



# A Practical Guide for Building Positive Parent and Donor Experience

7 Practical Tips for  
Schools to Strengthen  
Fundraising, Boost Donor  
Retention, and Build  
Community Trust



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# About This eBook

Schools today play a role that goes beyond the classroom. Their long-term success often depends on how effectively they engage parents and donors.

Yet for many schools, donor engagement is reactive. Outreach happens when a campaign launches. Acknowledgment happens when a gift arrives. And communication drops once the fundraising season ends.

This eBook is a practical guide to changing that – one relationship at a time.

## What This eBook Covers

- How to communicate impact in ways that keep donors coming back
- Building engagement that goes beyond campaign season
- The power of personalized communication in donor relationships
- Making giving simple, accessible, and frictionless
- Planning year-round engagement – not just annual drives
- Acknowledging and thanking donors in ways that build loyalty
- Turning one-time donors into long-term supporters

## What You Will Walk Away With

1. **Stronger Donor Retention Strategies** – to keep existing donors engaged and giving year after year.
2. **Higher Campaign Engagement** – practical approaches to get more parents and donors actively involved.
3. **A Relationship-First Mindset** – a shift from transactional fundraising to community-driven giving.
4. **Ready-to-Use Frameworks** – simple tips your team can start applying immediately, no large budgets needed.
5. **A Foundation for Long-Term Growth** – habits and systems that compound over time into a thriving philanthropic community.

### Did You Know?

Schools and nonprofits that communicate consistently with their online donors see measurable, compounding growth in fundraising revenue – not just in individual campaigns, but year over year.

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# Clearly Communicate the Impact of Every Contribution



Donors and parents give more generously and more consistently when they can see exactly what their support has made possible. Impact communication is not just courtesy; it is a retention strategy.

## Why It Matters

- Donors who receive specific impact updates are significantly more likely to give again the following year
- Vague thank-yous ('your donation helped many students') create no emotional connection
- Concrete outcomes – names, numbers, stories – make a supporter feel their gift truly counted



## How to Do It

- **Tell a story, not just a statistic.** Instead of “we raised \$20,000”, say “we funded 10 full scholarships for students who would otherwise not have had access”
- **Send a short post-campaign update.** A single email or newsletter post, shared within two weeks of a campaign closing, is enough to close the loop.
- **Use visuals where possible.** A photo of the program in action, a quote from a student or teacher – small details that show the real-world outcome.
- **Be specific about what each giving level unlocks.** If your campaign has tiers, show exactly what \$50, \$100, or \$500 achieves. Specificity drives action.
- **Share impact annually, not just post-campaign.** An end-of-year impact summary keeps donors connected to the school's mission even in non-campaign periods.



### Did You Know?

76% of donors say being informed of the impact of their gift influences their decision to give again.



FundThrive by



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FundThrive by MentisSoft gives schools a centralized view of every campaign's outcomes – making it easy to pull together impact reports, track donation totals by program, and share meaningful results with your donor community.



# Focus on Engagement, Not Just Fundraising Campaigns



Most schools communicate with donors twice a year – when a campaign launches, and when it closes. Donors notice this pattern. When the only outreach they receive is an ask, they begin to feel like a revenue source rather than a valued member of the school community.

## Why It Matters

- Donors who feel genuinely engaged are 4× more likely to increase their giving over time
- Engagement builds familiarity and familiarity builds trust before you ever make an ask
- Parents who feel connected to the school's mission become its most effective ambassadors



## How to Do It

- **Share school updates between campaigns.** A brief newsletter, a behind-the-scenes update, or a short video showing a program in action – none of these need to include an ask.
- **Invite donors and parents to school events.** An open day, a student showcase, a drama performance – experiences create emotional connection that no email can replicate.
- **Create a 'no-ask' touchpoint at least once a quarter.** Plan three or four moments each year specifically designed to appreciate and inform – with zero fundraising intent.
- **Celebrate milestones publicly.** A new program launch, a scholarship recipient's story, a school award – share these with your donor community and make them feel part of the journey.
- **Ask for input, not just money.** A short survey about what supporters care about most makes donors feel heard – and gives you valuable insight for future campaigns.



### Did You Know?

The number one reason donors stop giving to a school is not financial – it is that they felt the school only reached out when it needed something.



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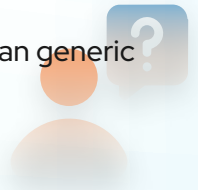
# Personalize Your Communication with Parents and Donors



A message that speaks to everyone, speaks to no one. When donors receive a communication that reflects their specific history with the school – the campaigns they supported, the programs they care about – it signals that the school genuinely values the relationship, not just the gift.

## Why It Matters

- Personalized emails have a 29% higher open rate and a 41% higher click-through rate than generic ones
- Donors who feel recognized are far more likely to become long-term supporters
- A first-time donor and a five-year donor should never receive the same message – their relationship with your school is completely different



## How to Do It

- **Use the donor's name – always.** Even in automated messages, addressing someone by name changes the entire tone of communication.
- **Reference to what they previously supported.** “Your contribution to last year's scholarship fund helped three students” – this small detail demonstrates that you remember and care.
- **Segment your donor list.** Group donors by giving history, interests, and engagement levels. Tailor your appeals and updates to each segment rather than broadcasting a single message.
- **Acknowledge milestones.** A donor's first anniversary of giving, their fifth year of support, a significant cumulative contribution – recognize these moments. They matter.
- **Match the channel to the person.** Some donors prefer email. Others respond to WhatsApp updates or printed letters. Knowing your audience's preferences shows thoughtfulness.



### Did You Know?

80% of donors say a simple, heartfelt thank-you convinces them to make a second donation.



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# Make Giving Simple and Accessible



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## Why It Matters

- 45% of online donations are now made on a mobile device – a poor mobile experience means a lost gift.
- Complicated giving processes cause a significant share of donors to abandon mid-donation.
- Recurring donations provide schools with predictable revenue – but only if the sign-up process is simple enough to encourage it.



## How to Do It

- **Offer a clean, simple online giving page.** One clear call to action, no unnecessary fields, and a mobile-optimized design. The fewer steps between intention and completion, the better.
- **Provide multiple payment options.** Credit card, debit card, bank transfer, and digital wallets. Different donors have different preferences – accommodate them.
- **Enable recurring donation sign-ups.** Give donors the option to give monthly or annually with a single click. Frame it as the most impactful way to support the school long-term.
- **Make campaign links easy to share.** When parents can share a giving page directly from their phone, peer-to-peer fundraising happens organically – amplifying your reach without extra effort.
- **Send an immediate confirmation on donation.** An instant receipt with a warm message reassures the donor their gift was received and begins the acknowledgment journey before you even send a formal thank-you.



### Did You Know?

Schools that switch to mobile-optimized, streamlined online giving pages consistently see higher donation completion rates often within the very first campaign cycle after making the change.



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# Create a Year-Round Donor and Parent Engagement Plan



Schools that plan their donor and parent engagement across the full calendar year build stronger relationships, face less resistance during appeals, and consistently outperform schools that only show up when they need funding.

## Why It Matters

- Donors who are engaged year-round give 48% more on average than those who only hear from a school during campaigns
- A planned engagement calendar prevents the cycle of radio silence followed by a sudden ask – which erodes trust
- Consistent communication keeps your school top of mind, so when a campaign does launch, it lands in a warm audience



## How to Do It

- **Map out your year in advance.** Identify 8–12 key moments across the academic year for donor and parent communication – not all of which should involve an ask.
- **Alternate between asking and giving.** For every appeal or campaign touchpoint, plan at least two touchpoints that offer something – an update, an insight, an invitation.
- **Build around your school calendar.** Back to school, end of term, graduation, annual day – these natural milestones are perfect opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- **Schedule your annual giving campaign early.** Don't plan your biggest fundraising push reactively. A well-planned annual giving campaign, communicated weeks in advance, dramatically outperforms a rushed one.
- **Recognize donors publicly at the right moment.** Year-end reports, event programs, donor walls – public recognition at planned moments in the year reinforces that giving is celebrated.



## Fun Fact

Schools that build a structured annual engagement calendar – with planned non-ask touchpoints built in – report significantly higher re-engagement rates from lapsed donors compared to those running reactive, campaign-only outreach.



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# Acknowledge Every Donor — Promptly and Personally



Most schools communicate with donors twice a year — when a campaign launches, and when it closes. Donors notice this pattern. When the only outreach they receive is an ask, they begin to feel like a revenue source rather than a valued member of the school community.

## Why It Matters

- A personal thank-you sent within 48 hours is the single most powerful predictor of a second gift
- 80% of donors say a simple, genuine thank-you convinces them to make a second donation
- The way a school responds to a gift tells a donor everything about how much the relationship is valued



## How to Do It

- **Acknowledge within 48 hours, always.** Set a clear internal standard — no gift goes unacknowledged for more than two days. For major gifts, a phone call or handwritten note is appropriate.
- **Make the thank-you specific.** Reference to the campaign or cause the donor to support. A message that says 'your gift to the arts bursary fund means a student will get to study music this year' is far more powerful than a generic reply.
- **Separate the receipt from the thank-you.** An automated receipt is a legal document. A real thank-you is a relationship moment. Do not let one replace the other.
- **Recognize repeat and long-standing donors specially.** A donor in their third year of giving deserves to know their loyalty is noticed. A brief acknowledgment of their continued commitment goes a long way.
- **Follow up with an impact touchpoint 30 days later.** The initial thank-you opens the door. A follow-up message 30 days later — showing what the gift is already enabling — keeps it open.



### Did You Know?

A well-crafted, timely acknowledgment costs nothing but transforms a one-time donor into a loyal supporter. It is the highest-return action in fundraising.



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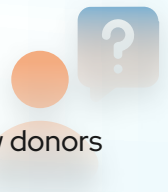
# Turn One-Time Donors into Long-Term Supporters



Acquiring a new donor costs significantly more than retaining an existing one. Yet most school fundraising strategies invest far more in attracting first-time givers than in nurturing the relationships they have already built. Long-term donor relationships are not a result of better campaigns – they are the result of consistent, deliberate stewardship.

## Why It Matters

- It costs 5–7× more to acquire a new donor than to retain an existing one
- Prior multi-year donors have a retention rate of 61%, compared to just 23% for brand-new donors
- Recurring donors give 42% more per year on average than one-time givers



## How to Do It

- **Introduce recurring giving early.** On your giving page and in your first acknowledgment, highlight the option to give monthly or annually. Frame it simply: 'The most impactful way to support us is with a regular contribution.'
- **Create a re-engagement path for lapsed donors.** Donors who gave last year but not this year are your warmest prospects. A personal, non-pressured message acknowledging their previous support – with no immediate ask – is often enough to re-open the relationship.
- **Celebrate giving anniversaries.** Mark the date a donor first gave to your school. A brief anniversary message – "It's been two years since you joined our community" – costs nothing and builds remarkable loyalty.
- **Offer a donor community identity.** Named giving societies, recognition programs, or simply a consistent 'community of supporters' label gives donors a sense of belonging that extends beyond any single campaign.
- **Ask for feedback from long-term supporters.** Inviting established donors to share their perspective on school initiatives makes them feel like partners, not just funders. Their input is also genuinely valuable.



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# Meet FundThrive by MentisSoft



FundThrive is MentisSoft's purpose-built fundraising and donor management platform for independent schools and educational institutions. It brings everything a school needs to build, manage, and grow its philanthropic community into one intuitive system.

## What FundThrive Does

- **Donor Management** – Maintain a complete profile for every donor, including giving history, communication log, campaign participation, and personal preferences.
- **Campaign Management** – Plan, launch, and track fundraising campaigns from a single dashboard. Monitor donations in real time and share live progress with supporters.
- **Personalized Communications** – Send segmented, personalized emails and acknowledgments triggered by donor actions, automatically, at scale.
- **Recurring Giving** – Enable and manage monthly and annual giving programs with automated receipts and reminders built in.
- **Impact Reporting** – Generate clear, shareable reports showing how funds have been used helping schools close the loop on every campaign.
- **FINACS Integration** – FundThrive connects directly with FINACS, MentisSoft's school accounting platform, so fundraising and finance stay perfectly in sync.



## Built for Schools

Unlike generic CRM or fundraising tools, FundThrive is designed specifically for the way schools operate – with the academic calendar, community dynamics, and relationship-driven nature of school fundraising built into every feature.

### Ready to put these tips into practice?

See how FundThrive by MentisSoft can help your school build stronger donor relationships, run more effective campaigns, and grow a loyal philanthropic community.

Visit

<https://www.mentissoft.com/fundthrive/>  
to book a free demo