



A SCHOOL FUNDRAISING GUIDE

Pledge Drives Made Easy

\$175

per student, on average

50%

more raised with PledgeStar

100%

stays with your school

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read it straight through before your first drive, then come back to the Checklists and Templates chapters as working tools once you're underway.



INTRODUCTION

Pledge Drives, Explained

Whether you're new to pledge drives or have run a dozen of them, this guide will help make your fundraiser the most fun, and most profitable, yet.

What is a pledge drive?

A pledge drive is a fundraiser where your students ask family and friends to donate money toward programs and equipment that enrich their education. It can be tied to an event, like a Jog-A-Thon or Walk-A-Thon, or it can run quietly with no set date at all, like a Read-A-Thon or general Donation Drive.

Why host a pledge drive?

Pledge drives are the easiest way for a school to raise serious money. Unlike product sales, students never have to sell or distribute anything, and your school keeps every dollar raised.

\$175

raised per participating student,
on average

50%

more raised by students who
fundraise with PledgeStar

100%

of funds raised stay with your
school

WORTH KNOWING

Because there's no product to sell, deliver or invoice, a pledge drive is one of the lowest-effort, highest-yield fundraisers a parent group can run.



WHY IT WORKS

How PledgeStar Helps

Grandparents, aunts, uncles and close friends would happily donate if asked, but many parents feel uncomfortable doing the asking. That alone can cost your school thousands of dollars a year.

PledgeStar removes the awkwardness and makes asking easy and even a little fun.

1 Parents add contacts

They enter the names, email addresses and phone numbers of family and friends, right from their phone or computer.

2 PledgeStar sends the ask

Cute, effective pledge requests go out from the children themselves, and parents can also share them straight to Facebook and other social platforms.

3 Donations land safely, automatically

Friends and family give securely online, and funds are deposited directly into the school's account, with no cash handling required.

50%+

of pledge requests sent through PledgeStar result in a donation

Direct

deposit into your school's account, with no manual handling

SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

Visit **pledgestar.com** for an explainer video, frequently asked questions, school testimonials and pricing.



GETTING STARTED

Get Your Board on Board

If a pledge drive needs approval from your group's board, these four steps make the conversation easy.

1**Finish this guide first**

Walk in with answers already in hand. If anything's unclear, call PledgeStar at **(949) 215-4458**; they've worked with hundreds of schools and almost certainly have your answer.

2**Recruit a leader first**

Find someone you trust to lead the fundraiser and get their commitment before the meeting. A board says yes far more easily when a leader has already volunteered.

3**Win over your opinion leaders**

Get your President, VP, Treasurer and Fundraising Chair excited early. Send each of them a copy of this guide so they can speak to the benefits themselves.

4**Be ready for objections**

Most concerns are answered somewhere in this guide. For anything that isn't, PledgeStar will help you find the right response.

NEED BACKUP?

Call **(949) 215-4458** any time during your planning process: before, during or after your board presentation.



PLANNING

Four Decisions, One Hour

Planning takes most fundraising committees about an hour. Work through these decisions in order, then record them on the Project Plan that follows.

1

Choose your format

Event-based drives, like Jog-A-Thons and Walk-A-Thons, create real excitement, but need parent volunteers for track setup, hydration stations, lap counting and more. See the Jog/Walk-A-Thon Checklist for the full task list.

Read-A-Thons and Donation Drives don't happen on a fixed date, so they only need two or three volunteers. See the Donation Drive/Read-A-Thon Checklist for that shorter list.

2

Name it, and pick your dates

Most schools simply name the event after its format: "Jog-A-Thon," "Walk-A-Thon." Others get more creative: a November Jog-A-Thon might become a "Turkey Trot," or a Walk-A-Thon at a school with a hawk mascot, a "Hawk Walk."

For timing, mid-September through mid-November and February through early May tend to work best. Avoid the first few weeks of school, the holiday season, and the final stretch before summer. Most schools run their event on a Friday during school hours; some prefer a weekend so no class time is lost. You'll also want a pep rally date and a money-due date.

PLANNING, CONTINUED



Pledges & Donations

3

Flat, variable, or both

Flat pledges let a donor name a fixed amount; always allow these. **Variable pledges** scale with effort: a per-lap pledge in a Jog-A-Thon, or a per-hour pledge in a Read-A-Thon.

Flat-only is simpler to collect since money can change hands before the event; variable pledges require a couple of extra weeks afterward to tally effort and collect.

4

Online, offline, or both

Most schools run both, since some donors prefer to give online while others prefer cash or a check in hand. Offline donations add a layer of recording and accounting work, so a school short on volunteers might choose to run online-only.



Offline

- Pledge sheet and envelope sent home with each student
- Family, friends and neighbors asked in person, by phone or by letter
- Volunteers record cash and checks per student
- Treasurer prepares deposit slips by hand



Online with PledgeStar

- Parents register, then add family and friends' contact info
- PledgeStar sends pledge requests and a shareable social link
- Donations are recorded automatically, per student
- Funds deposit straight into the school's account

QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU DECIDE?

Call PledgeStar at **(949) 215-4458**, or visit **pledgestar.com** for video walkthroughs, FAQs and pricing.

FILL IT IN

Your Pledge Drive Project Plan

Use this page to record the decisions from the previous chapter, in one place your whole committee can reference.

PLEDGE DRIVE TYPE

☐ Donation Drive ☐ Read-A-Thon ☐ Jog or Walk-A-Thon

EVENT NAME

PEP RALLY DATE

EVENT DATE(S)

MONEY DUE DATE

PLEDGE TYPES

☐ Flat ☐ Variable

VARIABLE UNIT NAME (LAP, MINUTE, PAGE...)

DONATION TYPE

☐ Online ☐ Offline ☐ Both

NEXT: ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

Proper delegation is what separates a calm, successful drive from a chaotic one. The next chapters describe each task and ask you to assign a volunteer.



ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

Work With PledgeStar

If you're using PledgeStar for online fundraising, two short tasks get your account ready.

1**Name a PledgeStar liaison**

This volunteer spends roughly 2–3 hours supplying details to customize your fundraising site, plus a short training session on administering it. Start the process on the Get Started page at pledgestar.com.

2**Apply for payment processing**

Someone, usually the treasurer, completes a short online application so your organization's payment processor can accept credit cards through your PledgeStar fundraising site. It takes about an hour.

TIP

Assign both tasks before your pep rally date, so your fundraising site is live and tested before students take packets home.

GETTING THE WORD OUT



Promote Your Event

Proper promotion is the single best way to ensure a successful drive. Assign one volunteer to own it.



Pep Rallies

An assembly where you explain the drive and hype students up with incentives. Excited kids motivate their parents.



Flyers

Send a flyer home with every student explaining the event, the reason behind it, and what parents are expected to do.



Email Campaigns

Most parent groups have an email list. Use it for reminders and progress updates throughout the drive timeline.



Robocalls

Many principals can deliver a recorded phone message to every family. Ask yours to promote your event.



Email Pledge Requests

PledgeStar sends personalized pledge requests directly from the student to each contact parents add, dramatically increasing response rates.



Social Media Sharing

Parents can post their child's fundraising page straight to Facebook and other platforms, reaching donors beyond their immediate circle.



WHAT TO SEND HOME

Pledge Packets

A pledge packet is what each student brings home after the pep rally: the drive flyer, a pledge envelope with a pledge sheet attached, and online fundraising instructions.

- **Read-A-Thons:** add a reading log.
- **Jog and Walk-A-Thons:** add a parental permission slip.

Personalizing and distributing

If your school has a parent volunteer for every classroom, give each one a class roster so they can write each student's name, grade and teacher onto the pledge sheets before handing them out. Otherwise, recruit one or more volunteers to personalize and distribute packets for the whole school.

TEMPLATES INCLUDED

A sample flyer, pledge sheet, reading log and tax receipt are ready to copy in the Templates chapter at the end of this guide. PledgeStar supplies its own online fundraising instructions.



MOTIVATION

Incentives That Work

Most successful drives offer prizes for raising money. Some are free, others are purchased once funds are in hand.

Free incentives

Homework passes, extra recess, or donated items from local businesses cost nothing and still motivate.

Top-earner prizes

Many schools reserve a few high-value prizes for the top fundraisers: first place might win an iPad mini, second an electric guitar, third a scooter, sourced as donations or purchased outright.

RULE OF THUMB

Keep total prize value under **10% of funds raised**. Generous prizes can still pay off: a family at \$70 will often raise the extra \$30 just to reach a \$5 prize tier.

DON'T FORGET EFFORT, NOT JUST DOLLARS

Since over half of pledge requests sent through PledgeStar turn into donations, also reward students simply for **sending** ten or more requests. PledgeStar's reporting shows exactly how many requests, and how much, each student raised.

SAMPLE STRUCTURE

Prize Levels Many Schools Use

Prize levels up to \$100 are cumulative: a student who raises \$100 earns the \$35, \$50 and \$100 prizes together.

10 reqs

Homework pass + a school-wide popsicle party for everyone who sends 10+ pledge requests in the first 24 hours.

\$35

A small trinket matching your event theme. Novelty suppliers like orientaltrading.com are a good source.

\$50

A water bottle, hat or kerchief matching your theme.

\$100

A T-shirt kids will wear all year, plus credit toward the school store or another prize around \$5.

\$200

A \$10 gift card.

\$300

A \$20 gift card.

GRAND & CLASS PRIZES

Top individual earners might win an iPad, theme park tickets or a bike. If the whole school hits its goal, consider a pizza party, or a principal in costume.

DON'T FORGET THE TEACHERS

An adult-friendly prize, like a facial or massage, for the classroom with the highest participation rate keeps teachers promoting your event too.



COVERING COSTS

Sponsorships

Some schools recruit local sponsors to cover event costs (prizes, online processing fees, packet materials), so every dollar students raise goes straight to enriching their education.

Good prospects include dentists and orthodontists, party and play facilities, and bike shops: any local business with an interest in reaching families with kids. As thanks, offer them recognition in your event's promotional materials: on flyers, at the pep rally, or on your fundraising site.

ASSIGN IT

Put one volunteer in charge of reaching out to prospective sponsors well before your pep rally, so commitments are locked in before promotion begins.



KEEPING TRACK

Accounting, Simplified

Volunteers record the cash and checks returned in each student's pledge envelope. You'll need these totals to award prizes. Your treasurer then prepares deposit slips for everything collected.

**Without PledgeStar**

- Each envelope counted and logged by hand
- One deposit slip built manually from totals
- Per-student totals compiled after the fact

**With PledgeStar**

- Online donations recorded and deposited automatically
- A shared data-entry tool lets several volunteers enter offline pledges at once
- Deposit-slip data and per-student totals, online and off, are available instantly

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most of your donations will come in online, so the bulk of your accounting work disappears before it starts.

**EVENT DAY**

Volunteers & Equipment

This chapter applies to Jog-A-Thons and Walk-A-Thons. Read-A-Thons and Donation Drives don't require an event day at all.

Volunteers

- Set up and tear down the track and hydration stations
- Run a public address system: music and an MC keep energy high
- For per-lap pledges: pin lap cards to each student, mark a box every time they pass, then collect the card and tally laps at the end

Equipment

If your school doesn't already have them on hand, you may need to source tables, chairs, water coolers and track cones.

PLAN AHEAD

Lap cards need to be printed before event day, so add it to your checklist a week out.



WORKING TOOL

Donation Drive Checklist

For Donation Drives and Read-A-Thons. Photocopy this page, or rebuild it as a shared spreadsheet for your committee.

VOLUNTEER DUE

6–8 weeks prior to end of drive

- ☐ Set up a PledgeStar account for online fundraising
- ☐ Design pledge packets
- ☐ Select prizes and prize levels
- ☐ Begin finding sponsors

4–6 weeks prior to end of drive

- ☐ Buy pledge packet supplies
- ☐ Print pledge packet sheets
- ☐ Personalize pledge sheets
- ☐ Assemble pledge packets

3–4 weeks prior to end of drive

- ☐ Send pledge packets home
- ☐ Hold pep rally
- ☐ Follow up on promotion

1 week prior to end of drive

- ☐ Send home another PledgeStar instruction sheet
- ☐ Send registration reminder via email and robocall
- ☐ PledgeStar: email pledge request reminders
- ☐ Announce classroom and leader totals daily



WORKING TOOL, CONTINUED

Wrapping Up the Drive

VOLUNTEER DUE

End of drive date

- ☐ Have students collect money for per-repetition pledges

Money due date

- ☐ Collect pledge packets from students
- ☐ Record pledge packet checks and cash
- ☐ Deposit money into bank account
- ☐ Determine prize winners
- ☐ Order prizes

2–4 weeks after money due date

- ☐ Announce results and distribute prizes

RUNNING A JOG OR WALK-A-THON INSTEAD?

Turn the page for a checklist built around an event date, with setup, teardown and lap-tracking tasks included.



WORKING TOOL

Jog/Walk-A-Thon Checklist

VOLUNTEER DUE

6–8 weeks prior to money due date

- ☐ Set up a PledgeStar account for online fundraising
- ☐ Design pledge packets
- ☐ Select prizes and prize levels
- ☐ Begin finding sponsors

4–6 weeks prior to money due date

- ☐ Buy pledge packet supplies
- ☐ Print pledge packet sheets
- ☐ Personalize pledge sheets
- ☐ Assemble pledge packets
- ☐ Source event equipment

3–4 weeks prior to money due date

- ☐ Send pledge packets home
- ☐ Hold pep rally
- ☐ Follow up on promotion



WORKING TOOL, CONTINUED

Event Week & Event Day

VOLUNTEER DUE

1 week prior to event date

- ☐ Send home another PledgeStar instruction sheet
- ☐ PledgeStar: email pledge request reminders
- ☐ Send registration reminder via email and robocall
- ☐ Print lap cards, if needed

Event date

- ☐ Setup
- ☐ Tear down
- ☐ Record laps, if needed, and send home results so per-lap donations can be collected

Money due date

- ☐ Collect pledge packets from students
- ☐ Record pledge packet checks and cash
- ☐ Deposit money into bank account
- ☐ Determine prize winners
- ☐ Order prizes

2–4 weeks after money due date

- ☐ Announce results and distribute prizes

COPY-READY TEMPLATE

Sample Flyer

Fill in the bracketed sections with your event's details.

[Name of Fundraiser]

[Date of Fundraiser]

What is the [Name of Fundraiser]?

Our largest fundraiser of the year. Participants earn money by [running laps, reading books, etc.], with [20 minutes to run as many laps as possible around a 1/10-mile track, or 4 weeks to read as much as possible]. Family, friends and neighbors can pledge a set amount per [lap, hour, etc.], or make a flat donation in support of our school.

How do I get pledges?

Ask friends and family! Register your child at [PledgeStar link] and follow the simple steps; it takes just minutes to set up your child's own fundraising page. Or use the form on the pledge envelope. Anyone who requests pledges from at least 10 people online becomes eligible for a special prize.

PRIZES

[Insert your prize schedule here (see the Incentives chapter for sample prize levels).]



TEMPLATE, CONTINUED

Flyer: Goal & Schedule

Why are we raising money?

Your support allows our group to continue funding the great programs and events at our school. Funds collected above [\$ amount needed for regular programs] will go toward [specific goal] for [School Name]. With your help, every child benefits.

What is the goal?

This year we'd like to raise [\$ goal]. If every participant raises [total ÷ number of students], we'll get there. Reach the goal, and the whole school enjoys [reward]!

Sample Walk-A-Thon schedule

TIME	ACTIVITY
7:45	Parents and students arrive for the day's festivities
8:00–8:15	Flag salute, national anthem, choir performance
8:15–9:00	Kindergarten and 1st grade classes
9:00–9:45	2nd and 3rd grades
9:45–10:30	4th and part of 5th grades
10:30–11:15	6th grade classes

All times and groupings should be adjusted to fit your school.

COPY-READY TEMPLATE

Sample Pledge Sheet

PARTICIPANT'S NAME

GRADE / TEACHER

Use our easy online system to participate. Register at [PledgeStar school link], it takes minutes to set up your child's own fundraising page, and family and friends can pay by credit card online. A thank-you note is sent automatically to every online donor.

Prefer to collect in person? Record names and amounts below.

NAME	PHONE	PLEDGE / UNIT	FIXED AMOUNT	COLLECTED

TOTAL TO COLLECT

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO

COPY-READY TEMPLATE

Reading Log & Tax Receipt

Reading Log

Record reading from [Start Date] to [End Date]. Log the date, book title, and time spent, then return the completed log to your teacher by [Due Date]. Reading can also be logged online at your PledgeStar site.

DATE	BOOK TITLE	TIME (MIN/HR)

Tax Receipt

[School or Nonprofit Name] · [Address] · [Phone] · [Tax ID#]

Thank you for your contribution. Your donation is tax deductible.

DATE CONTRIBUTED	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR	ITEMS CONTRIBUTED (ATTACH LIST)

COPY-READY TEMPLATE

Lap Card

Check a box each time the student completes a lap.

STUDENT NAME

TEACHER NAME

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60



THANK YOU

Here's to a Great Drive

You now have everything you need to plan, promote and run a pledge drive your whole school will remember, and your families will actually enjoy taking part in.

QUESTIONS ALONG THE WAY?

Call PledgeStar at **(949) 215-4458** or visit **pledgestar.com** for video walkthroughs, FAQs, testimonials and pricing.