Establishing Your Crowdfunding Policy
K–12 Crowdfunding Best Practices
Dear AASA members,

Since last year, AASA and DonorsChoose.org have been working together to support school districts looking to leverage crowdfunding to support district priorities.

After launching the Crowdfunding Best Practices Toolkit for district leaders, we heard that many school districts are creating crowdfunding policies for the first time. This new toolkit is designed to help public school districts put in place a smart crowdfunding policy that protects students, teachers and your school districts — all while celebrating classroom innovation.

Thank you for reading on!

Charles Best  
Founder & CEO  
DonorsChoose.org

Daniel A. Domenech  
Executive Director  
The School Superintendents Association

View Toolkit Part 1
6 Steps to Implement Your Crowdfunding Policy

Crowdfunding is an easy way for your teachers to gain new resources that help them innovate in their classrooms. When districts guide teachers to safe sites like DonorsChoose.org, resources gained through these platforms can dramatically impact student learning, while ensuring district accountability needs are met. This toolkit outlines six steps district superintendents, CTOs, CFOs, and other leaders take in harnessing crowdfunding:

1. Adopt a Clear Policy
2. Communicate Policy & Engage Principals
3. Train Teachers
4. Engage District Stakeholders
5. Input Your Technology Guidelines
6. Celebrate Teacher Successes
Action 1: **Adopt a Clear Policy**

Your crowdfunding policy should clearly outline which crowdfunding platforms are preferred by the district.

As a nonprofit exclusively serving public school educators, DonorsChoose.org is recommended by many school districts’ policies, including The School District of Philadelphia.
#1 Adopt a Clear Policy

**Characteristics of Best-in-Class Crowdfunding Sites**

- **Financial Accountability**
  - Materials, not cash
  - Transparency at every step
  - Capturing impact

- **Integrity Controls**
  - School ownership of funded materials
  - District visibility and reporting

- **Safety & Privacy**
  - Student protection
This model crowdfunding policy ensures that your teachers only use platforms that meet exceptionally high standards for transparency, integrity and student safety. It was built with input and guidance from district administrators, state auditors and our partners at AASA and NSBA.
#1 Adopt a Clear Policy

Philadelphia’s Crowdfunding Policy

TSDP adopted a new policy and procedure in 2016 to help teachers safely navigate the crowdfunding landscape.

The district conducted teacher and principal training sessions shortly after the policy’s implementation, helping teachers get set up to use secure crowdfunding sites like DonorsChoose.org.

“As a district leader, I want my teachers to be able to innovate.

DonorsChoose.org helps ensure that they have the classroom resources to do so, while making it easy for people across America to support Philadelphia classrooms.”

Dr. William R. Hite, Superintendent, The School District of Philadelphia, PA
Action 2: Communicate Policy & Engage Principals

By intentionally communicating your crowdfunding policy throughout your school system, you ensure that all educators and the students they serve have access to the opportunities available on DonorsChoose.org.

In addition to emailing a policy update, you can also enlist the support of school leadership to promote policy compliance and organize professional development sessions focused on helping teachers create district-aligned DonorsChoose.org projects.

Share this toolkit by the National Association of Secondary School Principals with your principals to help onboard them to DonorsChoose.org.
#2 Communicate Policy & Engage Principals

**Greenville County School District**

Maximizing funding and policy compliance

With support from Superintendent Royster, Monaview Elementary School Principal Damon Qualls travels throughout the district, training teachers on crowdfunding guidelines and best practices. Principal Qualls works with his district leadership to ensure that Greenville teachers have equitable access to DonorsChoose.org.

Using Principal Qualls’s training, the district’s academic and technology departments conduct annual professional development sessions to help teachers post projects that align with and advance district priorities and initiatives.

To date, Greenville Schools has raised over $2.5 million towards innovative resources like flexible seating, robotics kits and even a muralist.

“I relied on DonorsChoose.org as a classroom teacher. Now that I’m a principal, DonorsChoose.org is a must-have tool that I encourage all of our teachers to use. The resources we’ve received have transformed classrooms.”

*Damon Qualls, Principal, Monaview Elementary School, Greenville County School District, SC*
Action 3: **Train Teachers**

With three-quarters of all funding coming from individuals who’ve never met the teacher they’re supporting, DonorsChoose.org helps ensure students in every community has access to the tools and experiences they need for a great education.

You can **support all teachers in your school system and provide equitable access to DonorsChoose.org** by hosting districtwide training sessions.

This [training preparation checklist](#) and these [training slides](#) will help you get teachers up and running on DonorsChoose.org.
Miami-Dade Public Schools

Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho encourages his teachers to use DonorsChoose.org during the summer in preparation for the school year ahead. He invited a DonorsChoose.org representative to lead principal and teacher trainings on using the platform as part of the district’s Synergy Summer Institute PD events. By the back-to-school season, his teachers were equipped with materials to take learning to new heights for MDCPS students.
Every year, WTSD trains teachers on the district’s crowdfunding procedures and mini-grant program. The training sessions coincide with their local education foundation’s funding campaign on DonorsChoose.org. By matching individual donations to projects from WTSD teachers, the foundation leverages the site’s national network of donors to double the impact on students.
#3 Train Teachers

The Advancement Center at Washington Township Schools distributes these bookmarks to teachers during their back to school training sessions.

The bookmarks provide additional information on the DonorsChoose.org grant request process and also encourages teachers to participate in the program.
Action 4: **Engage District Stakeholders**

Stay up to date on funded materials coming to your school district, and see how much funding for classroom projects is coming from outside your community.

Designate an individual or group of district leaders to receive DonorsChoose.org district reports so they can monitor project fulfillment and recognize teacher successes.

Administrators are encouraged to [sign up](https://www.donorschoose.org) for free, line-by-line reporting on DonorsChoose.org to monitor every item requested, ordered and shipped to district schools.
#4 Engage District Stakeholders

**Customized Reporting for District Leaders**

**Superintendent**
Learn how much funding you’re drawing into your district from outside your local community

**Chief Communications Officers**
Find examples of inspiring and creative classroom projects happening in your district

**Chief Academic Officers**
Drill down to learn what specific instructional materials and other innovative learning resources teachers have received to enrich teaching and learning

**Chief Financial Officers & Chief Business Officers**
See an itemized list of all projects funded in your district

**Chief Technology Officers**
Receive comprehensive, regularly updated reports on technology devices and licenses arriving in your district

**Partnerships, Development & Grants**
Track funding by school site and monitor statewide match funding opportunities to maximize funding potential
#4 Engage District Stakeholders

Data Included in Reports

- $ Dollars Received
- # of Teachers Participating
- # Schools Participating
- % Funding From Out of State Donors

### DonorsChoose.org + Example School District Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Teacher Name</th>
<th>Project Need Statement</th>
<th>Project URL</th>
<th>Project First Posted Date</th>
<th>Project Expired Date</th>
<th>Project Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>Therapy Dog for a Trauma Sensitive Approach</td>
<td>Ms. Paullin</td>
<td>I need a therapy dog and training to assist all students in our district with trauma and emotional needs. Help me give my students thinking putty, games, treats, and other items to help encourage positive behaviors in our school!</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>1/2/19</td>
<td>5/17/19</td>
<td>$21,663.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>PBIS Rewards in the Art Room</td>
<td>Ms. Knappmiller</td>
<td>Help me give my students headphones, pencils and gum for state testing and classroom use.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/1/19</td>
<td>6/1/19</td>
<td>$499.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>I Can Do This</td>
<td>Ms. Schultz</td>
<td>Help me give my students supplies for a successful summer school art class!</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/15/19</td>
<td>6/1/19</td>
<td>$344.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>Run in Summer School Art</td>
<td>Mrs. Horvath</td>
<td>Help me give my students fresh supplies, like pens, glue sticks, and note cards, to start the new school year.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/15/19</td>
<td>6/1/19</td>
<td>$495.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>New Year, New Supplies</td>
<td>Mrs. Schneider</td>
<td>Help me give my students multiple copies of the miraculous journey of edward tulane and the tale of despereaux.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/15/19</td>
<td>6/1/19</td>
<td>$616.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Middle School</td>
<td>Our Favorite Author in Book Groups!</td>
<td>Mrs. Horvath</td>
<td>Help me give my students tables, chairs, clipboards and interactive curriculum that will give the kids movement and choices in the classroom.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/14/19</td>
<td>6/14/19</td>
<td>$209.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bonn</td>
<td>Help me give my students a variety of flexible seating options. Podi stools and lap desks will help keep students focused and engaged while learning!</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/15/19</td>
<td>6/15/19</td>
<td>$687.35</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Schultz</td>
<td>Help me give my students comfortable seating for their sensory area, this corner sofa will allow students a place to sit and calm down while they process their choices.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/19/19</td>
<td>6/19/19</td>
<td>$756.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Miller</td>
<td>Help me give my students virtual reality in the classroom that gets them moving!</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/21/19</td>
<td>6/20/19</td>
<td>$622.88</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pintens</td>
<td>Help me give my students books that are interesting, age-appropriate, and relatable, help me give my students thinking putty, slime, and treats to encourage positive behaviors in our school.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/22/19</td>
<td>6/21/19</td>
<td>$748.19</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Messicci</td>
<td>Help me give my students brain teasers, puzzles, and steam activities for a great makerspace!</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/22/19</td>
<td>6/21/19</td>
<td>$734.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Schneider</td>
<td>Help me give my students a functional and appropriate sensory area to help me give my students some flexible seating.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/23/19</td>
<td>6/23/19</td>
<td>$497.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Horvath</td>
<td>Help me give my students a functional and appropriate sensory area to help me give my students some flexible seating.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/23/19</td>
<td>6/23/19</td>
<td>$534.66</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Schneider</td>
<td>Help me give my students a functional and appropriate sensory area to help me give my students some flexible seating.</td>
<td><a href="https://donors">https://donors</a></td>
<td>2/25/19</td>
<td>6/25/19</td>
<td>$550.73</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Action 5: **Input Your Technology Guidelines**

Teachers can request a wide range of technology products through DonorsChoose.org. District technology leaders are invited to **integrate your district's tech guidelines with the platform**, letting teachers know which resources will be supported by your district.

When you [upload your guidelines](#) to DonorsChoose.org, teachers creating tech projects will see **your district's technology guidelines** when creating their project and can request the items that best align with your policies.
#5 Input Your Technology Guidelines

Example of district-specific tech guidelines shown to teachers when they create their project.
#5 Input Your Technology Guidelines

"By clarifying up front both the relevant district-level policies and system requirements of any hardware or software, new technologies can more seamlessly and effectively be introduced into the school environment to support excellent teaching and learning"

Guadalupe Guerrero,
Superintendent, Portland Public Schools
Action 6: Celebrate Teacher Successes

By encouraging educators to think creatively about their classrooms and celebrating project funding, district leaders can motivate teachers to post more projects that enrich student learning and amplify district initiatives and goals.

Whether you’re focused on student leadership, working towards 1:1 technology or looking to expand your extracurricular offerings, you can encourage teachers to create project requests in line with these initiatives.
Dallas Independent School District Celebrates $600,000 in Project Funding

Last year, an anonymous donor filled every single project request for teachers in Dallas County just in time for the holidays.

Superintendent Hinojosa announced the surprise, and the Dallas ISD community celebrated the donations that brought teachers the resources they wanted to provide their students.

With more than $600,000 in funding, the projects brought to life ranged from an aquarium and bug discovery kits to books for literature circles.

“Our teachers are outstanding, do the extra work, and are our most valuable players,

Today we have a chance to show our appreciation for their hard work in molding our students into future leaders of Dallas.”

—Superintendent Michael Hinojosa, Dallas ISD
Contact us anytime at DonorsChoose.org!

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What are the best practices for evaluating crowdfunding sites?

AASA and DonorsChoose.org issued a guide on this topic: [Crowdfunding in K-12 Education: Best Practices for District Leaders](#). Best-in-class crowdfunding platforms are run by nonprofit organizations, focused on K-12 education and connect teachers to a wide network of donors from outside of the teachers’ immediate network.

How do we create an equity plan for our school district?

Communication is key when ensuring equitable access to supplemental resources available on DonorsChoose.org. Work with your principals and instructional coaches to train teachers throughout the district on DonorsChoose.org and encourage them to post projects in alignment with district initiatives. Miami-Dade County Public Schools for example, include trainings on DonorsChoose.org during their Synergy Summer Institute professional development. By celebrating project funding, you can motivate teachers and encourage a little friendly competition throughout your school system so all teachers can successfully tap into the DonorsChoose.org national donor network.

How is DonorsChoose.org different from other crowdfunding platforms?

With built in financial transparency and accountability, integrity controls, and measures to ensure privacy and safety, DonorsChoose.org is the leading crowdfunding platform built to exclusively support K-12 public schools. By tapping into a national donor network of citizens, companies and foundation partners, DonorsChoose.org is unmatched in school fundraising.

See more frequently asked questions for district leaders here.
Partners of DonorsChoose.org