Donors Choose Guidelines
www.donorschoose.org

DonorsChoose.org is a resource that has been utilized by several of the Sweetwater Union High School teachers over the past few years. The purpose of this website is to connect classroom needs with individual donors through creative, teacher-designed projects.

While this website can provide a potentially great opportunity for many teachers, there are several factors that should be considered before submitting a proposal. The purpose of this document is to provide a very broad overview of the website. For more details, teachers should consult the website. This overview is in no means an endorsement of the website, but simply meant for your information.

Background

In 2000, Charles Best and a group of Bronx, New York public high school teachers decided to take action on the scarcity of resources at their school and tap into the unlimited potential of the internet. They started a nonprofit website called DonorChoose.org in the hopes that classrooms in need could be connected with people who wanted to help.

DonorsChoose.org gives teachers the opportunity to create a proposal for resources that he/she feels that are needed in the classroom. The teacher then submits a proposal to the website and if a project is approved, the project summary and total cost are then posted to the website. Individual donors can then search the website and make cash donations towards the total cost of the project.

As of January 2009, in Southern California alone, DonorsChoose.org has raised over $1.8 million to over 4,400 projects. Each project ranges in size and scope based on the needs of each classroom.

Eligibility

DonorsChoose.org is open to all public school teachers. Proposals can be submitted only by teachers for individual classroom projects (*School-wide or District-wide initiatives are not eligible*). According to the website, their criteria are:

1) All requested resources must be used by students or directly provide a student experience.
2) The proposal cannot foster discrimination or proselytize a religious or political viewpoint.

In addition, as a term of the donation, any resources given are considered property of the classroom and may not be transferred to another site if the teacher transfers.

Process

Like any other request for funding, DonorsChoose.org has a fairly thorough process that teachers must go through to get their projects posted on the website. **It is important to note that getting a project posted on the website _does not guarantee_ that the project will be funded** (more about this a later section).

The process for posting is as follows:

1) Teachers must write a one page essay and create a list of the exact resources that they need (books, equipment, etc.) and submit it to DonorsChoose.org
2) DonorsChoose.org then screens the proposal and determines eligibility (see previous section) and follows-up with the teacher as necessary
3) Once the project is posted, individuals can make donations toward the project. Donors will receive a receipt of their donation from the website.
4) If full project funding has been received, the school principal will be emailed and the donor receives an "e-thank you" from the teacher.
5) DonorsChoose.org purchases the items and ships them to the teacher along with materials and requirements for a "Thank You Package" *(As a condition of the donation, teachers are required to submit a package of thank you notes from students as well as photos. This also requires that teachers get permission from parents of any and all children who are in the photos.)*

Optional "Fulfillment Fee"

Like any other organization, DonorsChoose.org has costs associated with providing its services. All projects posted on the website include an optional "fulfillment fee" of 15-25% that is added to the overall costs of the project. While it is a bit unclear how they develop the fee, the website states that it is based on the school's poverty level. (For example, if a project costs $100 and they assess a 15% Fulfillment Fee, the Total Project Cost will be shown as $115)

DonorsChoose.org states that the Fulfillment Fee is optional and that donors are not required to include the donation to cover this. However, they do state that this is how they pay for their operations and since they are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the entire donation is tax deductible.

Special Notes

- DonorsChoose.org does not guarantee that once a project is submitted it will be posted on the website
- Once a project is posted, it expires after five (5) months if it is not fully funded
- Items requested will not be purchased until 100% of donations are received – projects will not be given partial funding and teachers cannot transfer funds to another project
- If a project is not fully funded, any donations already made will not be returned to the donor and the donor must choose how the donation will be reallocated
- DonorsChoose.org operates on a complex point system that allows teachers to post new projects etc. Points are gained and lost based on projects being funded, response to all requirements by the teacher, and several other factors. Teachers need to be aware of this and follow all guidelines very closely.

Additional Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact the Grants and Communications Department at (619) 691-5578.

Thank you and good luck!

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Grants and Communications Office