

# N.H. schools tap in to grant site

**Education | Donors**  
 can choose to fund  
 specific proposals  
 submitted by teachers.

By **MICHAEL BRINDLEY**  
 Telegraph Staff

Students in Jason Paige's geography class have been making good use of their new laptop computer, using programs such as Google Maps to zoom in to different parts of the world.

"It's definitely started to pay for itself," said Paige, a social studies teacher at Manchester Memorial High School.

The money for the computer didn't come from the school budget. In fact, Paige doesn't really know where - or who - it came from.

Paige had been using his personal laptop in the classroom, but it was starting to wear down and didn't have the capability to use some of the newest programs that are available.

But instead of looking for extra money from the district or going through the paperwork to apply for a grant, Paige posted a proposal on a site he had heard about called [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org).

The Web site connects teachers, who post their funding needs, with donors who can search through the proposals to find the one they want to help become a reality.

Three weeks after submitting his proposal, Paige said one

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 person donated the entire \$800. He soon had the new laptop in his classroom.

He still doesn't know who donated the money.

"I haven't heard from the person," Paige said. "I don't know if

they were from the area, if they went to this school."

The only contact he had with the person was when he and the students wrote letters, thanking the donor, which is what contributors get in return for their generosity.

DonorsChoose, which was created in 2000 and went nationwide last year, is becoming more popular among New Hampshire teachers such as Paige.

There are 45 New Hampshire teachers registered on the site, mostly from Manchester, Rochester and Conway. Administrators in Nashua said they also hope teachers in the district start using the site.

Stacy Hynes, the Nashua School District's director of grants and community development, would like to see Nashua teachers use the site. She recently made a presentation to school board members, who seemed receptive to the idea.

Hynes said the site could add resources for teachers without any cost to the taxpayers.

"I think this really could be something very advantageous for the district," she said.

The site allows potential philanthropists to search for proposals by location.

Current requests include a teacher in Conway looking for a button machine to make buttons to give to students recognized for positive behavior and a math teacher in Belmont asking for a mixing board, microphones and headphones to create podcasts for the students reviewing the material they've gone over.

Thalia Theodore, a spokeswoman for DonorsChoose, said that because there is no cost to the school district, the site is an effective way for educators to bring additional resources into their schools.

"We try to make it very teacher friendly," she said.

Paige has already posted another proposal, this time for an \$855 widescreen, high-definition television to display Power-Point presentations from the laptop. Paige said he was going to ask for a projector but said the TV made more sense.

So far, \$60 has been donated to the total cost.

Since the site launched, more than \$19 million has been donated, affecting nearly 100,000 students across the country. The site went national in September, and so far, \$6,732 has been donated to projects proposed by New Hampshire teachers.

The Web site provides real-time data on how much has been donated in each state.

Charles Best, a social studies teacher in the Bronx, started the site after seeing the need among the students in his own classrooms.

Teachers often resort to buying things on their own because there isn't any money in the budget, but Paige said the site is an effective way to fill those gaps.

"It's good for filling all the little nooks and crannies... where the school districts may be falling through," he said.

DonorsChoose is a nonprofit, and the company maintains its operation by adding an optional fee to donations that goes to pay staff, Theodore said.

The site only works with public schools, and all proposals are screened before they're put online, she said.

"Our baseline rule is that the proposal or the materials must directly benefit students," she said.

Once proposals are posted on the site, donors can search the projects using different criteria, including narrowing it down to specific subjects such as math or English.

Donors can choose to contribute a portion of the project or fund it entirely. Once it's com-



pletely funded, **DonorsChoose** acts as the middleman, buying the item from one of its vendors and shipping it to the teacher.

"We don't give cash or cut checks directly to teachers," she said.

Leslie Inman, a retired insurance executive who lives in Lincoln, volunteers for Donors Choose by contacting school districts and encouraging them to sign up.

"I wanted to help get the word out in New Hampshire," she said.

Inman used to work in fundraising, and said she liked the model that the site was using. She also has donated to

some of the projects.

Hynes said one of the best features is that it's a painless process for teachers. If they have an idea, they can just submit a proposal without a lot of paperwork, she said.

Robert Hallowell, a member of the Nashua Board of Education, has made donations to projects on the site in the past, and said he would be in favor of it being used by teachers in local schools.

Hallowell works in meteorology, and said he was able to find science-related projects to contribute to.

"It basically allows you to choose something that's of inter-

est to you," he said. "It gets me involved in the process. I feel like I have control."

Hallowell said one of the projects to which he donated was for an inner-city school in New York. The teacher was looking to buy a set of the science-focused Magic School Bus series of books, he said.

Hallowell said after making donations, he got back pictures and letters from students in the class thanking him.

"You get something back for it," he said, "rather than just a receipt."

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Jason Paige, a world history teacher at Memorial High School in Manchester, sits for a portrait with the laptop that he was awarded through DonorsChoose.org. Paige submitted a proposal to the Web site and received the laptop in only three weeks.

Staff photo by  
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