

Public School Fundraising = Bleeding Wallet + Unreal Expectations

by Tia Everitt - Wednesday, October 06, 2010

<https://politicsrespun.org/2010/10/public-school-fundraising-bleeding-wallet-unreal-expectations/>

Ah, the optimism of a newly-minted, first time kindergarten parent! Isn't it refreshing? Blissful?

Ignorant.

Seasoned parents (for fear of driving away fresh and enthusiastic blood to work the Dairy-Soy-Gluten-Peanut Free Hot Dog Day and monitor the playground in sub-zero weather) fail to disseminate vital information to the newcomers at the beginning of the school year. If the school were an olde-tyme internet chat room, the mid-September newsletter would read like this:

"N00Bs! U have been pwnd by the PAC Fundraising Committee!!! All UR wallets belong to us!"

Last night, I nearly wept as I pulled yet *another* fundraising catalog out of a dingy backpack, along with a PAC notice, which advised me that I was allowed to opt out of the fundraising for the 2010/11 school year.

For a minimum contribution of \$100/child.

It is only the first week of October. **gnaws wrists**

If my math is correct, the school is trying to raise at least \$50,000 this year, based on a minimum of \$100 child, in a school with 500 children.

FIFTY GRAND.

This means that each child is being asked to either provide money from the parents directly, allowing them to skip the plethora of inane fundraising projects, OR participate in the 5 + fundraisers through the year by selling products/asking for pledges.

God have mercy on your wallet if you have multiple children.

Since September 8, I have had money liberated from my bank account, via/for my children's schools, as follows:

- \$35 for communal classroom art supplies
- \$65 registration fee
- \$35 for criminal record check so I can volunteer
- \$40 = runners x 2
- \$40 for school photos

"Whew! Glad that's over!" I said to myself.

Then the fundraising-hell clusterfuck began.

The eldest child came home with a glossy, slick kit, enabling her to go door to door to sell over-priced magazines. The more magazines the kids sell, the more money the PAC gets to put towards their annual projects. That's fine and dandy if you're able to get Granny and Gramps to renew their National Geographic subscription from McMaddysonne so she can get credit for the sale. Or perhaps you're one of those perky-types that brings the kit to work with you and guilts your co-workers into buying so that you leave them alone until the next fundraiser! But..what if you're not? Now your kid, is left to go door to door (which is a potentially dangerous enterprise for a young child) or not participate. Never mind that really young students can't really read or write to take the orders.

Now it's your problem, Mama.

Then the next note came, about the Walk-A-Thon, with a pledge sheet, once again imploring my kid to harass the neighborhood for pledges.

Following that was a set of four Scholastic Book orders, imploring me to order books, so that funding can go towards buying books for the classroom.

By the time the PAC sent a note home to remind me that there were still a Read-A-Thon to pledge, a bake sale, a plant sale, a family dance and silent auction and a community breakfast to pay for, I was about ready to homeschool.

But wait! There's more!

This morning the younger child arrived home with an envelope full of wrapping paper swatches, a catalog, yet another set of Scholastic order forms, and a note advising us that she (at the age of 3.5) needs to get in touch with her inner Iacocca. Yes, my preschooler needs to move ridiculous volumes of wrapping paper and ribbon by the 25th, so her preschool can afford a new kitchen. Her government funded preschool.

Therein lies the problem, folks...

The government.

We've let them off the hook. We allow them to continue to slash funding to our schools...to whittle it down to a stump that barely passes for what was once a decent public education. Whether it's through apathy or lack of involvement on behalf of the parents, the province axes more and more programming every year and almost nobody bats an eyelash.

Shhhh. Listen!

Poof!

There goes more and more funding.

Enter the fundraising machine.

School fundraising is a stop-gap measure, which allows the PAC to make up for the deficit left behind by the government termites. Every year, things need replacing. Improving. Renewal. That funding must come from *somewhere*. After all, who doesn't love a new playground that isn't a tetanus orgy, a field that isn't filled with dog-dung land mines, or perhaps, the luxury of *gasp* library books?

While the mindset of the PAC is altruistic (supply needs of the classroom through fundraising) the necessity to do so is a sickening and pathetic statement of how little our elected representatives value public education.

Why do you hate fundraising so much, Tia?

- **Fundraising is a disservice to children in poorer socioeconomic neighbourhoods.** Public education should provide *all* children with equal opportunity to learn, play and be safe at school. Fundraising creates tiers in this system, allowing children in more affluent neighbourhoods to raise more money, thereby having increased access to better equipment, field trips, books and educational tools. Less disposable income in a home means less fundraising dollars and parental buy-in, therefore less ability to improve the school beyond what the school board allocates.
- **Fundraising lets the Province off the hook.** The more the PAC fundraises and provides amenities to the school, the less the government feels the need to kick in. Good luck trying to get it back once it's gone, folks.
- **Fundraising masks the government's failure to provide.** If you are not active in school decision-making (and most are not) you will never know where the funding comes from, where it goes to, and how it is spent. Sitting in on even one PAC meeting each year will allow you to see just how much money went into PAC coffers, where it is being allocated, and just how little the government is actually kicking in for items like Smart-Boards and balls for the gymnasium.
- **Fundraising allows private corporations to profiteer off of young children.** That company that has you and your child selling \$100 subscriptions to Popular Mechanics? Is not doing it because they care about the community. They're doing it because it's an effective and brilliant sales strategy. What company doesn't want thousands of young Canadians (and their parents) acting as unpaid sales and merchandising reps for them across the country? It's a brilliant way to take your product to market with little overhead. Think about it. What a marketing strategy! Your kid goes door to door for their company, in the name of the school. The company hauls thousands of dollars per campaign. The school gets a few token bucks tossed their way. Child labor in Canada? Alive and well, thank you very much.
- **Fundraising places a strain on parents and caregivers financially.** In an era where we're already taxed to the hilt, paying through the nose for every aspect of our lives, and watching our standard of living slip into the abyss, the perpetual requests for handouts by the school add insult to injury. The pain of the hit to the wallet increases exponentially with every subsequent child. Woe to ye who dare to put your children in sports or music activities on top of this, for they too require fundraising and fees galore.

I for one would be glad to end the madness, and do away with the fundraising all together. Our time and

energy would be much better spent being an active participant in holding the feet of our politicians to the fire, demanding better funding for our children, and protecting our families from additional stress and burden caused by excessive wallet bleeding.

Now if you'll excuse me, I need to figure out how to sell 2 cases of Girl Guide Cookies by the end of the month, which is another story all together.