Jump Rope For Heart and Hoops For Heart (JRFH/HFH) are just two of many fundraisers that schools can choose from to participate in each year. With districts often limiting the number of fundraising projects, how can physical educators convince school leaders to select JRFH/HFH as the fundraiser of choice? As a former JRFH coordinator and physical educator, Superintendent Dan McMinimee offers some perspective on how to garner support for these educational fund-development programs that directly support our profession.

**Question:** How does your school district review fundraising requests?

**Answer:** Gaining support becomes more difficult in a district of 86,000 students, where there are multiple layers of staff between schools and the superintendent. In our case, we are setting up a system of support from the district office leading to schools, and have placed an emphasis on more site-based decision making within a framework of the outcomes we all want for our students as they exit the system. We are also using this opportunity to take a closer look at all that would make a school successful; not just the scores on statewide assessments, but multiple measures of success.

**Question:** Why should principals and superintendents support JRFH/HFH?

**Answer:** I am supportive of JRFH because it is a simple and concrete way for students to support their community and to also build skills that are transferrable. It is an easy way for students to develop their motor skills, work on fitness and healthy activities, and develop their confidence as they achieve goals.

**Question:** How do you personally support the program?

**Answer:** From my chair as the superintendent, I have met with the American Heart Association representatives and simply asked them what they thought would be helpful to our teachers and principals. We came up with a letter of support which outlined my level of commitment to the program. This letter conveyed that the JRFH program was supported from the top of the organization and outlines an opportunity for me to be a part of the reward system. I pledged $1,000 to the school with the best percentage of participation and provided my time as
a half-day substitute for three different reward category winners. As a former PE teacher, it was a great joy to go back and be in the classroom with students for a little while, and it also showed my support for the efforts of our teachers!

While I do believe support from my office helps in most cases, as a former principal, I never want to force something on a school. There needs to be a balance as we give schools more autonomy — they need to be able to decide what programs they want to participate in and why.

**Question:** When PE teachers approach their principal, what should they keep in mind when making their case?  
**Answer:** Emphasize that JRFH/HFH is a low cost/high impact way to support their school and the greater community. Discuss how it provides an opportunity for kids to learn about themselves, develop heart healthy habits, see how it can easily be integrated into a fitness program, and build skills that benefit them throughout life.

When I was running the program as an educator, I worked really hard to make sure my principal and district-level leadership had a clear understanding of what I was trying to accomplish through the program. Once they understood the goals, it was easier to share (the benefits of the program).

Here’s what I would not say: “I have to do this because I do not have enough support from the PE budget” or “I have to do JRFH/HFH because it is the only way I can fundraise for my program.” I would also not say that every student is responsible for a certain amount of fundraising. If you say that each student has to raise a certain amount of money, that immediately shifts the focus from doing something fun and enjoyable that has a health and educational benefit, to simply accomplishing a task. It also makes it tougher in some of our schools, as kids don’t have the same opportunity to fundraise as more affluent neighborhoods.

**Question:** What makes JRFH different from other fundraising opportunities?  
**Answer:** Perhaps they have an impacted family in their community, a cause greater than themselves that could be pointed out. Maybe they could research where the dollars go and what benefit is provided to others as a result of participation. Consider the program as part of an interdisciplinary project in which students explore the science of aerobic exercise and how it affects heart health along with the improved coordination that results from jumping rope. Then, see how students’ endurance and coordination improves as a result of their participation in this program. I think the key is to showcase the opportunity to get students personally invested in this activity.

**Question:** When is the best timeframe to ask for support from principals?  
**Answer:** I think the planning for this should start as soon as possible and should be a part of a comprehensive physical education program.