



Urban Classical Education with Russ Gregg

Lesson 5: Raising Funds for Urban Classical Schools

Outline:

Introduction

- It typically amazes people to hear that 90% of students at Hope Academy are funded by donations.
- Be careful about tuition tax credit programs—sometimes “with the shekels come the shackles.”
- The Hope Academy maxim: It is the Lord’s will, it is the Lord’s bill!



The **Benevon Model** of Sustainable Funding – Home Academy’s Model

- Four Main Steps
 - **Point of Entry: Facts, Emotional Hook, Capture Names**
 - **Follow-Up: Listen and Involve; Begin Cultivating the Relationship**
 - **Soliciting a Gift**
 - **Reconnecting Partners to the Mission and Provide Opportunity for Partners to Introduce Others to the School**

Key Principle for Hope Academy Fundraising: They focus on **Ministry versus Money**

- **Point of Entry: Monthly “Tour of Hope”**
- Point of Entry Event (Monthly):
- Russ give’s background of the neighborhood and the crisis in the neighborhood
- First graders recite the Hope Academy Declaration. It generally sizzle’s and impresses people—it is emotionally compelling.
- Russ tells his own personal story—Russ being someone not qualified for the work!
- Then they visit a couple of classrooms so that parents can see with their own eyes what the education is like
- Teachers are often reviewing learning so students can really shine with what they know
- Then all visitors are gathered so they can debrief regarding what they have seen
- Russ then lays out the five core strategies of Hope Academy (see them here).



- Then invite a couple of students who are interviewed in front of the visitors, often interviewing high school students—students share their experiences and aspirations
- Then a parent shares a testimony of his or her experience at the academy
- Then share the good results coming out of the academy: three times the results for half the cost; they show the diversity of the student body; explain how people can be involved.
- Then take questions.
- This event is the most important thing we do to develop an army of sponsors and supporters

Follow-Up: Listen and Involve, Begin Cultivating the Relationship

- Within 10 days the office calls and asks visitors about their experience; office asks if they can see themselves being involved. Those who don't wish to be involved are "blessed and released."
- Benevon model encourages a period of cultivation with new visitors. We need to be patient with donor, by cultivating the relationship before asking for money. If you ask for donations too soon, you tend to get a token "tip" gift. Help donors to imagine how they might be involved with an invitation without being pushy.

Soliciting a Gift

- After a period of cultivation, potential partners are asked, "Do you see yourself getting involved in any particular way?" Then be quiet and listen. If they are not ready, "bless and release them." They will more likely to recommend you to others.
- Onboarding partners: every student is paired with a partnering sponsor. A meeting is arranged with partner and student. One student needs a \$7000 yearly partnership. Reconnect partners with the mission.
- HA hosts a partner day twice a year: message from Russ, testimony from a parent or student, then observe student in class, then have lunch with their student.
- Once a year the student will send a letter of thanks to the sponsor.

Reconnecting Partners to the Mission and Providing an Opportunity for Partners to Introduce Others to the School

- Hope Academy will invite partners to come back to the school and bring others to come with them. Most of our new partners come from existing partners.

Hope Academy Fundraising: Values and Practices

- The ministry of fundraising—not just raising dollars, but to love our partners, so they become joy-filled givers who are rich toward God



- Difference between an abundance mentality and a scarcity mentality: We don't compete for scarce resources but trust that God is abundantly able to provide for all.
- Eternal rewards versus earthly treasures: laying up treasure in heaven; link between giving and faith
- Thinking in terms of solutions rather than needs: We should not only talk about our needs—our school has not needs so much as proven solutions to the problem of inner-city education. We are inviting people join us.
- Think sustainable versus sporadic: link partners to the longterm vision of HA; partnership with a student really helps. The sponsor will often follow the student through the entire school experience. We ask partners to renew every year in the spring. We do this without arm-twisting.
- Think team versus talent. Too big of a burden to place this fundraising effort on a few talented people. The Head of School is on the fundraising team! The Head of School is the chief fundraiser. HA hosts investor meetings—90 minute meetings with partners; we invite their feedback and input; ask them for any opportunities or threats that they see. We do this without asking for money.
- Warm tours versus cold calls. The school is your greatest promotional tool. It is a show and tell exercise! Drive people to attend your school tours.
- Inviting people to participate rather than cajoling or being pushing. We always ask (after developing a relationship) “Do you see yourself getting involved in any particular way.” Then we are quiet and listen.
- Love the donor as you love yourself.
- Partners versus events. Better to build relationships with partners than investing too much time on events. All of the work put into hosting events tends to be counter-productive compared to the riches of developing friendships with partners.
- Danger of mega donors: Don't rely on big donors (giving say 500K or more) because then if they cannot make donation one year, you will be sunk. Better to have a broad range of many (hundreds) givers who give in the range of 7K per year (or less).
- All K students are enrolled without partners, and therefore we must find partners for them during the year.
- Don't spend time with bulk mailings. Make 2-3 personal contact with each partner each year
- Unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor, labor in vain.
- We must trust in the master not the method
- Focus on the story versus the program. Programs don't change people; people change people. Therefore share stories about those people. Just as David had five smooth stones, you will need five great stories. People will forget your statistics but will remember your stories.
- All is done in dependence on the Lord, not on the partners. We must mindfully point to the ultimate provider, God himself.



Conclusion

- God has provided for Hope Academy; will provide for you too.