

Financial Sustainability

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Van Lunen Fellow 2012-13

The Peace & Justice Academy, Pasadena, CA

www.ThePeaceAcademy.org

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What did I do?

The Peace & Justice Academy is a 6-12th grade secondary school founded in the Mennonite tradition located in Pasadena, CA. The school first opened its doors four years ago in September of 2009. Since that time, the school has been running on donations, tuition, and in-kind donations of teaching by the staff. The goal is to be sustained by tuition for basic operating expenses and have donations be used for capital purchases and long-term investments like endowment. Another goal is to have full-time staff that is paid a living wage for the area.

This year we looked at creating a strategic plan for fundraising, donor relationships, and increased enrollment to bring us to our full size in the next five years.

What did I learn?

Over the years we have had many people donate in small amounts to the Peace & Justice Academy, but we needed to ask people to give at a higher level for the school to make it through its initial startup. I learned that many people want to be invited along and pulled into the mission of the school. There was generally excitement, but, as directors, we were not asking directly for the funds. We have added to our annual direct mail to make it an annual fund with multiple appeals and have worked directly with our regular donors to ask them to give at a higher level as a way for us to encourage others to give. Our board has now taken up an major annual fundraising event that had its first successful launch this year.

What Difference Did It Make?

- Our scholarships are now at 50% of tuition, which is our goal for sustainability
- We increased personal donations by 53% in the 2012-13 school year.
- We received \$4800 in grants this year and have hired a part-time grant writer who is working on our goal of \$15,000 for next year.
- We have now added our final grade, so our cost increases will decrease as we work on our fundraising.