

7 Fundraising Mistakes PTAs Need to Avoid

Most PTA fundraisers don't struggle because the volunteers aren't committed. They struggle because of how they're designed. These are the seven mistakes we see over and over, and what to do instead.

1. **You leave kids out of the why.** At most schools, kids are bystanders. Families get the flyer, maybe donate, and the student has no idea why it matters.
 - a. **Instead:** Let students lead. When a 7-year-old tells a family member what they're working toward, it's personal, not another donation link in the newsletter.
2. **You run too many fundraisers.** More fundraisers feels like it spreads out the burden. It actually multiplies it. Every extra ask hits the same families, and each one is easier to ignore than the last.
 - a. **Instead:** Commit to one big, well-run fundraiser and tell families up front the ask comes just once.
3. **You use the same volunteers over and over.** Your volunteers aren't less committed. They're just the only ones who raise their hand, and they're running on fumes.
 - a. **Instead:** Choose a fundraiser that doesn't need a volunteer army to run.
4. **You reward dollars instead of effort.** When prizes only go to top earners, kids from families with less notice. Quietly, but they notice.
 - a. **Instead:** Recognize every student for participating. Put dollar goals on the classroom or the whole school so everyone celebrates together.
5. **You judge a fundraiser only by the money raised.** What would you rather have: a fundraiser that made \$13,000 but took significant teacher and admin time to organize, communicate, and coordinate, and dozens or even hundreds of parent volunteer hours OR a fundraiser that made \$12,000 that asked no time of your school staff or your parents and instead allowed everyone to participate and have fun?
 - a. **Instead:** Measure what you keep, the hours it took, and whether your families would happily do it again.
6. **Your fundraisers are non-inclusive.** Restaurant nights, catalog sales, and ticketed events only work for families who can pay to play, or have the time, energy, and space to handle sales. The kids whose families can't, end up on the sidelines.
 - a. **Instead:** Run a fundraiser where 100% of students take part in the event, no matter what they raise.
7. **Fundraising is 80% of what you do as a PTA.** When fundraising is most of what the PTA does, the board turns into a fundraising job nobody can wait to be done with.
 - a. **Instead:** Make the fundraiser energizing for the board and the school, and make sure to spend more time on supporting your students, teachers, and families instead of just asking them for money over and over.

When we take care of the students and the school community, the fundraising follows. TopKid's Lead with Character program was built to fix all seven, and schools typically raise 2 - 3x more than similar volunteer-run events. Learn more at www.TopKidEvents.com.