



PTO in-a-box

Helping Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Things

Case Study

Roxborough Primary and Intermediate School

Parent teacher Involvement Committee (PTIC)
Increases Parent Involvement &
Optimizes Fundraising Results

The Roxborough Primary (K-2) and Intermediate (3-6) school is one of 46 elementary schools in the Douglas County School District (DCSD). DCSD is located between Denver, CO and Colorado Springs, CO, and covers 870 square miles. It is the third largest and one of the faster growing school districts in Colorado.

Rewind to 2005: Roxborough Elementary School's parent teacher group, the Parent Teacher Involvement Committee (PTIC), was considering dissolving the dwindling 10-person group. For some time, the minority was doing the majority of the work and was overwhelmed. In tandem, Karen Brofft was hired as the new Principal. She recruited Barbra Chase and Sean Burke to join the PTIC as executives to restart and reinvigorate the struggling parent teacher group. The new executive team was in agreement that the PTIC was a valuable school asset that could maximize enrichment, optimize fundraising results and increase parent involvement, while minimizing volunteer burnout through the implementation of best practices and processes.

The Challenge

The PTIC was looking for ways to grow parent involvement, increase fundraising results and establish a mutually beneficial partnership with the community. There were numerous challenges. Without a plan, events were stagnant and severely understaffed, while profitability was questionable. Parent participation and fundraising results remained flat, while the student population was growing 20% per year. Parents that had expressed interest in participating were frustrated because they were not contacted about volunteer opportunities. Fundraisers were not well attended because they were not properly promoted. The principal and PTIC officers had no visibility into the event status or results. There was little historical data and no process in place to understand how the PTIC might improve or expand the events and experience for volunteers, families and students.

The Solution

Leveraging their business experiences and best practices from other successful parent teacher groups, the new leadership team worked together to develop a plan and organizational structure anchored by repeatable best practices, templates and technology. The solution, PTO in-a-box, provided school leadership with more time and money to execute daily operations and strategic vision efficiently, and increased parent teacher groups' effectiveness and sustainability.

To minimize burnout and increase parent involvement, a committee chair and fundraising/enrichment process was established that focused on recruiting great leaders and expanding events. "We chose complementary fundraisers," said Sean Burke, former PTIC President. "We balanced our fundraising activities, such as a silent auction, with a community-oriented event, such as the Fall Family Social." The PTIC also set up an annual goal-oriented budget-planning process that was aligned with the school's needs. Once the annual budget was established, it was segmented into manageable tasks, and those tasks were delegated to different committees. The number of committees established was directly associated with the activities necessary to meet the budget's goals. It also included multi-year projects divided into annual goals. For example, the PTIC implemented a two-year project to purchase Smartboards for each classroom. They started with grades 4-6 and worked their way through to kindergarten.

To distribute the workload and establish a succession plan, co-chairs and a formal process with which to hire them were added. The co-chairs were selected through a standard recruitment process where they submitted an application and participated in a formal interview process. "If you staff your committees appropriately and assign responsibilities under a certain timeline, you don't burn people out because they don't feel they have to do everything," said Barbra Chase Burke, PTIC Vice President.

To increase parent involvement and build a mutually beneficial relationship with the community, the PTIC began regular communications with the parents and community. Emails were sent asking for volunteers and announcing the time and location of events, emphasizing their purpose and how the children, school, families and community would benefit. "Saying it's the school fundraiser isn't enough," says Karen Brofft, former Principal, Roxborough Primary and Intermediate School. "It's important that you say, 'We're raising money to pay for a program called Everyday Math that helps boost math test scores and helps students understand there's more than one way to solve a problem.'"

A post-mortem process was instituted to understand how the PTIC might improve or expand the events and experience for volunteers, families and students. At the end of each event and school year, the chairs and officers evaluated each event and its outcome, not only in terms of how much money was raised but in how the experience could be improved for volunteers and participants. For example:

- ★ Did the group meet or exceed committee goals?
- ★ What percentage of families/students participated? Is this number higher or lower than last year?
- ★ How can the committee increase participation?
- ★ How else might the event be promoted?
- ★ Were parents surveyed about their experience of the event? Would they like to participate in it again next year?
- ★ Were the volunteers thanked?
- ★ Are plans under way toward implementing the originally stated goal? (Is the new playground equipment on the way? Are the field trip plans complete?) Has this information been communicated to families?

The results of the post-mortem were captured and shared with the next year's committee so they could benefit from and build on past experiences.

Managing all the information and documents was a daunting task. To capture, protect and make available all the necessary information, best practices, templates and documents, leveraging technology such as PTO in-a-box was critical to the parent teacher group's success. PTO in-a-box allows parent teacher groups to capture best-practices and store documents as well as member, vendor, event, communication and financial data—all in one solution.

The Results

Within five years, the Roxborough PTIC has grown alongside the school. During this time, Roxborough opened a second new building, housing Primary (K-2) and Intermediate (3-6). The PTIC has consistently doubled their fundraising contributions year after year. In 2005, financial contributions were averaging \$20,000 a year compared to 2009 contributions of approximately \$100,000, with plans to double this amount in the near future. They have increased parent involvement from 50 family members to over 350 family members, from a few committees to 31 committees and from a few dedicated parents to 89 dedicated chairpersons. The chairs function as independent departments and are held accountable for their goals, delivering over 50 events per year. The money raised to date has funded new curriculum programs (Every Child a Reader, Every Child a Writer and Everyday Math) and equipment (recess equipment, calculators, document cameras, projectors and SmartBoards).

"Mention the word PTO to most parents and they envision a group of moms sitting around drinking coffee planning one or two events for their school. Today's PTO is anything but this stereotype. With school districts around the nation facing enormous budget cuts, today's PTO has become a critical source of funding to supplement these cuts in addition to sponsoring events the kids will always remember. Our PTO is literally run like a business in order to achieve our mission: 'Create Fun, Have Fun, Raise Funds'. We not only provide a vital source of income to the school, but even more importantly, we provide memories for years to come. We could not have accomplished the above without the best practices, templates, historical data and tools made available to the officers, chairs and volunteers. PTO in-a-box is a one-of-a-kind solution to managing Parent teacher groups."

Kristi Watson,
PTIC President 2009-2010

