



Without Fundraising

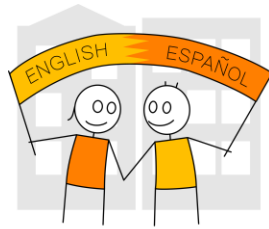
Jennifer Friedman, December 2006

One of La Escuelita's three core values is to welcome a diverse community of families. In fact, families at La Escuelita range from those who are in a financial situation to be able to make generous donations to the school in addition to the tuition they pay for one or more children, to those who are struggling to pay their monthly installments of less than one hundred dollars. To welcome families who would not otherwise be able to send their children to a private preschool, from the beginning the founders have been committed to offering significant financial assistance. Gradually increasing the total amount offered we have reached our goal of \$100,000 in tuition reduction, offering \$115,000 for the 2006-2007 year, roughly 1/6 of La Escuelita's annual revenue. La Escuelita has ensured a socio-economically diverse community by putting our money where our mouth is!

In order to support our commitment to this core value, one would think that it would be important to fundraise. In fact, there are many other schools, public and private, that seem to have a fundraiser activity every week. Yet the founders made an active decision in the first year not to do or allow fundraising. We feel there are a few detrimental side effects of fundraising activities. When a school hosts a dinner at fifty dollars a person, the family for whom fifty dollars represents the entire month's groceries is placed in a difficult situation. The family must either pay, extending themselves beyond their means, or not attend and be left out of the community bonding. Additionally, families who can afford to give of their time and money may feel more deserving of special treatment while families who do not have the time or the financial resources may feel that they are not supporting the school enough to be able to voice their opinions. Fundraising can inadvertently create feelings of inequality that we do *not* welcome into our community.

This is not to say we will never do any fundraising. The founders concurred that if a specific need arises, such as a renovation project, we would ask the parents to help utilize their resources to raise the money needed, but even then we would stay clear of direct fundraising among the parents. Also, we recognize that there are goals met by fundraising in other schools, such as community-building and parent involvement, and we must build opportunities for them directly into our program. As La Escuelita Preschool families know, we facilitate parent involvement in many varied ways and we always welcome new ideas with respect to family involvement. To fill the void in community-building that is filled by fundraising at other schools, La Escuelita hosts many school-wide and classroom events during the year that are intended for community-building, such as the culminating activities following most classroom units, the Family Bookreading Night, the Carnaval Party, our semi-annual picnics, etc. Parents often come to us with ideas to raise money, such as the making of the La Escuelita CD or a concert such as the Jose-Luis Orozco concert we hosted last year. We are thrilled when families wish to organize these kinds of activities and we ask them to proceed but not for the purpose of fundraising, charging only what is necessary to cover the costs of production.

We encourage families with the means to make annual donations to consider our mission when choosing from among the many laudable non profit institutions. These donations are welcomed but to protect equality within our community they are made known only to the founders, the Board of Directors, and to our accountant. The teaching staff is to have no knowledge of which children come from families who pay full tuition and those who do not, nor are they told which families make donations and which do not. Feelings of inequality within a



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diverse community are probably unavoidable, but we feel that reducing the focus on fundraising and eliminating the spotlight on financial support for the school lends itself to community members feeling more equally valued.