

Explore Various Methods of Obtaining Resources and Supplies

PROGRAM BUDGETS are often tight. This means teachers and caregivers cannot buy everything they would like to use in the classroom. They must identify which items are necessary and look for other, sometimes creative, ways to obtain resources and supplies. In this unit, you will learn about the different types of resources and supplies, as well as the various sources for those items.



Objectives:



1. Describe types of resources and supplies.
2. Identify various sources for resources and supplies.

Key Terms:



budget
community resources
comparison shopping
consumable goods
durable goods
fund-raisers

Resources and Supplies

Programs that serve young children or older adults require many resources and supplies. Some supplies last a long time and may be purchased only once every 5 or 10 years. Other supplies must be replaced often and may be purchased monthly or weekly.

Durable goods are products designed to be used repeatedly over a long period. Furniture, such as tables and chairs, and playground equipment are expensive, but they are designed to last for years. Other examples of durable goods are appliances, such as refrigerators and microwaves; electronics, such as computers and CD players; and toys, games, and books. Some art supplies, such as easels, smocks, and stencils, are considered durable as well.

Consumable goods are products that get “used up” and must be replaced frequently. They include basic maintenance supplies, such as cleaning products, hand soap and sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and toilet paper. Office supplies, such as pens, pencils, note pads, copy paper, and stickers, are consumable. Some art supplies, such as paint, dough or clay, and crayons, must also be replaced frequently.

Community resources are people, places, or organizations that provide learning opportunities or other support to local individuals. Guest speakers may visit the classroom to relate expert information on a lesson, or the program may plan a field trip to allow participants to learn more about a topic. Businesses, museums, libraries, and parks are all popular educational field-trip destinations. Businesses may offer other resources as well. For example, a travel agency may provide vacation brochures and posters during a lesson on the ocean and the beach.

Volunteers are an important community resource. They provide extra hands and individual attention for special projects. They may also help prepare or create materials for lessons or provide additional information on a subject. Local support programs are another source of free help for teachers or caregivers.



FIGURE 1. Cleaning products, such as hand soap, must be replaced frequently.

Sources for Resources and Supplies

A program usually has a **budget**, or an itemized list of how funds will be spent. The budget allows for the purchase of new supplies and materials for the program. Some programs may purchase durable goods only once a year, usually at the beginning of the school year. They may purchase consumable goods in bulk or throughout the year, depending on prices and storage space. If a day care uses two rolls of paper towels a day, it is not practical to purchase and store a year’s supply. However, some items, such as crayons, are offered at very low prices in back-to-school sales and can easily be stored in a cabinet until they are needed.

Shoppers should compare items before making purchases for a program. **Comparison shopping** is the process of comparing the price and quality of merchandise. Specialty supply stores (catalogs and Web sites) may offer high-quality school-grade furniture or medical-grade equipment. Discount stores may offer lower prices on standard items, such as office supplies and paper products, or discounts on bulk purchases.

RECEIVING USED EQUIPMENT

Many programs are able to save money by receiving used equipment. However, it is important for staff to ensure the safety of all used items. Staff should check product recall lists, especially for toys and equipment designed for children. They should also make sure the items have no broken pieces, chipped or peeling paint, or splinters. Sources for used equipment include garage sales, consignment shops, and donations from community members.



FIGURE 2. A garage sale is a great place to purchase used equipment.

SEEKING DONATIONS

Some programs may seek donations to fill their supply needs. Rules for soliciting and accepting donations vary among programs, so staff should check with program directors before seeking donations.

Programs may request items from students' or clients' families. For example, a classroom may send home a list of school supplies that students are responsible for providing. Day care facilities and preschools may also ask students to take turns providing snacks and drinks, as well as any necessary paper products, such as napkins and cups. Programs may also post "wish lists" of desired equipment or supplies on classroom bulletin boards or in newsletters.

Some programs allow staff members to seek donations from local businesses or community members. Sometimes the donations may be monetary, but often they are in the form of free merchandise or discounts, especially on bulk purchases.

ENLISTING HELP

Parent groups or booster clubs may provide resources by organizing **fund-raisers**, events or sales designed to raise money to benefit a program or cause. The groups may use the funds to pay for special projects or items, such as field trips or new playground equipment.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Beyond the Budget

School budgets do not always cover all the supplies teachers need for their classrooms. While many public school teachers spend their own money for basic supplies, some teachers look for creative ways to afford classroom supplies. Visit the following Web site to learn more about how teachers can obtain supplies beyond what the budget allows.

<http://www.edutopia.org/free-school-supplies-fundraising-donation>

CREATING AND REPURPOSING MATERIALS

Sometimes teachers work with a small budget and have to be inventive. They may create new materials or repurpose existing items to be used in a new way. In some cases, it may be less expensive to build equipment than to buy it. For example, a handy person may be able to build a balance beam or install coat hooks for much less than the items or service would cost commercially.

Teachers may create new games, story boards, and decorations with supplies already found in the classroom. In addition, teachers may find new uses for objects. For example, a colorful silk scarf may be used in the dress-up area or as a wall hanging to decorate the classroom.

SEEKING “FREEBIES”

Many resources and supplies are available free if staff members know where to look. Businesses may be happy to give items that are normally thrown away or recycled. For example, empty cardboard boxes, wallpaper or carpet samples, and scrap paper can all be used for classroom projects. Likewise, staff members may ask participants’ families to save items, such as paper-towel tubes, egg cartons, and fabric scraps, for art projects.

The Internet is a great source for freebies as well. Many Web sites provide access to free ideas and printable materials that can be used for classroom decorations or activities.

BORROWING ITEMS

Sometimes teachers need specific materials but only for a short time. In this case, they may consider borrowing the items. Libraries lend books and CDs, but there are other sources to consider. Teachers may help each other by trading resources or materials for lessons. Community members may



FIGURE 3. Paper-towel tubes can sometimes be used for art projects.

lend items to support a lesson or activity. For example, a doctor may lend old lab coats and stethoscopes when the class studies health topics, and families may lend items of cultural significance when students learn about their heritages.

Summary:



Programs that serve young children or older adults require many resources and supplies, including durable goods and consumable goods. In addition, programs may benefit from community resources, such as guest speakers, field trips, and volunteers. Budgets do not always allow staff members to purchase all the items they want or pay for extra help. Staff members should consider alternative methods of obtaining resources and supplies, such as buying used items, enlisting help from support groups, seeking donations and “freebies,” creating and repurposing materials, and borrowing items.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are durable goods?
2. What are consumable goods?
3. What is comparison shopping?
4. What are some examples of community resources that may be available to a program that serves young children?
5. What are the main sources for resources and supplies?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Interview a staff member who purchases supplies for a day care or preschool program. Be prepared to ask questions about how often durable goods are replaced and how often consumable products are purchased. Find out what stores or suppliers the program uses and what items are routinely donated to the program.

Web Links:



Classroom Supplies

<http://forums.atozteacherstuff.com/showthread.php?threadid=12029>

Donation Process

<http://www.iloveschools.com/faq/how-it-works.html>

New Uses for Old Classroom Supplies

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=7378>