

# 4 Project Creation Habits of Highly Effective Teachers

Between them, these amazing educators have posted 298 fully-funded projects. Now, they're giving you the inside scoop on the best way to set your project up for success.

All four of the teachers below began their DonorsChoose journey as novices, unsure how to bring resources to their students through the site. We wanted to know how they got from there to here, so we asked them: What's the one thing you wish you'd known before creating your first request? Here's what they had to say.

**298**

Fully-funded projects between these four amazing educators

We asked them

**What's the one thing you wish you'd known before creating your first request?**

## 1. Break It Up

*Mr. Stuart*



I wish I'd known that smaller projects are easier to get funded than larger projects. At first, I was asking for everything I would want for a given activity or unit—say, all 40 books that I needed—and some projects weren't getting funded. **But then I started breaking projects down—say, into four separate ten-book projects—which increased the frequency with which I ultimately received the materials I needed.**

Breaking up projects is important because I think donors feel that their contribution is most likely to result in a funded project when there's less money left to go. This is challenging for teachers because what we really need is the 100 books for our classroom library or the entire set-up of science lab equipment or what-have-you, and breaking up a request can feel clunky or inefficient. But my one piece of advice would be to figure out how to break your biggest-vision classroom needs down into \$100-\$200 projects. **Whenever my projects have under \$100 remaining, they are almost always completed by generous strangers.**

## 2. Shop Around

*Ms. Gionti*



When shopping for your project, it can be easy to go overboard; there are lots of things we need and can use in our classrooms. While limiting the number of items in your virtual shopping cart can help your proposal get funded, so can comparison shopping. **Shop around for classroom items (especially big-ticket items) just as you would for a major personal purchase.** If you search for low prices, your total project cost will be lower—and proposals that are under \$600 are most likely to get funded.

At first, comparison shopping through the online vendors is a bit daunting—so many choices! Although it might seem easier to stick with the vendors you're familiar with, don't be afraid to branch out and explore others. For example, even though I regularly shop on Amazon (and they have amazing prices), sometimes the books I'm requesting for my class can be found cheaper through AKJ Books. **You don't need to check out every vendor all at once (although you may want to eventually), but do check out a few different ones when filling your cart.**

---

## 3. Feel the Love

*Mr. Andy*



Before I created my first project, I wish I had known how willing my family and friends were to help my students. I did not turn on Facebook notifications at first, but—luckily—a company was willing to help fund my request. Since that first project, you wouldn't believe how many people (some of whom I haven't spoken to in a long time) were willing to support my classroom. DonorsChoose helped me connect with old friends.

**I also wished I had known how willing some parents were to help.** I only started asking parents when I was in my second year of being a DonorsChoose teacher. I always felt that families who have kids that attend public school shouldn't be pressured to contribute money. However, many parents are proactive in their children's education and, if they can't afford to help, will spread the message along.

## 4. Write It Down

### *Ms. Baugher*

I wish I'd known how to articulate the ways that ordinary classroom supplies impact student outcomes and achievement. I was overwhelmed with excitement when I first learned about DonorsChoose, thinking about all the supplies I wished I could get for my classroom. But when I started creating my first project, I ran into trouble articulating why my request was important:



My first-graders need Play-Doh for rainy-day recess, but will donors really understand why it's a priority? Scene-by-scene story cards will help strengthen reading comprehension, but what if donors think it's just an unnecessary game? Putting the impact of ordinary classroom supplies into words took me a while to master, but **I've now received a total of over \$6,000 worth of supplies through DonorsChoose.**

To write about my project, I start by imagining a perfect day in my classroom: what are students doing? What are they learning? And finally, what are the resources and supplies that get them there? The answer to this final question serves as the beginning of the written portion of my project. Once I've written about the supplies I need, I address the other questions I asked myself, explaining how these resources will contribute my vision for my students.

Now that I organize my thought process in this way, I can explain, for example, how whiteboard markers facilitate phonics development, which is critical for my students' success in first grade and in life.

---

Share your classroom dreams with a community eager to make them a reality.  
[donorschoose.org/teachers](https://donorschoose.org/teachers)