



RAPSA Fundraising Guide

Welcome to the RAPSA Fundraising Guide! Attending the At-Promise Conference is one of the best career moves you'll ever make. In three days, you'll gain real, proven, immediately applicable classroom strategies from some of the best minds and educators in our field, including Ron Clark, Dr. Willard Daggett and Dr. Jesse Jackson III among others. But, like most things, putting on a training of this magnitude costs money. While every dollar of the registration fee is more than worth it, we understand that in these economic times even worthwhile causes can be sacrificed, which is why we've created this guide just for you. As your professional association, we are committed to helping you find the resources to help you attend the At-Promise Conference.

While we do have limited scholarship funds, we encourage you to raise the funds yourself so we are able to give even more people the opportunity to attend the conference. Here is our step-by-step guide to raising funds.

STEP 1: CREATE A BUDGET

Registration - Fees are \$595 for RAPSA members (www.rapsa.org/content/view/139/165); \$695 for non-members; and between \$1,785 (members) and \$2,085 (non-members) for groups of four. Registration covers the conference sessions, meals, and networking events.

Travel Expenses - This will vary per attendee, but there are some key questions everyone should keep in mind:

How many people are traveling?
How will you be traveling to the conference site?
What's the most cost effective way to get there?

If San Diego is relatively local and airfare is not needed, be sure to determine the mileage and calculate for gas as well as the cost of a car rental, if needed. For up-to-date gas prices, check out www.gasbuddy.com.

Accommodations - Conference attendees are eligible for a group rate discount at the Manchester Grand Hyatt for \$239/night (just mention "RAPSA" when booking). You can also find other accommodations near the venue at www.hotels.com from anywhere between \$48 and \$300/night.

Once you've considered and tallied all your expenses, you're ready to start fundraising!

STEP 2: REACH OUT TO FUNDERS

The biggest question likely on everyone's mind is who can I ask for funding and donations? Here are a few options to consider:

Family and Friends - You'd be surprised what a few emails and phone calls to your family and friends will yield! No one wants to see you succeed more than your friends and family. Why not give them an opportunity to help your career and make a real difference in the lives of your students? *See our template friends and family letter on page 5.*

PTA - Parent Associations often have additional funding that hasn't been earmarked, some even have funds set aside for teacher appreciation or recognition events. Ask your PTA board if they would consider offering some of these funds to cover the registration fees for you (or a group of your colleagues) to attend the conference. What better way to recognize you *and* bring lasting results for the students!

Alumni Association - Don't discount your alma matter. Like PTAs, oftentimes alumni associations have resources available to bolster the careers of or recognize a former student. Colleges love it when their graduates use their education to change the world. Feel free to tailor one of our template letters.

Local Retail Stores and Businesses - Grocery stores, salons, hardware stores, doctors' offices, restaurants -- the list is endless. Build a list of local business and shops in your area and see if they have a sponsorship program or would be willing to make a small donation toward your attendance fees to better the community. If money isn't an option, see if they would be willing to give in-kind donations that you could raffle off or use at an event. *See the local business template on page 6 and tailor to work for your community.*

Local Travel Agencies - If travel is your biggest cost, ask if they can give you and/or a group of your colleagues a discounted price on travel to attend the conference.

STEP 3: Try HOMEGROWN FUNDRAISING

If you prefer a do-it-yourself approach, consider hosting a FUNdraising event and invite family, friends, colleagues, and members of the community. A few tips to keep in mind:

- Your event can be as simple or as grand as you'd like. Themed events are often the easiest to pull off, but don't limit yourself – pull out your rolodex and see what can happen. Try a concert, movie night, dance-off, or even a chili cook-off. Whatever suits your fancy and will draw a crowd.
- Charge a small fee at the door (\$2-\$10 depending on your community) or ask for a suggested donation at the door within a similar range. Have other means to make money like refreshments, silly photo shoots, even \$.25 games if you carry a carnival theme, or a 50-50 raffle.
- Get everything donated! Ask local restaurants for food donations, a student's band to play for you, a friend to take the pictures.
- Be sure to advertise the event as a fundraiser so people remember to bring their wallets.
- Don't shy away from raffles and auctions or asking everyone you know to donate at least one item. Gift certificates are a perfect option and are easy donations to secure.
- Promote, promote, promote. The more people who know, the more money you'll potentially raise.

Similarly, go to your social networks. If you have a Facebook account, let people know you're raising money and how they can get it to you. For a great (free!) fundraising tool and widget try ChipIn: <http://www.chipin.com>. It allows you to set a fundraising goal, track donations, and post your campaign to various social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, and twitter. Best of all, people can donate securely online directly to you! To get started:

- Set-up a PayPal account. Free and super user-friendly. Note: PayPal will deduct <3% from each donation, but it's a small fee considering your potential.
- Add the application "ChipIn" to your Facebook account (see website for details).
- Set-up "an event" or fundraising campaign through ChipIn. All you'll need is a PayPal account to collect donations.
- Post it everywhere. Ask your friends to donate and re-post.

STEP 4: BE STRATEGIC

Make a plan. Know who you're going to target, what events you're going to host, and how much you expect to raise from each effort *before* you do anything.

Important tips:

- Set realistic goals. One letter or one bake sale isn't likely to raise every penny you need. Consider how much you want to make from each effort and be sure your effort into making that happen reflects your end goal. If you want \$1,000 from local businesses, send a letter requesting \$100 to at least 20 of them.
- Make a specific ASK and start HIGH. Asking for support isn't nearly as effective as asking for \$100. Don't expect the recipient to know how to support you – tell them. With that in mind, ask big and expect less. If you ask for \$100 and get \$50, that's still a success. If you ask for \$50 and they were willing to give \$100, that's not so good.
- Remind businesses that in-kind donations (donations of good or services rather than money such as gift certificates, supplies, food, etc) are tax-deductible. Similarly, if they wish to fund your registration in full and get a tax deduction, that can be arranged through RAPSA. Contact: Joanne Motz at jmotz@rapso.org.
- Make it personal! The work you do is incredibly important; share with your potential supporters just how crucial the lessons you'll learn at the conference are for your students and your community.
- Every penny counts. What if everyone at your school or in your neighborhood gave you one dollar?

STEP 5: SAY THANK YOU!

It's not just good manners, it's relationship building. A handwritten note on a real card (not email) carries a tremendous impact in today's world of email and text messages. Write not just one, but TWO notes: the first right after you receive the donation, thanking them for their generous support (no matter the amount) and reminding them why attending the conference is so valuable to you and the community; and the second after the conference telling them how incredible the sessions were, what you've learned that will make a real difference for your students, and how you couldn't have done it without them.

If someone provides you with a large donation (like the funding your entire costs), consider giving them more recognition like writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper thanking them or letting your local news station know of their generosity and commitment to your community. *See page 7 for sample letters.*

Sample: *Friends & Family Letter*

Dear [Family/Friend],

I am writing to ask for your help in sending myself to an amazing training to learn how to better engage my students. As you know, drop out rates are rising, and I am in a wonderful, unique position to do something about it.

The conference is called the At-Promise Conference, organized by the Reaching At-Promise Students Association, a professional association for educators and others aiming to help students realize their fullest potential. The conference will give me hands-on tactics and classroom strategies to get my students engaged in their learning. I will get an opportunity to meet and learn from some of the most esteemed minds in education today, including Ron Clark and Dr. Jesse Jackson III.

This conference comes around just once a year, and is being held in San Diego, CA on February 19-21, 2010. My attendance will give me new ways to effectively teach and keep more of my students in school and on the right track. Past attendees have boasted using lessons from the conference to help at-risk students graduate on time; I wish to do the same for my students.

I am hoping you can help by making a contribution to help me attend the At-Promise Conference this winter. Registration costs \$XXX. In addition, I also need to raise \$XXX to help cover my travel expenses. Can you make a contribution of \$X?

Thank you so much for your help!

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME, EMAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE]

Sample: *Business Letter*

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is [NAME], and I am a [TITLE] at [SCHOOL, DISTRICT]. I am writing to ask for your help in sending myself to an amazing training to learn how to better engage my students so they might realize their fullest potential. As you know, drop out rates in our community are continuing to rise [IF YOU HAVE STATS, INCLUDE THEM], and I am in a wonderful, unique position to do something about it.

The conference is called the At-Promise Conference, organized by the Reaching At-Promise Students Association, a professional association for educators and others aiming to help students realize their promise. The conference will award me with hands-on tactics and classroom strategies to get my students engaged in their learning and graduate. I will get an opportunity to meet and learn from some of the most esteemed minds in education today, including Ron Clark and Dr. Jesse Jackson III.

This conference comes around just once a year, and is being held in San Diego, CA on February 19-21, 2010. By attending, I will learn new ways to effectively teach, and keep more of my students in school and on the right track. Past attendees have boasted using lessons from the conference to help at-risk students graduate on time; I wish to do the same for the students in our community.

I am hoping you can help by making a contribution to help me attend the At-Promise Conference this winter. Registration costs \$XXX. In addition, I also need to raise \$XXX to help cover my travel expenses. Can you make a contribution of \$X?

I'm hoping you can help with any or all of the following:

- Sponsor my attendance at the 2010 At-Promise Conference. Registration costs \$XXX.
- Help cover my travel expenses, which will run \$XXX.
- Make a \$XXX donation that would be used exclusively toward my attendance to the conference.
- Make an in-kind donation of goods or services that can be sold in a raffle or at a fundraising event to support my attendance at the conference.

Are you able to help? Please contact me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL] with any questions. Thank you kindly for your thoughtful consideration!

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME, TITLE, SCHOOL, EMAIL ADDRESS, AND PHONE]

Sample: *Thank You Letter 1*

(Remember: a handwritten note on a card is best)

Date

NAME

TITLE

COMPANY NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear

On behalf of my students, [SCHOOL], and our community, I would like to thank you for your donation of [\$XXX or in-kind donation of XXX], which will give me the opportunity to attend the Reaching At-Promise Students Association's (RAPSA) fifth annual At-Promise Conference in San Diego, CA. While there, I aim to learn hands-on ways to get my students active in their education and the classroom so they might realize their fullest potential.

Your commitment will help me and [SCHOOL] reach that goal. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sample: *Thank You Letter 2*

(Remember: a handwritten note on a card is best)

Date

NAME

TITLE

COMPANY NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear

On behalf of my students, [SCHOOL], and our community, I would like to thank you again for your donation of [\$XXX or in-kind donation of XXX], which gave me the opportunity to attend the Reaching At-Promise Students Association's (RAPSA) fifth annual At-Promise Conference in San Diego, CA.

INSERT paragraph about your school, the issues you face, and what you learned at the conference.

YOU HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR SUPPORT. Your commitment has helped me and [SCHOOL] reach and engage our at-promise youth. Thank you again.

Sincerely,