

GUIDES & TOOLKITS

Starting a School-Based Project

A practical guide to getting approval, building support, and launching a student-led initiative in or around your school.

1	Understand the school process before you announce dates, collect money, or recruit widely.
2	Bring a clear one-page plan to the right teacher, club advisor, or administrator.
3	Design your project around the school calendar, policies, space, and communication channels.
4	Start with a manageable pilot and document the results.

Use this guide as a working document. Write directly on a printed copy, or use the prompts to build your own project notes.

1. Define what is school-based about your project

A project can be school-based in different ways: it might serve students, use school space, operate through a club, recruit on campus, involve teachers, or require school communication channels. The more your plan depends on school systems, the earlier you should ask about approval.

On-campus activity

Uses classrooms, auditorium, cafeteria, gym, library, school grounds, or other school facilities.

Student participation

Recruits students, teams, clubs, classes, or grade levels through school channels.

School identity

Uses the school name, logo, staff participation, official email lists, announcements, or social media.

Money or donations

Collects funds, charges fees, sells items, seeks sponsors, or accepts donations connected to the school.

Off-campus extension

Runs a community activity led by students but connected to a school club or school-approved project.

Independent project

Created by a student outside school but may still need permission before recruiting or promoting on campus.

Ask early

Do not assume that a good idea automatically has permission. Schools may have rules about rooms, supervision, fundraising, flyers, photos, outside guests, transportation, food, technology, and student data.

2. Find the right adult and approval path

The fastest way to get stuck is to ask the wrong person too late. Start by identifying who can advise you on the process and who can actually approve the activity.

A typical approval path

1	Teacher / club advisor	Helps refine the idea and explains school procedures.
2	Department / activities office	Checks calendar, club rules, rooms, events, communications, or student activities requirements.
3	Administrator	May approve larger events, fundraising, outside partners, guests, or activities involving broader school resources.
4	Other offices as needed	Facilities, finance, transportation, technology, counseling, athletics, or district office depending on the project.

Your first conversation

Keep it short: "I have an idea for [project]. It would serve [students/community] by [purpose]. I have a draft plan and wanted to ask what approval process I should follow before moving forward."

Bring a one-page plan

Adults are more likely to help when your idea is organized. Include the purpose, audience, proposed date/time, location, expected attendance, supervision, budget, partners, safety considerations, and what approval you are requesting.

3. Build a school-ready proposal

Your proposal does not need to look corporate. It needs to answer the practical questions a school has to manage.

Include these 10 items

- [] Project name and student lead(s).
- [] Problem or need being addressed.
- [] Who will participate or benefit.
- [] What the activity will actually involve.
- [] Proposed date, time, duration, and location.
- [] Expected number of participants.
- [] Adult supervision or staff involvement needed.
- [] Budget, fundraising, donations, or fees (if any).
- [] Safety, privacy, transportation, food, technology, or outside-guest considerations.
- [] What approval, space, communication, or school support you are requesting.

School calendar matters

Check exams, holidays, sports, major performances, testing, field trips, assemblies, and other school events before proposing a date. A strong idea with a bad date is still hard to approve.

Make it easy to say yes

- Offer one preferred date and one backup date.
- Show that you have thought about cleanup, supervision, and room setup.
- Keep the first event small enough to manage.
- Ask for exactly what you need instead of saying, "Can the school help us?"

4. Recruit students and communicate responsibly

Once the project is approved, use the communication channels your school allows. Do not assume you can post everywhere, email entire grade levels, or use school logos without permission.

Recruitment message

State who the activity is for, what participants will do, when/where it happens, and how to sign up. Avoid hype that overpromises results.

Teacher communication

Give teachers concise information and enough notice. If you are asking them to share something, provide ready-to-forward text.

Registration

Collect only the information you actually need. Follow school rules for student names, emails, emergency details, or parent/guardian permission.

Photos & stories

Confirm photo/video and publication rules before documenting students. Participation in an event does not automatically mean permission to publish someone's image or story.

Sample announcement

[Project Name] - Student Sign-Up

Interested in [topic/activity]? Join us on [date/time] in [location] for [one-sentence description]. Open to [audience]. Space is limited to [number, if applicable]. Register by [deadline] at [approved link/process]. Questions: [contact].

Build through existing communities

Clubs, classes, teams, counselors, service organizations, student government, and school newsletters can be more effective than trying to reach everyone at once.

5. Run the pilot and earn trust

Your first school-based project is also a credibility test. A well-run small event makes future approvals, partnerships, and expansion much easier.

Day-of checklist

- ☐ Room/platform is confirmed and accessible.
- ☐ Required adult/staff contact knows the final plan.
- ☐ Materials are ready and labeled.
- ☐ Sign-in or attendance process is prepared.
- ☐ Volunteers know their roles.
- ☐ Opening instructions are clear and brief.
- ☐ Backup plan is ready for technology, attendance, weather, or missing supplies.
- ☐ Cleanup and room reset responsibilities are assigned.
- ☐ Feedback or reflection method is ready.

After the project

- Thank the staff, students, volunteers, and partners who helped.
- Share a short result summary with the approving adult or office.
- Record participation, feedback, and evidence of impact.
- Note what you would change before requesting another event.
- If the project will continue, clarify leadership and handoff plans.

Reliability builds opportunity

Schools remember whether student leaders communicated clearly, followed procedures, respected the space, handled money responsibly, and closed the loop afterward. Strong execution creates trust for the next project.

One-Page School Project Proposal

Use this template before meeting with a teacher, advisor, or administrator.

Project name	Working title:
Student lead(s)	Names / grade / contact:
Purpose	What problem or opportunity does this address?
Audience	Who will participate or benefit?
Activity	What exactly will happen?
Date / time / location	Preferred + backup:
Expected participation	Approximate number:
Staff / supervision	Who needs to be involved?
Budget / fundraising	Costs, donations, fees, or none:
Approval requested	Room / promotion / fundraising / outside guest / other: