

Finding Funding

EDCompass newsletter

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Ideas and Tactics to Help You Raise Funds for Classroom Technology

By **Wendy McMahon**

Whether you're looking for a few unique fundraising ideas or searching for ways to make your grant applications stand out from the crowd, it always helps to have ideas and tips for raising money for technology purchases. From note cards created using [SMART Notebook™ collaborative learning software](#) and trivia nights held with the help of [SMART Response™ interactive response system](#), we've assembled advice from educators who've been there.

Cards for cash

When Gretel Watson's primary students created an assortment of note cards using SMART Notebook software as part of an art lesson, they didn't expect to raise over AUS\$2,000 – but that's exactly what they did. And now the assignment has become an annual project that incorporates art, math and even poetry, and, of course, a bit of fundraising as well.

When the project began two years ago, Watson, who teaches at [Curl Curl North Public School](#) in North Curl Curl, Australia, had her students collaborate to create two original paintings – one of a fish and the other of some coral – using both oil pastels and water colors for their contrasting effects. Students scanned and saved the two images to the school's network, and then inserted them in a SMART Notebook file. Using SMART Notebook software's features and two [SMART Board® interactive whiteboards](#), each student cloned the images and used them to create their own unique pattern or scene.

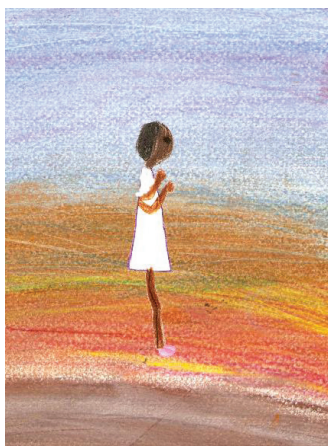
Students also changed the size of the images and used SMART Notebook software's order feature to make the fish appear to be either in front of or behind the coral. "It really gave it a feeling of movement," explains Watson.

When each student completed a masterpiece, the student submitted his or her SMART Notebook file to Watson, who then exported the artwork as an image file, took it to a photo shop and printed it out as a beautiful, glossy color print. The final step was mounting the print on cardstock and pairing it with a brightly colored envelope.

Because the cards turned out so well, Watson and her students decided to set up tables after school and sell the cards to parents for AUS\$1 each. But as interest grew, they began selling their creations to the wider school community. Soon they had to print additional cards to meet customer demand, and Watson sought the help of parents to ask printers for donations and mount the photos on cardstock.

To add a math component to the project, Watson asked students to determine how much profit the sale of each card yielded. With almost all of the supplies and labor being donated, Watson and her students calculated that it cost AUS\$0.10 to make each card, resulting in a AUS\$0.90 profit per card. With just over 2,000 cards sold, they made a significant profit. These funds were then added to the school's general art fund, which is used to buy equipment, technology products and supplies.

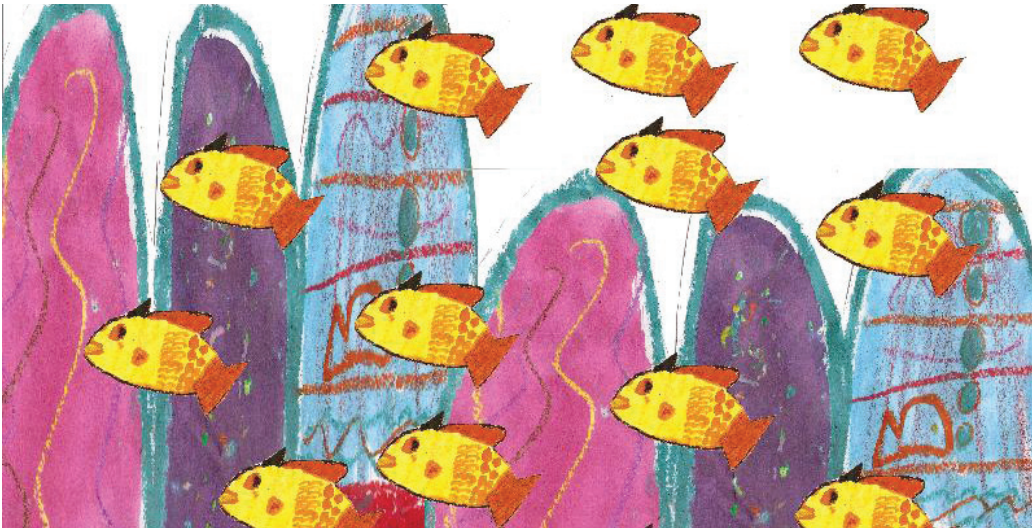
The project was so successful that Watson had students illustrate a water scene from an aboriginal poem for another set of cards the following year. She is now preparing to run the project for a third time. "It started out small and grew into a project which has been repeated and developed by numerous classes and schools. Treasured pieces of art have been created, sold and given as gifts. Limited only by imagination," adds Watson.



"Treasured pieces of art have been created, sold and given as gifts. Limited only by imagination."

Gretel Watson

Teacher
Curl Curl North Public School
North Curl Curl, Australia



Hold a trivia night

James Griffin, SMART's education consultant in Georgia, suggests another fun way to raise funds for classroom technology – hold a trivia night. While this type of event involves a lot of planning and organization, it can be very lucrative. With a \$10–\$20 admission fee and teams of 6 people or more, these events can raise between \$1,000–\$4,000, depending on the number of invitees and whether or not you hold side fundraisers, such as 50/50 draws or silent auctions.

There are many variations of trivia nights. Here are a few guidelines for hosting your own.

During a trivia night, several teams play to see who can answer the most trivia questions correctly. In each round, the host asks a series of questions related to one theme and teams record one group answer using a score sheet or, if you have it, a SMART Response interactive response system.

While judges review and score the answers, the host reads the correct answer out loud. Scores are posted on a SMART Board interactive whiteboard or another visible area so teams can see their scores for the round and their cumulative scores. At the end of the evening, the team with the most points wins.

Griffin, who has helped organize two trivia nights in the past, recommends holding the event in your schools' media center, if it's large enough. If you have SMART products, such as [SMART Sync™ classroom management software](#), SMART Response interactive response systems and SMART Board interactive whiteboards, this is a great opportunity to showcase them. It's also a chance for parents, local business owners and community members to see how money from fundraisers is being spent.

As Griffin explains, deciding who to invite to your event will depend on the socioeconomic climate of your district. "If you're in quite a wealthy district you probably only need to invite parents, but if you're in a more poverty stricken district, you need to reach out a little bit to those people who are looking for ways to donate to their school district," he explains. He recommends inviting local businesses, parent-teacher organizations and even the general community.

To increase your profits, Griffin recommends taking a low-cost approach to promoting and organizing the event. Rather than printing and mailing invitations, add notices to your school and district's websites and monthly newsletters, send e-mails to local businesses and post flyers at local libraries and even the YMCA.

Another money-saving tip is to approach local businesses to donate anything from snacks and beverages to team prizes and items for a silent auction. You could also ask attendees to bring their own snacks and refreshments to the event.

With all of the logistics out of the way, the final challenge is coming up with trivia questions for the event. "The hardest thing we found was coming up with questions – finding relevant questions that aren't going to be overly hard," says Griffin. "The key is to find that question balance to get everyone excited and make it close, so everyone is doing well." Topics such as local history, sports, news, music and movies work well.

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James Griffin
SMART Education Consultant
Georgia



With careful planning, organization, a great host and the right questions, a trivia night may just be the answer to your fundraising needs.

Write better grants

When it comes to grants, Mindy Adair has experience on both sides of the application process. As the math chair for [Kent Dever School](#) in Englewood, Colorado, she has successfully applied for a technology grant from the Morgridge Family Foundation. And for the past two years she has served on the foundation's grants committee for their interactive whiteboard initiative.

Based on what she's learned from her experiences applying for grants and reviewing applications, Adair says there are steps you can take before and during the grant writing process to help make your efforts to secure funding more successful.

Adair says that when it comes to selecting successful grant applicants, foundations like the Morgridge Family Foundation want to see that your school administration and staff are aligned and positioned to make your planned technology project successful. That means ensuring your initiative has support from IT staff and that you've planned for everything from providing professional development right down to allocating funds to replace projector bulbs.

As Adair explains, "This means real, thoughtful and well-articulated support for the proposal by the IT folks and the administration as well as the teacher writing the grant application."

Aside from checking for typos and misspelled words, Adair explains that demonstrating your understanding of classroom technology and the impact it will have on your school is another key to success.

"It needs to be written from somebody who's passionate about this, from somebody who's excited about education, from somebody who knows students," explains Adair.

"Show that you've done your homework, that you know about the technology, that you have an understanding of how it would benefit you and how it would fit into your school. That quality and that time in processing your answers make a big difference in how we would read that proposal." **EC**

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Mindy Adair

Math Chair and College Counselor
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