed. It may also have overt or covert conflicts between students, parents or even with the school. It also creates unequal education environment for students in different school. It is a public school and the education should be provided for free. All schools should have the same level of resources to provide an equal learning opportunity for everybody, no matter how rich or poor they are. I could accept occasional fundraising only if the money goes out to other charities and the purpose is to teach students to care for other people in need.”

“I am worried that if we move to a neighbourhood with lower incomes the school will not be able to accommodate the basic needs if all the above items are not covered by the school board. I am concerned that my child is in Jr. Kindergarten (this is my first experience in the school board) and I have already put out approximately \$500 of our own money for fundraising and school supplies that were requested. I am afraid that if I do not give this level of money that my child will be viewed as "not beneficial" in the school system and will not be helped by the teachers if help is needed. I can't volunteer in the school as I need to work and therefore I feel the need to help out financially so that my child isn't viewed as a burden to the school board.”

“If school Boards rely on parent fundraising for things they should provide in the first place, schools located in less affluent areas will yet again have less to offer to their students.”

“I believe that fundraising stats are way off. I work for an arts organization that places artists in schools. We raise hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to pay for this. The schools pay only a portion. We are only one organization among many who do this. Not one penny comes from the Ministry of Education. I appreciate the work you do to inform

the public of how short schools are on their goals to provide what their students need. Our work is mainly in schools north of the 401. The difference between these schools and other GTA schools is nothing short of remarkable. They have nothing. Some don't even have a parent council. The children and teachers are wonderful. I love working with them.”

“What your recent report does not discuss are the many schools (there are a number in the GTA) that have set up their own charitable foundations. Parents at some schools got together, hired a lawyer and designed foundations. The parents then solicit donations for the foundation and make donations themselves. They get tax receipts for their donations as these are charitable organizations. A parent from one such school came to speak to my school council about setting up a foundation. She told us their foundation raises over \$100,000 annually. There are 300 students in her elementary school. All money from the foundation is given to the school. The government and the board have no say in how that money is spent. The parents decide. Essentially, this is a private school that operates in our public system and the parents receive tax receipts for their "fees" or "donations". I have researched some of this and sent the findings to the TDSB Equity Department and the Chair of the Board. I received no reply. No one wants to talk about this, yet I think it is a very serious issue. Our schools are very inequitable and this situation only highlights how bad the "fundraising" problem is. Your statistics don't include the hundreds of thousands of dollars funneled into schools through these private foundations.”

“I don't think schools should fundraise for anything other than field trips, and this is a guarded answer.”

“PLEASE DONT DRAW ANY LINES UNTIL OUR PENCILS ARE SHARP.... I hate fundraising - I would love to have what I consider the basics of a solid education provided through the public school system, but it isn't, and until it is, I will be selling chocolates and running dance-a-thons.”

Looking for Solutions:

“As the Chair of the fundraising committee for our school, I want to know how much fundraising is enough. It seems that no matter how much money we raise, there is always a need for more. It would be nice if the board would make a list of acceptable things to fundraise for (perhaps by making public the results of this survey).”

“There should be a provincial statement on an ethical guideline for business in schools, partnership, and fundraising. One such ethical guideline example is that money raised is not for items that should be funded and that any monies be distributed in an equitable manner so it does not increase any disadvantage.”

“I think fundraising should be shared with other schools in your board if not the rest of the schools in the province.”

“Somehow, school boards need to equalize the have and have not schools. One possibility is through cafeteria sales and vendor machine sales in well off high schools,

share a percentage with disadvantaged communities. Raise awareness to parents, teachers and staff to think about less fortunate schools in their board communities. Ministry needs to fund schools where they have low EQA scores, low economic and social challenges with extra staffing, food and social workers.”

Wealthier Communities or Schools

“If wealthier school districts can raise more money, they should be allowed to do so. Restricting wealthier school districts from raising money just drags down the top groups and does not make the bottom groups better. All it accomplishes is to keep all the schools at a lower level. If you want to avoid a "two-tier system" then have the province spend more in the poorer school districts.”

“Fund raising is working just fine thank you very much. There is no reason why those who may be more affluent should not raise money for certain things - which they should be able choose. I pay taxes that support all schools and I do not mind paying extra for local school purposes. It is quite natural for people who can afford to enhance their own school and the services it provides to our children. Two-tier is quite natural for those who want to pay.”

Funding for Education:

“Tax dollars should cover all the essentials for every school. Fundraising dollars should be used for community building within the school and parental involvement in the school.”

“If schools need money, raise taxes. It’s very simple.”

“If parents are raising \$500,000,000 odd a year the system is clearly under funded by \$500,000,000 a year.”

“The government funding should provide for the needs of our students. The schools should have enough money to buy texts, update computers and equipment and give our students a relevant, up to date education. This is a publicly funded education system so all students in Ontario should be offered the same opportunities. The lack of government funding and the increase in fundraising will only allow for more discrepancies between schools and available programs. Why should students attending schools in the well-to-do neighbourhoods have more opportunities than students attending school in the low income neighbourhoods? This is not public education at its finest.”

“If the government would put their priorities where they should & spend money on the 2 most important things--Education & health care, there would be no need for fundraising in schools because what we need would be provided.”

“I thought we paid taxes for theses very things. Parents shouldn't have to raise funds for what our tax dollars should already be paying for. We are already taken away from our children enough having to work 40 hours a week or more. Plus do all the research, go to therapies, meetings, take care of the house, etc...We are robbed of so much precious time

with our children already. The government should cough over the dough for these necessities for our children. The way they are increasing education and minimizing the teaching staff is ridiculous. Don't forget...they are our future, give them a fighting chance.”

“School fundraising should be for extra curriculum activities or fundraising the rest should be taken care of with our tax dollars.”

“Unfortunately, schools have come to depend upon fundraising dollars. If we all stopped fundraising, what would our schools be like? I think we would see how inadequately schools are funded. I believe fundraising should be done for the "extras" in education. Not for the essentials.”

“I don't believe that parents should be fundraising for things that the government should be paying for.”

People for Education is an independent parents' group working to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

You can reach us at: P.O. Box 64, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2S6

Phone: 416-534-0100 Fax: 416-536-0100 Email: p4e@peopleforeducation.com

www.peopleforeducation.com