

## Pitching at your school council

It is not necessary to pitch your school council - some schools may want to get going right away and might start simply by asking their school council chairs and principal whether they think it is okay to survey parents. However some parents/groups are starting off by pitching the idea to their school council and this is what we've learned so far:

The key thing is for presenters to feel they have at least a rough idea of what's involved in a sponsorship, and we have answers for this on the [FAQ's](#) on our site. If you are feeling a bit nervous, a recorded [webinar or slides](#) from the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program is available on the site.

### Key ideas:

- sponsorship allows whole school community to get involved in sponsoring a refugee family.
- It provides concrete, positive way of making a difference for a family fleeing civil war or armed conflict or persecution.
- It provides incredible learning opportunities for students,
  - global citizenship and learning what a refugee is and what Canada's responsibilities are,
  - learning that you can come together and make a difference in the face of what seems like an unimaginably large tragedy,
  - thinking through what it takes to make a family feel welcome in the school and developing concrete strategies to do that, reinforcing the safe and caring schools goals.

It also provides an opportunity for the school community to get stronger working on something "big" — leads to stronger school community. We have seen HUGE excitement about it from students, families, and educators and staff.

**Sponsorship requires three main aspects** — doing an application, probably with the help of an organization called a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH); raising a large sum of money (we used \$30,000 as a target); and providing hands-on settlement assistance to a family on arrival. To proceed realistically means school will need a committed group of approximately 10. If you already have two or three, you are in great shape to start recruiting an active committee.

**We strongly recommend starting with a survey** - great awareness raising tool, great way to get broader buy-in, great way to get a contact list of volunteers to form your active committee. Our first school had 320 responses from approximately 400 families - most of them said they wanted to donate, and about 70 people expressed interest in being involved in some way as volunteers

Questions we've heard about so far:

**Where does the money go:**

The money goes straight to the family. Some SAH's seem to charge very low overhead - around 5%, slightly more than a credit card transaction fee - to literally keep the lights on, but the vast majority of the money is used to support the family for its first year at Social Assistance Rates. The amount comes from government guidelines. The sponsoring organization is responsible for guaranteeing that amount is available to the family in the first year, but does not have unlimited financial responsibility.

**How does this relate to other fundraising? Is the School Board onside?**

Doing this is not in opposition to other fundraising efforts to provide support to Syrians, such as TDSB Cares. They are complementary initiatives. Schools may choose which way to get involved, or both. If you are in a TDSB school, you should know the board is not mandating this in any way — but has been very supportive, including doing a press conference at our school to highlight the initiative.

**Are tax receipts available?**

We **strongly recommend** that you work out a relationship with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder before you start fundraising (we learned this the hard way!) Tax receipts may be available through an SAH. They may also be able to connect you to refugee families where matching funds are available from the government.

**What resources are available:**

The 1000 school challenge team has said it can help with resources from a website that your school can customize, an organizing guide, etc.