

Show Me the Moola!

Find Funding and Support For Your Program

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Introduction

This short ebook is designed to be a quick reference tool on getting you started in finding support for your programs. Support can come in various forms: money, volunteers, extra time (couldn't we all use more of that??) and business partnerships. There are many ways to build up and strengthen your program and it is my hope that this ebook will help you to do that!

I have been very fortunate to be able to provide these supports to our arts integration program. In the midst of budget cuts and lack of funding, our arts integration program has survived and *thrived* due to the ideas and techniques I'm going to outline in this book. It was through much trial and error and a bit of stubbornness on my part that we discovered how much is truly out there if you just go looking.

Hopefully, this will be just another item in your toolbox for developing your own successful program. Please come back to <http://educationcloset.com> to share your stories so that we can all learn from each other!

Best Wishes and Good Luck!

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Chapter One – Show Me the Money!

This is the chapter everyone wants to read, yet it is going to be the shortest chapter in this book. Not because there is no money out there (quite the contrary), but because I have found it to be the least critical to supporting a program.

I know that sounds ridiculous, but I promise that I'm not crazy.

Money is something we could all use and we never seem to have enough of the darn stuff. And yes, it does serve a useful purpose in that it can buy materials, pay for time, and provide incentives for a program. And yet, the real work lies in the other 3 areas I'm going to outline: volunteers, extra time and business partnerships. All of these will provide you with the money you are so desperately seeking with the least amount of struggle.

But since we all still want to know how and where to get money, I'll go ahead and give that my best shot too.

Obviously, we are facing massive budget cuts in education, and particularly in arts funding. Grants and donations have always been in high demand, but now have gotten even more competitive. I have been watching many organizations holding rallies to protect state funding for programs and while I think it is noble and hopeful to do so, the reality is that there just isn't enough money to go around from the states. So, it's time to get creative!

I have found great success in grant writing. Now, before you roll your eyes, sigh and click to another website, let me answer your thoughts:

- 1.) Yes, this takes time.
- 2.) No, you don't have any to spare as it is.
- 3.) Yes, they are often 20 pages long.

4.) No, there are no guarantees (and possibly very bad odds) that you'll get the grant you're writing.

So why in the world would I tell you to do it?

Because it works at least 1% of the time and that 1% can fund your entire school year's program.

It's like when you were applying for scholarships to go to college. I don't know about you, but I needed a whole lot more money to go to school than the federal government deemed in their FAFSA form. I applied to upwards of 100 scholarships and managed to get 3. But those three got me through 4 years of college (along with a few student loans). Grant writing is exactly the same thing. Money is out there to be had - you just have to be persistent enough and strategic enough to get some.

I am often asked how it is that I am able to get said grants for my program. Due to the popularity of this question, I thought it might be a good idea to provide you with some of my top tips. Keep in mind, these work an average of 1-2% of the time. So you're still going to have to work your tail off. But if you follow the strategies, you'll end up with some extra cash, your program can take off and you can help support the advancement of education for all the children in your school. And isn't that why we're educators in the first place?

Okay....here goes. Here's a basic list of where I start my searches for grants:

Americans for the Arts http://www.artsusa.org/information_services/toolkit/009.asp

Howard County Economic Authority

<http://www.hceda.org/links.aspx>

Howard County Arts Council:

http://www.hocoarts.org/grant_programs.php

HCPSS Office of Professional Development/PDS program:

<http://www.hcpss.org/schools/pds/>

You'll notice that only ONE of these links is to a national organization and the rest are to my local businesses/partnerships.

That's because it's based on the averages of numbers.

Look, I know that if I'm going to Vegas, my odds of winning are very slim because there are a lot of people there. But, if I go to the slots at Perryville, MD, I have a much better set of odds to work with. Same applies to grant writing for education.

Successful Grant Writing Tips:

- Think local – the more local the provider of the grant, the better the chances of getting the money.
- Follow directions! This is the easiest, but most important step! If it specifies margins and spacing, do what they ask.
- Be sure to include a cover page, contact information, and any media materials that are requested.
- Think SMART Goal Setting Process: the most successful grants are those that identify measurable goals. People want to see how you will use their money and be assured that there is a way to measure progress attained with the money.
- Have at least one other person listed as a contact person. Grant providers want as much accountability as possible, so work with someone else in your building.
- Be thorough. Include as much data and information as possible when submitting grants.
- Most importantly – keep writing! You'll get turned down for more grants than you'll ever receive. But even one will help you with your goals!

Of course, there are other ways to get money. I would stay away from donations unless you are a private institution – too many legal issues. Fundraisers are always a nice little addition and I have known several schools that have done 8-10 fundraisers a year and supported their whole program. Again, choose products that will appeal to your

demographic and that parents can actually USE if you're looking to be successful. Money is out there – you'll just have to get over your pride and ask for some if you want extra to support your program.



Chapter 2 – Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor – The Value of Volunteers

No...I'm not implying that volunteers are either tired or poor. I'm implying that teachers are. Teachers work endlessly with little or no pat on the back and so they are very tired. Teachers also are not paid what they are worth (no matter WHAT they say in Madison, WI). They may not be poor, but they certainly aren't rich; especially after what they spend on classroom materials.

So what do most schools do? They bring in volunteers to help these wonderful teachers accomplish a never-ending amount of work throughout the day. These fantastic volunteers do a bunch of behind-the-scenes things like laminating and copying so that our teachers can work with our students. And the volunteers love it! They *want* to help out and it makes them feel good!

So why wouldn't we use these very same people to support and cheer on our new programs? These volunteers have a ton of energy, will go out and network with people in the community, and love to do the small details that it takes to run a program. Best of all, they don't have to be paid with money! Instead, they just want to make sure that the students are receiving the best possible education.

Therefore, make sure your program is something that will have a direct impact on student learning. If it does (and it should!), volunteers will work tirelessly to rally and support your program in any way possible.

The other great thing about volunteers is that they are usually the very people in your community that you want to brag about your program. You know – these are the people in high school that would spread the word faster than you could blink. So the other thing you want to keep in mind is to treat your volunteers like news reporters. Give them information that you want to spread and be ultra careful with how the information is

presented. Always make sure your program is positive and links back to students' success.

There are a couple of ways that you can use volunteers to get the maximum benefit for both your program and for them:

- 1.) Value their time and THANK THEM!! Many times, a simple thank you and a schedule for when they are needed is enough for volunteers to feel special and to value the work you are trying to accomplish.
- 2.) If you have a large group of volunteers, think about splitting them into some smaller committees and have some committee chairs that you trust. They will be able to meet on their own time, need less supervision and come up with some great ideas for promoting your program and providing work groups that you may not have thought about.
- 3.) Meet with your volunteers and outline your vision and mission for this program. They need to know why it's important and what you're trying to accomplish before they can help you.
- 4.) Ask them for some ideas for getting the program off the ground or for keeping it afloat.
- 5.) Get to know their strengths – maybe one of them has experience in public relations? Or, maybe someone is a really great scrapbooker and can keep great documentation of your student work.
- 6.) Brainstorm, with your volunteer group, a list of tasks to be accomplished throughout the year and then divvy up the work right then. Make people accountable. Things will get done and people actually like being counted on.
- 7.) Have these volunteers coordinate big events for the community – it will be a chance for their friends to get together and for the program to be highlighted. Everyone likes a party!
- 8.) Build a community – people want a place to belong and if your program provides that, you'll have more people working (for FREE) on your project that can move mountains.

You can never underestimate the power of volunteers! Our volunteers have practically run our two-year process of becoming a “Green” school. They have added innumerable hours to our arts integration program. And they are all loved in our building. We have a volunteer tea every year to highlight all of our parent volunteers and it is the single biggest reason they come back year after year. We even have volunteers that come back after their children have moved on to middle school. Treat your volunteers well and your program will fly!



Chapter 3 – Clean Off That Desk!

Many times, people don't think about the power of organization when it comes to supporting and funding your program. But truly, it is an essential piece of this puzzle. Organization is the key to making your program run, to finding funding, to keeping it going long after it has kicked off, and to making it a success. So let's get started!

Step One: Come up with a Plan of Action!

You need to decide what your vision and mission is for this program and how you are going to achieve it. You need to make it measurable – just like we would for our students. Write it down and post it everywhere you can: on your desk, in the office, in the staff lounge, in the hallways. Everywhere! Make it visible to make the program accountable. What is written gets done. So come up with the plan, write it down and post it up!

Step Two: Check In With Your Plan

Create some benchmarks to check in with your plan to see if you're staying on target. If you create the plan and post it but never follow through, your program will get the reputation of being a "pie in the sky" idea. You've got to check in, adjust if necessary and celebrate meeting the small goals throughout the year.

Step Three: Keep Track of All the Pieces

Have you ever put together one of those 1,000 piece puzzles? If just one piece is missing, you can't complete the puzzle. Supporting and growing a program is exactly the same way. You will have a lot of little pieces to your program: volunteers, funding deadlines, testing deadlines, special events, celebrations, adjustments and more. You'll need to keep track of all of these things to make your program successful. How are you ever going to get money for your program if you miss the deadline for sending in the

grant? Or how will you get all that “free” work from your volunteers if you miss your scheduled meeting times? You won’t.

The best way I know to do this is to keep a planner. I have switched over to using Google Calendar for my planner because I can color code it, get alerts on my phone and my email and basically keep on top of things without too much work. But if you like writing something down and crossing it off, then use whatever method works for you. Bottom line is: do it!

You will save yourself and your program time and money by staying organized. ALWAYS take care of the little things as they pop up. Don’t put them off. If you do put them off, set aside a portion of a day every week to clean up these little things. Answer emails right away if you can, write the small notes, keep your meeting times. By doing these small things, you’ll save yourself headaches and feel like you’re on top of your game. And that feeling will always translate into a much more effective program.

To me, the best part of organization (and yes, I’m a little bit of a nerd) is that I always seem to have more time than everyone else. While that’s physically impossible, as we all have the same amount of time, it is a true statement. That’s because my time is used more efficiently and effectively because my organization tools are put into place.

I hear from people many times, “how do you get everything done?” and the answer is simply because I spend a lot of time organizing up front so that when I need to accomplish a lot of tasks, they are streamlined.

Thus, you’re actually GAINING more time! And who couldn’t use more time?

Here’s my favorite tools/ideas that help me squeeze the most out of every single day:

- Using a planner and writing everything down

- Keeping my emails cleaned up. I keep important reminders in my google calendar and then erase the email or put it into a folder. Sometimes, if I'm falling behind, my email bin starts to look crazy. So I set aside 15 minutes every Friday morning to sort, delete and file my emails.
- Keeping a running list on my desk of tasks that need to be completed by the end of the day: notes to teachers, paperwork, grading, etc. I carve out a few minutes here and there and attack the list systematically. Anything that doesn't get finished gets top priority the next morning NO MATTER WHAT.
- Answering emails/phone calls immediately if possible and then deleting or filing it away immediately.
- Color-coded file drawers are a beautiful invention.
- I set aside a full 2 hours once a quarter to clean up my desk and my classroom of anything that has piled up. Come spring concert season, this is an absolute must if I want to keep my sanity!
- Give yourself permission to have 15 minutes set aside to relax: check your personal email, catch up on the news, drink a cup of coffee, whatever. Your mind needs a break and will be more refreshed for the rest of the day if you give it a break!

Giving time to your program

I have found that time is one of the most crucial elements to any program's success or failure. If you don't make time a priority for your program, it will cease to exist. You need to budget in time for teachers to get on board, learn about the program, learn and get comfortable using the new techniques, to have peer reviews, to meet with other colleagues and much more! Finding time during the school day is hard, but it is vital to your program's success. If you try to do everything before or after school, people will come to resent the program and it will not take off.

If you place your priorities on finding time for your program, the benefits will be that the program will build momentum because your staff will build excitement.

Because time is so hard to come by in a school, I've learned to be creative. We have booked special library presentations up against student's related arts block so that the classroom teachers have a full 2 hours to look over data, write lessons, perform peer reviews or to collaborate with each other. We've hired substitutes for half days so that teachers could go and watch other successful programs. We've used assemblies or special days (like Dr. Seuss day or anti-bullying programs) to have teachers be available to meet with each other while the related arts teachers or instructional assistants or volunteers supervise the students.

Think outside of the box!

Sure, we've used professional development days to further our efforts, but these are NOT the main support for our programs. Time is carved out of the school day where teachers do not have to write sub plans so that they can spend the time learning and gaining the knowledge and tools they need to make the program a success!



Chapter 4: Let Me Hold Your Hand – Business Partnerships

I'm all about local – I try to eat local food when I can, I try to shop in local stores if possible rather than the chain stores, and when it comes to funding for programs at school, local businesses are a HUGE, untapped resource.

Many schools like to try and get sponsorships or partnerships with large retail chains. You see this all the time when you walk through a Wal-Mart or a Target. These stores proudly sponsor a local school in the community and display this with pride on their walls. That's great and all, but that's one school in a community that could have anywhere from 3-30 schools, depending on the size of the district. Plus, chain stores have big rules. You can only use the money for certain things and it takes a lot of work to keep track of all the documentation to get their continued support. As we already know, time is a scarce commodity and big sponsorships are like finding a needle in a haystack.

Now, I'm not saying that you shouldn't try to partner with your big chain stores if you can. These certainly do help and are a great way to get some extra funding for your school. I've been apart of schools that use Box Tops for Education and we've been able to update a lot of our technology and get some much needed supply replenishments from our "big" partnerships.

My point is that if you look a lot closer to home to the local businesses in your community, you'll find a better yield for your efforts.

You see, local businesses are looking for partners, just like you! They want to become a household name and would love to offer you resources, space, materials, time, and yes, even money in exchange for getting their name out there to all of your parents,

grandparents, students and friends. They are in competition with those big chain retailers and are looking for a way to be in the front of consumer's minds.

If you partner with a pottery store or a craft store, they can provide you with lots of materials for art projects and portfolios at little to no cost. In exchange, they may ask for their fliers to be made available in the front office or to have a vendor's space at you next large school function.

If you partner with a local gardening store, you may be able to get the plants/seeds for your next science experiment donated if you put a label on the cup with their store name on it for when it goes home.

If you partner with a local music store, you may be able to get some of the local private teachers to come in and do a residency with the students in your school in exchange for a mention in your next music concert program.

See? You're saving your school time and money by partnering with these local businesses and all you're doing in return is telling people that they were generous enough to help you.

The other nice thing about partnering with local businesses is that there are usually little or no restrictions as to how to use the funds or materials and you can use them for a variety of projects, not just one big one. Plus, you're building community and teaching your students the benefit of keeping your money, time and resources within their own neighborhood rather than through "outsourcing".

Local businesses also bring with them the benefit of real world experience. They can be a place for your students to intern and learn trades that can help later in life, and thus become a large way to get return on your investment. Many times, when students are able to learn and grow within their own communities, they continue that knowledge and growth cycle later on in life.

By getting your local business community involved in your school, participating in partnerships and volunteering at their events, schools can earn cash and resources that can immediately impact any program you're looking to support.

Social Networking

A quick note here on using social networking and local businesses. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter are having a tremendous impact within local communities for small businesses to promote themselves. Small businesses make up 90% of the GDP in the United States and most, if not all, are either on a social network site or have a website.

Schools can use social networking to support these businesses, strengthen their partnerships and also to reach out to find new sources of funding.

I know that many schools and districts have shied away from endorsing social networking due to legal fears and the possibility of misuse. While these are very real concerns and true problems, the schools and districts that are embracing social networking with caution are making great strides in creative sources of support for their programs. Programs that would otherwise be in jeopardy have been able to stay afloat because schools and businesses put the word out on social networking sites to fundraise money or resources.

In addition, social networking is a great tool for teachers and administrators to talk with peers around the country and the world on techniques that have been successful when facing budget cuts and tough program decisions. By garnering knowledge from a variety of sources, schools are better equipped to make creative and important decisions when it comes to educational programs and initiatives. I have learned so much from the vast variety of people I have connected with through social media and it has bolstered our program many times to see ideas that are working in other schools throughout the nation.

Resources

This is a very short resource list that got me started to finding funding, and to figuring out other creative ways to support my programs. Please use them as a beginning guide, add to this list, and then post your additions to <http://educationcloset.com> so that others may benefit as well. We are truly a community of learners and could all use a larger pool of knowledge to continue our excellent programs. Best of luck to you and I look forward to a continued dialogue!

Grant Resources:

Americans for the Arts: http://www.artsusa.org/information_services/toolkit/009.asp

US Dept. of Ed Grants: <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/landing.jhtml>

Education/School Grants: <http://www.fundsnetsservices.com/educ01.htm>

Local Education Grants: <http://www.topeducationgrants.com/>

Local ideas: check your local community college, economic development office, and department of commerce to see what local funding is available. There is ALWAYS something local.

Volunteering:

Go to your local school website and look at how you welcome volunteers and what training is offered. How does it compare to others? Is it inviting? Do people use the site? If not, take a look at a couple of these examples to make it better:

Calvert County Public Schools:

<http://www.calvertnet.k12.md.us/departments/instruction/volunteer/welcome.asp>

Seattle Public Schools:

http://www.seattleschools.org/area/vol/vol_opps.xml

Fairfax County Public Schools:

<http://www.fcps.edu/ocr/volunteer.htm>

Volunteer MPS:

http://commed.mpls.k12.mn.us/Vol_Services.html

Organizational Tips:

Here are a few great websites for additional ideas on how to get organized!

Randy Pausch's Thoughts on Organization: <http://www.hci.org/lib/randy-pausch-shares-thoughts-how-best-organize-your-workspace>

Google Calendar: www.google.com/calendar

Time Saving Tips:

http://www.educationoasis.com/resources/Articles/time_saving_tips.htm

My Organized Life: <http://www.myorganizedlife.com/>

Business Partnerships:

Here are some places to look when searching for business partnerships for your school.

- Local economic development office
- Local department of commerce
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Local town government website
- Local.Google.Com