

# ***THE ULTIMATE ONLINE SCHOOL STORE GUIDE***



**VANCO**  
EDUCATION

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# INTRODUCTION

*Looking to open an online store for your school district?*

*You might want to provide a convenient way for parents to access school supplies, pay for events, activities or lunches. Alternatively, you may want to make school memorabilia more available. With an online store, you can fulfill a variety of these goals.*

*Keep reading to learn what online school stores can do for districts and how schools can use one to grow their budget.*





# ***WHAT AN ONLINE STORE CAN DO FOR YOUR DISTRICT***

## **1 Fundraise to Make Up for Budget Shortages**

Schools and districts can never be certain of what their funding will be from year to year. Allocations from federal, state and local governments may be reduced, and there's no telling what surprise expenses your school will face. This is why schools and districts across the county lean on fundraising efforts to address sudden reductions in government funds or surprise expenses.

## **2 Give Your School Prestige with an Online Shop**

An online store also helps you build credibility. For example, billions of consumers shop online. Nevertheless, only a fraction of organizations that can benefit from e-commerce follow through with establishing an online store. Conversely, every major organization has an online presence.

Your online store can help to build your school brand. It can make your school look like one of the big players. A functional, professional-looking online store speaks volumes about the integrity of your school.



### **3 Monetize Your School's Brand**

Whatever you do, don't underestimate the power of your school's brand. Your colors and logo are big sellers that can boost the sale of many different types of products from branded school supplies to apparel.

Though apparel is a big revenue maker, don't forget that decals, school materials and a variety of other products can sell at a premium with your school's brand emblazoned on them.

### **4 Promote Your School's Events**

Even a small school district has countless events to coordinate and promote. With an online school store, you can use the simple, and intuitive, e-commerce platform to [sell tickets](#).

Having one place for the parents and the community to visit makes it easier for them to find events and purchase tickets, boosting your school's bottom line.

### **5 Monetize Your Facility**

With the monetary strain that many state and local governments have placed on schools, districts need to maximize the value of their assets. With an online store, it is easy to sell parking passes for high school students wishing to drive to school and park.

You can also sell gym memberships for individuals to use the workout facilities or swimming pool after school hours. Monetizing your facilities in such a way will help you generate extra revenue to make up for shortfalls.

## 6 **Collect Fees**

Throughout the year, schools need to collect a variety of fees from students including payments for school lunches, activities, field trips and much more. Simplify the process by letting parents pay for these items in one, easy-to-use hub, your online school store.

Doing this will not only simplify work for school staff, in some cases cutting the budget reconciliation [process down to only 10 minutes](#), but it will also keep parents happy. And when parents are happy, it cuts down on calls to the head office and the time it takes for staff to manage parent concerns.

## 7 **Accept Donations**

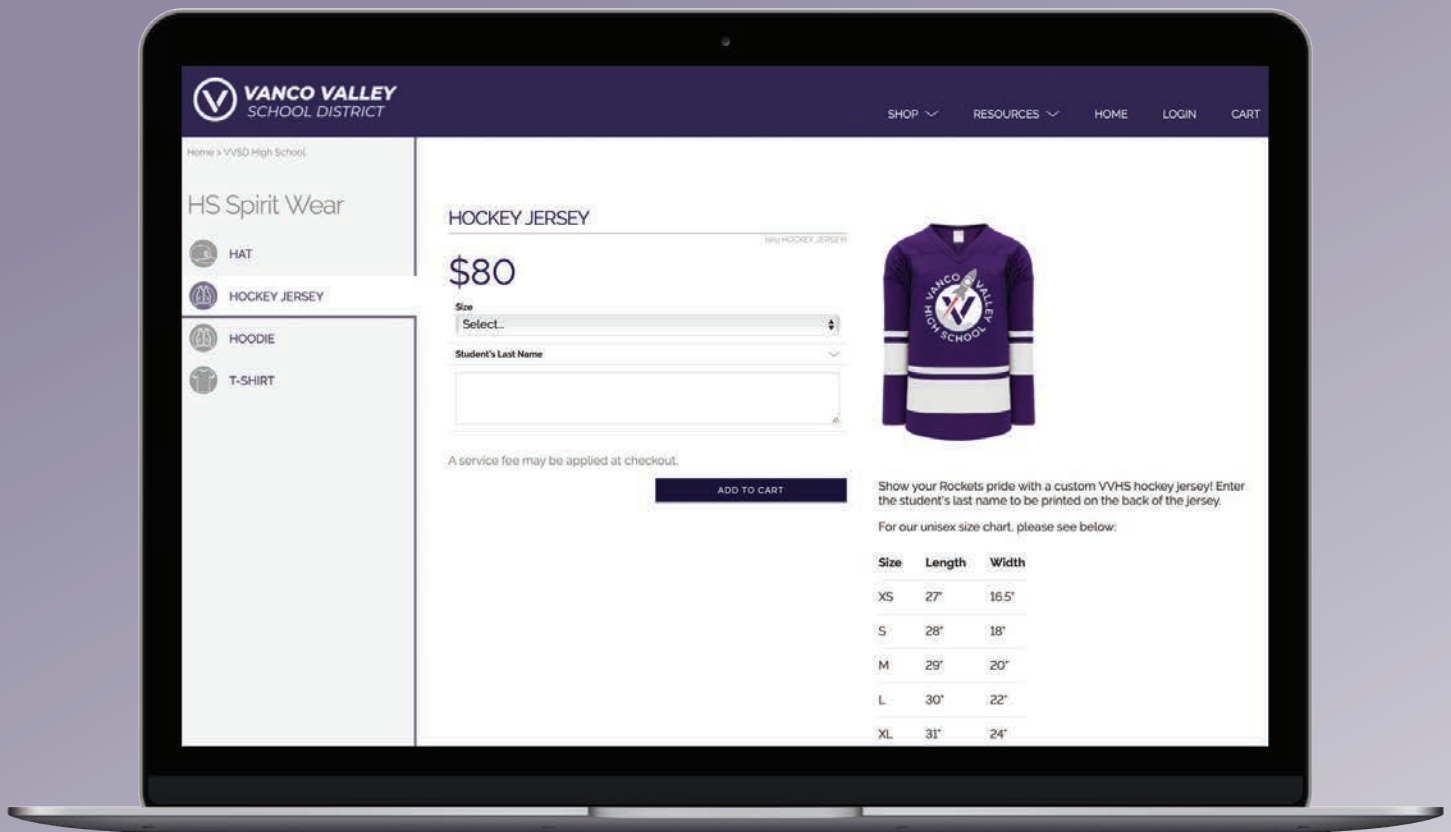
When schools face hardships, districts can look to the charity of those within the community to find solutions.

A powerful example of a school receiving help from their community is the [Maine Township High School District 207](#). During the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote learning first began, this district had to find a way to get meals to all their students in need of free or reduced lunches.

The demand for free and reduced lunches also increased, as more parents were out of work. To ensure all students were fed, the district quickly set up an online store to receive donations from the community. Through their online fundraising and adjacent efforts, the district was able to raise \$86,000.

An online store makes it easy to accept monetary donations from parents, local businesses and large, multinational corporations. In many cases, all schools need to do is give the option for someone with the means to step up.





# SCHOOL STORE FUNDRAISER IDEAS

Now that you know what an online school store can do for you, it's time to start putting it to use. One of the best ways to employ your online school store is to use it for [fundraising](#).

We've assembled a few great ideas for fundraisers, and we've given you tips on how to execute these fundraisers. Read on to find inspiration for your next fundraiser.

## Fundraising Ideas That Involve Students

Student participation is important to successful fundraisers. Getting them involved isn't as difficult as it might seem either. There are ways to incentivize them, either with prizes or some other benefit they find enjoyable.

### School Dances

These are great ways to raise money, and students of all ages love them. Students can run the show, too, with minimal oversight from faculty. It won't cost a lot of money to decorate the gymnasium.



You can easily find a local DJ who is willing to give you a deal if you place his ad in the school's newsletter. If you have a concession program already, it won't be hard to get a few PTA members to run it for the evening.

Offering [advance ticket sales in your store](#) at a discount will drive attendance and help with planning. Ticket and concession sales can add up to a profitable event that is fun for the students.

### Talent Shows

Nothing is quite as fun as watching students show off their passion and talent. A battle of the bands, a singing competition or even karaoke can be a fun way to involve students.



Students competing will raise awareness. Turning the lights and microphones on is the only real expense. Ticket sales and concessions will turn a tidy profit on something the students will love doing and seeing.

To maximize attendance and sales, sell tickets far in advance through your school web store.

### Student Coupon Books

It seems like everyone is selling coupon books, and why not? They give the buyer value while raising money for those businesses offering coupons. So, what if you created a student coupon book for sale in your school store?

You could include coupons for things like extra-long recess, first in line at lunch, or wear what you want day. The possibilities are virtually endless.

### Arts and Crafts Sales

This form of fundraising is becoming more popular and more profitable. Your children are already creating arts and crafts in school. Why not sell them?





Granted, the parents of the students are the ones most likely to buy them, but at least they are getting something special in return. You could have your first-grade class write an essay about what they want to be when they grow up.

Publish them as a book and offer them for sale. There are plenty of online publishers that will handle this at very little or even no cost to you. They make their profit from the retail price, and the school gets its percentage as the author.

You can do this with drawings or paintings. Have them individually framed, and then invite parents into your school store for an art show where they can purchase them.

## ***Traditional School Store Fundraising Sales***

Your school store is ideally positioned to generate income. You already have a customer base. Once you have an online store to display items and work as a payment platform to process sales, you can take advantage of this to boost your fundraisers.

### ***Holiday Sales***

A school holiday store fundraiser is a great way to capitalize on seasonal and holiday cheer. Schools have been doing them for years, but the successful ones aren't just selling wrapping paper. In fact, if that's all you can come up with, then you should consider something else.



Consider small gifts for Hannukah or stocking stuffers for Christmas.

Keeping them under \$20, for the most part, is a good idea. Students will be able to purchase them for parents, siblings and friends. Your [online store](#) can generate income from parents who may not be able to come in during school hours but want to help raise money by buying something cute for their children.

Selling Easter baskets, chocolate bunnies, marshmallow peeps and jelly beans for Easter is another way to capitalize on a holiday. Everyone loves candy.

Displaying holiday items on your school web store will create a welcoming feeling and generate interest and sales.

### ***Local Business Coupon Books***

Like we said earlier, coupon books work. Just be careful it doesn't get too complicated. Spending a little time contacting local businesses and getting them to participate is the easy part. So is selling the coupon book on your online store.



If there's a local printer who has experience with this and is willing to help, fantastic. If not, try and keep it simple.

Businesses might have their own coupon artwork ready to print. If not, you should offer to do it for them. Don't go crazy about designing ads for people. Keep it simple.

The point is you need to keep the cost of producing the coupon book well below what you want to sell it for.

## Raffles

This tried-and-true fundraising method is usually successful but not without its challenges. Essentially you have two options. First, you can have local businesses donate items or gift cards that you can turn around and offer as raffle prizes.



If you're using this method, you'll want to have plenty of prizes. Try and get the value of the prize around \$25 or more. Selling tickets at \$5 each or three for \$10 gives a decent return.

The easiest and always popular raffle method is the [50/50 raffle](#). You sell tickets at whatever price you want. The winner gets one-half, and the school gets the other half.

Often you can sell more tickets this way because the prize can get large fast. A 50/50 raffle is great to do at a football or basketball game. You can have someone announce the raffle over your P.A. system and direct those interested in where to buy tickets.

You can drum up sales by announcing updates on how high the jackpot has grown throughout the game.

These can work at school fairs, dances, and anywhere you get a large crowd of students and their families together. You can also simplify the process by letting parents easily purchase tickets through their smartphones with your online store.



## Parent-Focused Events

We all know the parents are funding the majority of fundraising events. Why not give them something in return? Here's a look at some great fundraising ideas the parents will really enjoy.

### Wine and Cheese Night

Turning your gymnasium or cafeteria into a winery for an evening is a creative way to raise money that not only benefits the school directly but the parents as well. Parents are always looking for fun things to do on a date night, and this always gets rave reviews.



Parents can come to mingle with other parents and faculty while the children are home with a babysitter. Sipping wine, enjoying hors d'oeuvres and exchanging stories with other parents is a great way to offer value for contributing.

Find a local liquor store willing to partner with your school, and perhaps a restaurant willing to provide small bites at or near cost.

With your online school store, you can easily sell tickets for the event far ahead of time.

### Online Auctions

Online auctions can be handled as an online school store fundraiser through your existing web store. You can run these at any time and take advantage of the holiday and seasonal trends and themes.

### Dinner and a Movie Night

This is fun for the whole family and a great way to raise money. You can turn your football field, soccer field or playground into an outdoor movie theater. You probably already have a projector, but you can rent one and a large screen for not a lot of money.



If you can find a restaurant to cater, great! If not, food trucks are always willing to come set up shop for the evening, and most will donate a portion of the proceeds to your school. You can always invite families to pack a picnic if the food truck or restaurant angles aren't feasible.

Selling tickets in your store or online is easy to execute, and you can offer additional perks like snack packs for the evening with every ticket.

## ***Community and Teacher Involvement in Fundraising***

We aren't talking about getting local businesses to donate products or gift cards, although that's a start. What you want to find are companies that will go a little further.

### ***Sell Sponsorships***

Most schools do this already. You'll see signs along fences, on the walls in the hallways and even on digital signs by the street that promote upcoming events. Facilitate the sponsorship process with your online school store. Give community partners an easy way to express their interest in sponsoring your school by creating an online form that makes it easy to sign up.

### ***Get the Teachers and Faculty Involved***

Fundraising requires the involvement of teachers and faculty, typically in an oversight role. But have you ever thought about using them in other ways?



By making it easy to accept donations and buy tickets, you also reduce barriers to volunteering for teachers and staff involved with your events. How about holding a contest to embarrass a teacher? Select three teachers willing to dress up in a crazy outfit or go in the dunk tank at the next school fair.

Set up donations through your online store to let students and parents get in on the fun.

## ***School Spirit Wear & Memorabilia Fundraiser Ideas***

School spirit wear and memorabilia help schools across the country monetize their brand at very little cost or effort to them. Read on to learn about what specific items can help you generate plenty of funds.

### ***Face Masks***

This small piece of apparel, which protects us, is an everyday way of expressing who we are. So why not help your students express their school pride by selling them face masks?



These are cheap to buy in bulk with your school's logo and can be sold for an easy profit.

### ***Spirit Sticks for School Spirit***

Another great option you can sell on school spirit day is spirit sticks. These are inflatable sticks that you can custom-design to have your school colors, logo, name and anything else related to your school. It's perfect for a high school apparel fundraiser because it can be used at pep rallies or football games.



## **Pompoms**

If the students at your school are really into going to football games or other sporting events, then pompoms are the perfect item to sell at your online store. Pompoms aren't just for cheerleaders anymore—they're for everyone!

## **Branded T-Shirts**

If you're thinking of putting together fundraisers selling spirit wear online because students are learning remotely, then selling branded t-shirts is a great idea. Students can wear these shirts while they are taught on zoom to show off their school spirit. School spirit shirts can come in various colors, though we recommend selling them in your school colors.



Aside from online learning, branded t-shirts are generally a hit for students. Selling these items online is a great way to generate extra revenue from students, parents and the community.

## **Polo Shirts**

Depending on the style your students prefer, you might want to sell polo shirts with an emblem of your school logo or mascot embroidered in them. If your school has a uniform or strict dress code, this can be a way for students to show off their school spirit while wearing a shirt that's acceptable for attending school.

## **Beads**

Beads are a fun, glam way to show off school spirit. They can be worn in school hallways, at sports games or at any school festivals such as the fall festival. Students will want to buy them not only for themselves but also for their friends. Students are also likely to buy more than one bead necklace so they can layer them over each other.

You can buy a large number of beads in bulk and then sell them at a higher price to students. They can be sold anywhere, whether that's at the first football game of the season or at your online school store.

Different bead options include beads with medallions, light-up beads, football-shaped beads, glow beads, paw beads and standard round beads.

## **Foam Hands**

Another great school spirit idea is foam hands. Students can use these at the school game to cheer on their favorite team.



## Branded Hoodies

Your students can also show their school spirit by wearing branded hoodies. Especially in the colder months of fall and winter, students will be happy to pay a little extra for this piece of clothing.



## Zip-Up Sweaters

Another option for the colder months of the school year is zip-up sweaters. Simply choose sweaters in your school colors and have them embroidered with your school mascot or your school's logo. If you stock up on these at the beginning of the year, you can sell them at your school store and at school events.

## Temporary Tattoos

One of the most fun school spirit ideas [is temporary tattoos](#). After all, these come in many different designs, and students are likely to buy a large amount of them since they only last so long. These are, in fact, the 4th most popular school spirit fundraising item sold to raise money in high schools.



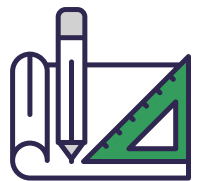
Like many of the items in this list, the more you buy in bulk, the more money you'll save. Temporary tattoos last a long time before being put on the skin, so you can store them for as long as needed. You can sell them in preparation for many events, such as the Homecoming Parade, pep rallies and game days.

## Noodle Wavers

Noodle wavers are fun school spirit items that are perfect for showing school spirit at the big game. By selling noodle wavers to students at concession stands, on the online store or at school the day before the big game, you can raise money with this popular item.

## Branded School Supplies

Branded school supplies are the perfect item to sell at the beginning of the year. These can include agendas, notebooks, pencil cases, pencils and pens. Have them specially designed with school colors and include branded elements such as your school name, logo and mascot.



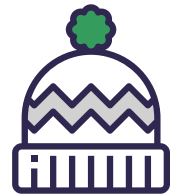
With the rush of school supply buying during the first few weeks of school, you can make a lot of money with branded school supplies. You can also consider selling them just before the school year starts, too, [during fall school registration](#).

If you have any leftover stock after this rush, you don't have to worry. Students will buy branded school supplies throughout the year, too—especially pencils and pens when they realize they've left theirs at home.

To maximize your revenue from school supplies, be sure to offer these items on your online store. This will help you generate sales during the summer when students are away from the building.

## **Beanies**

For any students who enjoy wearing headgear, beanies are the perfect choice to show off school spirit. If your school is in a colder state that experiences harsh winters, this is also a great choice since beanies are one of the best ways to stay warm when it's cold out.



Buy beanies in bulk that sport your school color and insignia. If you have any games outside on cold days, you can sell them at the concession stand as well as your online store and get a bigger bang for your school's buck.

## **Antenna Toppers**

If your K-12 school has a parking lot area for student cars, then you might already be making some money from auctioning off the parking spaces that are closest to the school. Why not make a little more money in this area by selling antenna toppers to the students at your school who drive?

This is also an area where you can make money by selling a school spirit item to parents. Many parents of younger children drop them off at school every morning and are proud of where their kids go to school. When advertising your antenna toppers, remember to tell parents about them too.

## **Lollipops in School Colors**

Another way to make money for your school is by selling lollipops in school colors. You can sell these at events such as the Fall Festival and the Homecoming game. Keep in mind, however, that there might be limits on when and where you can sell these lollipops.



If your school has any regulations on sugar intake, then you probably need to limit the sale of lollipops to the end of the school day. This said, lollipops last a long time, so you can still buy them in bulk and sell them slowly over time.

## **Baseball Caps**

Many students like the idea of wearing a baseball cap to school but aren't allowed to because it's impolite or against the dress code. So, if you start selling baseball caps in your school colors and with your school logo, students will be excited to buy them. Expect a rush in sales.



Keep in mind that you might need to change your school's uniform or dress code to make an exception for these branded baseball caps.

## **Awareness Bracelets**

If you want to raise money for your school and for a good cause at the same time, then you can sell awareness bracelets. In addition to raising money for your school, you can raise money for great causes like cancer research and homelessness solutions.



When you're combining two good causes, you can get people to match donations. Parents looking to give to two good causes will be thrilled and eager to donate.

Students will also want to show off their awareness bracelets. This is a way for them to demonstrate that they care about a good cause to all their friends.

When it comes to selling awareness bracelets, you can buy different colors. Some can be in your school colors, while others can have the colors associated with the additional fundraising cause.

## **Stickers**

Another fun option for raising money for your school is by selling stickers that have your school logo or school mascot on them. If you really want success, consider hiring a graphic designer who can create fun stickers related to your school. For example, you could also have images of footballs, a fictionalized student in your school uniform or pompoms.



## **Branded Backpacks**

Another great option is branded backpacks. All your students need them, so why not make some money for your school by selling this essential item at the beginning of the school year and before it starts?

## **Branded Water Bottles**

Hydration is so important for keeping energy levels up during the school day. So why not give your students the option of carrying around branded water bottles? In addition to keeping them hydrated, this option is good for the environment because they won't be buying plastic water bottles.



## **Branded Socks**

If you're looking for a great spirit wear fundraiser item, look no further than a pair of socks. Not everyone cares to show off their socks, but in a school spirit wear fundraiser, you can't go wrong with school logo socks. Encourage the kids to wear shorts for the day and pull up their socks to let their school spirit show.



You can go in a lot of directions with socks - use the school colors with a large logo or plain socks with a pattern of small logos. Give them options and see what they come to school with.

## ***Scarves for School Fundraisers***

In the winter cold, we all need to make sure our necks are protected. A branded scarf is a great option to boost morale on those coldest of spirit days. Using this popular but often overlooked spirit wear has been a successful fundraising tactic for many schools.

## ***Bucket Hats***

If you're going to [raise money for a school](#) spirit fundraiser, you have to keep up with the latest trends. Right now, it's all about bucket hats and other 90s fashion staples.

You won't have to sell the older kids on the bucket hat, even if they've got a big school logo embroidered on the front.



## ***Fundraiser Sunnies and Straps***

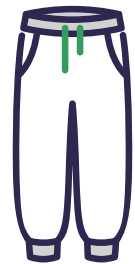
Looking for another great spirit gear fundraiser item? When kids are hanging out in-between classes or outside of school, they need sunglasses. No matter what your school spirit wear fundraiser is for, eye health is important. What's great about sunglasses, however, is that they make you look cool.

It's easy to create sunglasses [with a slogan](#) or the name of the school on the temples. You can take it one step further and sell branded straps for the sunnies (or eyeglasses) as well.

## ***Sweatpants***

No one wants to wear jeans or khakis if they don't have to. Branded sweatpants are an excellent choice for your next spirit wear fundraising endeavor.

You've got a lot of real estate to get your message across on sweatpants. A slogan up one of the legs or across the backside is probably the best move.



## ***Workout Gear***

Many overlook workout gear as a school spirit wear fundraiser item. Yet, health and fitness are crucial to the health of our kids. You can encourage exercise and sell some school spirit wear at the same time with branded workout gear.

Whether you're selling yoga pants, headbands, or sweat-wicking t-shirts, you'll definitely have all of [your school athletes](#) on board with this one.

## Patches

When it comes to the best spirit wear fundraiser for schools, patches are among the best because they are affordable and versatile. For the kids that are less interested in sports, but more interested in fashion and the arts, you can give out school spirit patches. An embroidered patch can be stylishly stitched or ironed onto a jean jacket alongside those Ramones, Bob Marley, and Led Zeppelin patches.

## Flip Flops and Slide Sandals

What teenager doesn't value comfort these days? With branded school slides, your students will be able to enjoy comfortable footwear on the hottest days of the year. This makes them great items for a school apparel fundraiser.



With a logo on the front flap, they can embody comfort and also represent school spirit at every school spirit wear fundraiser.

## Lapel Pins

Lapel pins, like patches, are an excellent addition to existing clothing. This makes them great for team spirit wear fundraisers. Students can easily share their school spirit by pinning them to almost any item of apparel.





# **CHALLENGES TO FUNDRAISING**

*No one ever said fundraising was easy. There are challenges you will face, and they don't have to ruin your effort if you know what they are and how to overcome them. You'll want to make sure you have a good [collection program](#) for donations and products.*

## **Finding Volunteers**

[Finding volunteers](#) might be the second-most challenging part of fundraising after coming up with an idea. Volunteers are free, and many people simply don't have the time or inclination to spend setting up, running and breaking down fundraising events.

Nor do they have the time to go stumping around for donations, checking venues and coordinating vendors. Find volunteers with a vested interest. If the fundraiser is to send the baseball team to the state championship for the weekend, you better have every player and coach involved.

If you do end up needing more volunteers than readily available, there are PTAs and booster groups that will offer enthusiastic help.

## **Motivating People to Fundraise**

We aren't talking about volunteers here, or at least not primarily. Motivating people to participate in the execution of your fundraiser can be difficult. Whether you are selling gourmet popcorn, cookie dough, or Christmas ornaments, getting students to actually go out and sell these items presents a significant challenge.

This is always difficult because everyone is motivated by something different. Some enjoy a pat on the back. Others may need a little prodding. Some are only in it for the prize money.

This is why you should have incentives for participating. Give prizes to those top performers. The go-getters will go get sales, donations and whatever else you need.

Create competitions between classrooms and grades. The winning class might receive a special ice cream party or something similar.





# ***GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR ONLINE SCHOOL STORE***

*When getting started, you'll need to find the right tool and have a strategy for promoting it. Follow the three tips below to begin.*





## **1 Get the Right Online School Store Software**

When choosing a service provider for your online store, it's a good practice to select a provider that can consolidate your entire payment system. Imagine a single system that integrates student information, food-service software, payment collection and other administrative tasks.

With a centralized management system, you can get rid of multiple software applications and manual administrative tasks. Furthermore, you'll make the lives of students, families and employees easier. For example, a leading technology vendor will provide you with a system that works across a range of devices. In doing so, parents and students can easily access your school offerings and services—whether at home or on the go.

One solution used by more than 1,200 school districts across the country is Vanco's Web Store, which provides a one stop shop for all your school sales and payments. The Vanco Web Store makes growing revenue easy, simplifies the collection of payments and streamlines your school's reconciliation. To learn more about it, [watch](#) this short video.

### **No DIY Needed**

Aside from simplifying payments for staff and parents and increasing revenue, many schools choose Vanco because building the online school store isn't a process they have to DIY. Vanco's team listens to what products, fees, services and other items you want to feature and creates a tile for each within your web store. As your school adds items, all they have to do is reach out.

This makes it a great solution for already overburdened staff, freeing them from extra responsibilities while streamlining existing work.

## **2 Use Your School's Built-In Marketing Channel**

Setting up your online store is only half of the equation. You'll also have to get the word out about your school store.

When it comes to online marketing, schools have it much easier compared to for-profit businesses. Parents are much more likely to read an email sent by a school rather than a commercial advertiser. You can take advantage of this circumstance to promote your online school store.

Using your existing email list, you can send out emails informing families about your new online store. Already, you have a free, built-in way to market your school merchandise. At this stage, all you need is your school email list and a little creativity.

You can also use email templates to simplify the creation of your emails. A template will help you market your school store items in an engaging way.

Furthermore, an email marketing system will help you reach thousands of parents easily. Digital marketing is much more cost-effective compared to managing catalog sales.

With your email messages, you can guide parents right to online ordering forms. You can also promote upcoming school events. In time, you'll find that your online store makes nearly every task involved with promoting your school much easier.

### **3 Build Community Awareness with Social Media**

Your online store will establish a presence that makes it easier for you to do business. However, technology can provide you with many ways to market your online store. For example, with an online school store, you can take advantage of one of the latest business trends—marketing on social media.

Today, both students and parents use social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram every day. You can use your store to provide the immediacy demanded by today's consumers.

With the right marketing plan, you can develop a long-term loyal customer base. By doing so, you can generate repeat business that extends beyond students' graduation.

Your online store will automatically collect information, such as purchase history and email addresses. This information will enable you to create targeted marketing and promotions for potential buyers. With it, you can save time and build a loyal base of repeat shoppers.



# ***DON'T WAIT, GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY!***



**Streamline your payment process for parents and staff** while boosting your budget with a powerful fundraising tool. Simply follow Vanco's hassle-free process—It's just three steps!

1. **Request a demo** and receive our free cashless campus consultation.
2. Sign up and let us build you a custom Web Store.
3. Enjoy easy online sales, time-savings and the simplicity of being able to track all your district payments in one place.

**800.323.5953**

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