

Ithaca Creek State School P&C

Funding Proposal 2009

Introduction

The last ten to twenty years have seen a significant tightening of the State Budgets in all areas. In Education there has been a slow move to imposing an invisible tax by allowing parent bodies to pick up the funding shortfall at State Schools. All the State Primary Schools in this area engage in comprehensive fund raising activities.

The ICSS budget includes \$1000 for grounds equipment yet a single high jump mat cost \$5000. For all numeracy and literacy activities the school received \$5800 dollars or about \$20 per child.

Traditionally Ithaca Creek State School (ICSS) P&C has conducted an extensive series of funding activities aimed at supplementing the schools budget and building a school community spirit. The funds have been used to contribute to both building initiatives and curriculum activities.

In 2008 the P&C made a commitment to contribute \$22,000 per year for the following three years to supplement curriculum activities. This paper is based upon the assumption that a similar or increased funding level will be needed for future years.

In 2009 a committee was set up to co-ordinate the years fund raising activities. This document is based upon the experiences of members of that committee during the year.

This proposal discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the current strategy, analyses three options for the future funding strategy and presents a recommendation for consideration by the P&C.

Current Situation

The 2008 fundraising activities and income generated are as follows:

Bunnings sausage sizzle	\$ 1,284.60
Cards & calendars	\$ 2,628.00
Election Day stall	\$ 1,853.84
Entertainment books	\$ 492.00
Fathers Day stall	\$ 1,552.88
History	\$ 20.00
Lifeline Bin	\$ 825.00
Mothers Day stall	\$ 3,957.63
Movie night	\$ 7,569.54
Oktoberfest	\$ 830.75
Raffles	\$ -
Smartathon	\$ 3,822.50
Sundry	-\$ 449.15
Trivia night	\$ 4,423.39
Welcome BBQ	-\$ 13.22
Wine Drive	\$ 264.00
	\$ 29,061.76

It is worth noting that many of the above activities require multiple volunteers and an enormous amount of co-ordination. Movie Night, for instance, is a major exercise in co-ordination to deliver the array of stalls and activities

The P&C also appeals for money during the year for activities such as the Building Fund and the Pavers scheme.

There are a series of events organised and run by the P&C or requiring P&C assistance that do not raise funds. These are:

Celebration of Sports Day, Welcome Back Breakfast, Volunteers Thank You Breakfast, Under 8's Day, Anzac Day Morning Tea, Open Day Morning Tea, Mystery Festival and Working Bees.

The P&C additionally calls for volunteers to staff the Tuckshop and the uniform shop, bake for the Tuckshop and run and attend the various committees.

The school utilises volunteers to assist with classroom activities, swimming, library and excursions.

The above list demonstrates that the school and the P&C have a large requirement for volunteers. In the last few years the ability of families to maintain a sustained effort for volunteer activities is declining. This year the P&C struggled to find a secretary for several months and several of the

committees are poorly and irregularly attended. This year the Anaconda barbecue and the Fathers Day stall did not go ahead due to a lack or unavailability of volunteers.

The current set of activities is maintained by a small and declining troop of “regulars” who expend considerable energy to drum up support from the parent body. In short, whilst there is no shortage of good intentions, actual time commitment is becoming more difficult in our increasingly busy world.

Fund Raising Options

Presented below are three options that utilise varying strategies to raise funds.

Option 1- Do Nothing

Advantages:

The current fund raising strategy does provide a wide range of activities that do assist in building a school spirit. Many of the activities are thoroughly enjoyed and looked forward to by the children and the parents.

Disadvantages:

The sheer weight of activities for the relatively poor return for the effort expended. This results in volunteer fatigue and is becoming unsustainable.

Suggestions to alleviate this situation include:

- Reducing the number of activities, concentrating on those that provide the best return in terms of community building and money.
- Assigning activities to individual years to organise at the commencement of the year.

The burden of funds contribution is not shared evenly amongst the parent body. The parents who volunteer their time are invariably those who support the events.

Option 2 - The Big Bang Approach

Most of the other schools in the area run one big event to raise a large proportion of their fundraising needs. In general this is a school fair although there are alternatives. Ithaca Creek State School did run a successful fair for the 120th anniversary.

Advantages:

The Big Bang Approach does address the problem of volunteer fatigue in that it consolidates effort into one large activity.

This approach is not restricted to a school fair. St Finbarrs, for instance, run a fashion show that raises a considerable amount of money. An option that secures ICSS a “market niche”, such as the Christmas Markets, would probably be equally as successful.

Other events would still need to be run but could now utilise a lesser volunteer effort as the emphasis for fundraising could be removed or at least lessened. Trivia Night, for instance, would not need a silent auction and could move to a venue that caters for food and alcohol.

A large event would share out the volunteer effort more evenly and would probably attract a greater and more even response to contributions as well.

Disadvantages:

Whilst effort is condensed it is not reduced. The most successful fairs are very strict about handing out roles, usually on a per year basis. They also utilise an almost full time convenor to manage the progress of the various teams.

The idea of a fair has been raised many times in the past but has usually run aground due to the abundance of fairs in the area and the inability to find a date that doesn't clash with the others.

Option 3 - The Fund Raising Levy

A fund raising levy imposed at the start of the year would allow the P&C to know its exact budget and plan and implement the initiatives to be funded by that levy. The levy would not replace the current suite of activities, instead leaving them to concentrate upon building the school community.

The current enrolment at the school of 350 plus students would mean that a levy of \$140 would raise approximately \$49,000.

Advantages

The main advantage of this approach is the enormous reduction in volunteer effort. As with the Big Bang approach the best of the current activities would still run but without the emphasis on making money. This may increase the community building aspect of the activities.

The reduction in volunteer effort will also free up the P&C and the school to concentrate their efforts on how to use the money to the greatest advantage of the children rather than on how to raise the money. This will allow the development of future funding strategies and enable a long term view of how to improve the general state of education at ICSS.

The levy shares the financial burden of the budget supplement more fairly across the school. For some families a flat fee of \$140 would be a reduction of the amount given.

The fund raiser levy means 100% of the contributions get to the school. For every dollar donated, the school gets a dollar. With nearly all other fund raisers there are costs associated. At movie night for instance costs run to about \$2000 which means to raise \$6 the parent body has to contribute \$8.

Disadvantages

Any levy introduced at a State School is not going to be popular. There is a view that State Schools are funded wholly by the State and the levy flies in the face of that view.

The levy may have a negative effect on the activities that will still need volunteers with some feeling that they are doing their bit and paying for it as well. This may be countered by offering incentives such as Uniform Shop Discounts to those who help out.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above it is the position of this proposal that the current funding strategy is no longer sustainable and must be improved. The Big Bang option does not address the problems with the current system and so is rejected.

The recommendation therefore is to implement the Funding Levy as follows:

- Levy to be \$140 per child included with the stationary list.
- Various fee structures are possible however it is only proposed to consider a flat fee per child. The logic of this approach mirrors that of most school fees. Each child will receive the same benefits from the funding and they will not reduce as more children are sent per family.
- Recognising the diversity of situations at the school it is proposed that the fee be voluntary for the first year.
- The levy is assessed in May 2010 and all these aspects are included in that review.
- A form of incentive is introduced to reward volunteers for the remaining activities.

In conclusion the following points should be considered whilst evaluating this proposal:

Private schools now receive considerable public funding despite their parents paying anything from \$4000 to \$15000 per year. The teachers at private schools are paid no more so this money is all invested into the school facilities and curriculum.

7 years education at Ithaca Creek for one child will cost \$980 dollars – about one term at the least expensive private school.

\$140 is about the cost of a day out at Dreamworld for a family of four. It is slightly more than two trips to the cinemas and popcorn for that same family.