

# Teachers go to Web for funding

## City joins nonprofit that finds donors for classroom projects

BY SUMATHI REDDY  
[SUN REPORTER]

A Polytechnic Institute biology teacher wants \$1,169 for an LCD projector.

An eighth-grade special-education teacher at Winston Middle School seeks \$1,000 worth of graphing calculators.

And a teacher at Booker T. Washington Middle School needs another \$261 to have enough money to buy 60 copies of *Time for Kids: World Report Edition*.

"The eighth-grade students of Booker T. Washington Middle School in West Baltimore live in poverty with distractions all around," the teacher wrote in a request for help. "They need your help to learn about our world and to stay connected with our global community!"

Hundreds of such pleas from Baltimore City public school-teachers are posted on the Web site [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org), a place where parents and members of the public — from Baltimore and across the country and even the world — can fund public school projects that range from several hundred dollars to more than \$1,000.

City officials launched their participation in the nonprofit Web

site yesterday, though the site has already funded \$60,000 worth of projects from 142 proposals from city schools over the past three months, according to Missy Sherburne, executive vice president of the organization. Another 300 projects are waiting to be funded.

Started in 2000 by public school teachers in the Bronx, N.Y., the site lets teachers pitch projects that members of the public can then donate money toward. Since its launch, the organization has delivered over \$16 million to more than 800,000 students with donations from all 50 states.

The Abell Foundation is paying the \$50,000 in operation costs for the school system to use the site for the second half of the school year. Andres Alonso, chief executive officer of the school system, praised the program.

"It takes the entire community to step up, it could be 20 dollars, it could be 40 dollars, it could be 50," said Alonso. "There will always be the need for the opportunity for teachers to go beyond whatever is there, and this is an extraordinary way of bringing the community and the creative people in the schools, the creative energy in the schools together, for the sake of the kids," he added.

Mayor Sheila Dixon called the program a "great, great effort."

"It's a great opportunity to promote this program and this effort so that people can look at alternative gifts," said Dixon.

"Ultimately anything and everything that we can do to benefit these jewels that are sitting here ... we're going to do that," she added.

Erin Miller, a fourth-grade teacher at Belmont Elementary School, has already received several hundred dollars to buy three sets of books for her students.

"It was a huge help," said Miller. "They can now take adventures in the classroom and not on the street."

At yesterday's news conference Miller said the books have been a big boost to her independent reading program. "Without the help of this program, donorschoose.org, my program would not be able to continue past January, we'd have nothing to read," she said.

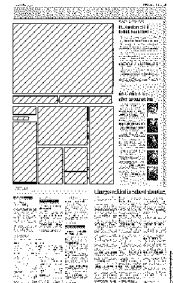
"We have benefited greatly by receiving reading supplies, science kits, math kits, manipulatives, and much more," she said of Belmont teachers.

Asked about government's responsibility to provide the sources for public education, Alonso said that is not a factor.

"We have a system with great needs," he said. "Most of the money goes into the schools and that's still not enough in order to meet the needs of all the students."

"There is never enough money for education," he added. "There would never be enough private funding to meet the needs of what is really the central function of a democracy, which is to grow the citizens of the future."

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Assistant Principal Rita Crews has Belmont Elementary students sign the back of a large caricature of the mayor before a news conference on [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org). The school has received several hundred dollars through the Web site to buy books.

PHOTOS BY ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]



Mayor Sheila Dixon and schools CEO Andres Alonso chat before announcing the city's participation in [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org).