

2025-2026 ORION FUNDRAISING CHECKLIST & CALENDAR

Welcome to school!

By sharing this joint fundraising checklist & calendar, we hope to consolidate the fundraising asks made by various groups on campus that work together to enrich our children's learning experience. We hope the calendar helps your family plan for making contributions in the timing that aligns best with your family's financial situation.

What makes Orion truly special is the involvement and support of student families. There is no single correct way to give, and all donations are appreciated. Every family's financial situation is unique and we trust you to determine what donation amount works for your family. Orion is home to a diverse community and relies greatly on families with extra capacity to contribute more than the suggested donation amount. We highly recommend checking with your employer for donation matching.

Finally, making a monetary donation is not the only way to support Orion Alternative school. Many of our families support in other ways including: helping to find sponsors for events, organizing events or volunteering time on campus.

For more context &
answers to fundraising
FAQs:





Suggested Donations Checklist

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Starship Orion Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

\$1,000/Family

Donations via Paypal, Check** or
through your Employer Matching
Program

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Redwood City Mandarin Immersion Scholars (RCMIS)

****Mandarin Immersion Program Only****

\$2,000/Student

Donations via Paypal, Check** or
through your Employer Matching
Program

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Class Funds by Class Coordinators

Estimated \$100-\$200 per family per class

Check with your class coordinator on how to make
your contribution. Some classes will ask for
contributions throughout the year on an as needed
basis, others may gather funds upfront.



Additional Notes

- All suggested donation amounts are for the 2025-2026 school year
- Your after-school program may have donation requests of their own
- If you have additional capacity, Redwood City Education Foundation (RCEF) is a district-wide PTO funding organization to help underserved schools in Redwood City. You can support them at (www.rcef.org)

Monthly Donations: If you would prefer, you may breakdown your yearly donation into monthly donations via Paypal. You can also check your employer matching portal if monthly donations are an option for you.

****For Checks:**

- **Mandarin Immersion Families:**

- Make two separate checks, one for Starship Orion PTO and one for Redwood City Mandarin Immersion Scholars. Do NOT combine donation amounts into a single check as Starship Orion PTO and RCMIS are two separate organizations.
- You can include your student(s) name & grade on both checks
- Please drop off your checks with Elizabeth Araiza at the front office

- **Co-Op Families:**

- Make your check out to Starship Orion PTO
- You can include your student(s) name & grade on the check
- Please drop off your check with Elizabeth Araiza at the front office

2025-2026 FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

FOR ORION CO-OP FAMILIES:

While donations are accepted year round, here are the major Starship Orion PTO fundraising drives:

- **August - October 2025 | PTO Fall Direct Drive Fundraising**
 - Kicks off at Maze Day August 9th and runs through October 31st
- **November 2025 | PTO Read-a-Thon**
 - November 1st - 30th
- **TBD 2026 | PTO Spring Auction**

Note: Please support your class by contributing to class funds. Ask your class coordinator for more information. Your chosen after-school program may have donation drives of their own.



2025-2026 FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

FOR ORION MANDARIN IMMERSION FAMILIES:

While donations are accepted year round, here are the major fundraising drives across Starship Orion PTO & RCMIS:

- **August - October 2025 | PTO Fall Direct Drive Fundraising**
 - Kicks off at Maze Day August 6th and runs through October 31st
- **August - September 2025 | RCMIS Direct Drive - Mid-Autumn Festival**
 - Kicks off at Maze Day August 6th and runs through September 30th
- **November 2025 | PTO Read-a-Thon**
 - November 1st - 30th
- **January - February 2026 | RCMIS New Year to Lunar New Year Direct Drive**
 - Kicks off on January 6th and runs through February 17th (Lunar New Year)
- **TBD 2026 | PTO Spring Auction**

Note: Please support your class by contributing to class funds. Ask your class coordinator for more information. Your chosen after-school program may have donation drives of their own.

DONATE



PTO

\$1,000/family



RCMIS

\$2,000/student

MI ONLY



Your donations maintain a high level of educational enrichment for your student(s). All donations amounts are welcome. Maximize your impact by checking with your employer about corporate matching.

Please also support your class by contributing to class funds.

Ask your class coordinator for more information.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

CONTEXT: Why does fundraising exist at Orion if it is a public school?

Recently, Redwood City School District (RCSD) has had to navigate major funding shortages and Orion families have stepped up to fill the gaps. These funding challenges affect both MI and Co-op programs at Orion. Parent volunteers work together to address these challenges through monetary donations or by volunteering their time. If you are interested, please talk to your class coordinator about getting involved!

CONTEXT: Why are so many of the fundraising efforts focused in the Fall?

While you can make your donation anytime in the school year, for budgeting and planning purposes, it is most helpful to have the bulk of funds raised in the beginning of the school year. Both the PTO and RCMIS make monetary commitments to Redwood City School District (RCSD) to fund staff positions for the following year. It is crucial that both organizations know how many positions they can fund by February so that current staff can be retained for the following year. If there is a deficit in Fall fundraising, these staff members will be “pink-slipped” (or let go). They can be rehired if there is funding later in the year but the uncertainty reduces the retention rate of our staff. The most important resource we have is our teaching staff, this is in part why both the PTO and RCMIS work hard to focus fundraising earlier in the year.

If you know that you cannot make a donation in the Fall or prefer to make monthly donations, you can reachout to our fundraising teams at the emails below to pledge your full donation amount:

- Starship PTO – email pledges to fundraising@orionschool.org
- RCMIS – email pledges to info@rcmis.org*

CONTEXT: What do Class Funds cover?

Class funds are collected by your class coordinators either in a lump sum at the beginning of the school year or on an as needed basis. These funds cover staff appreciation (holidays, birthdays, teacher appreciation week), class parties (3-4/school year), and supplement the PTO provided budgets for classroom supplies and field trips. Connect with your classroom coordinators for more context on the specific budget for your class.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

CONTEXT: What is the difference between Starship Orion PTO & RCMIS?

Starship Orion PTO (PTO – Parent Teacher Organization)

Nonprofit Parent Teacher Organization for both MI & Parent Co-op Programs. PTO organizes parent volunteers school-wide and raises funds for school-wide activities, STEAM, garden, staff, instructional aides, field trips, music, art, tutoring, teacher supplies and more.

RCMIS (Redwood City Mandarin Immersion Scholars)

Nonprofit led by MI program parents. Raises funds for MI Program support including curriculum development, reading intervention support, Mandarin teaching coach, and Mandarin teaching assistants shared across MI classes K thru 5th grade.

- Families of Mandarin Immersion students are asked to contribute to BOTH Starship Orion PTO and RCMIS, as Mandarin Immersion students benefit from both organizations.
- Families of Parent Co-op Students are asked to contribute ONLY to Starship Orion PTO. Additionally, Co-op families are asked to donate 72 hours of volunteering time over the course of the school year. You can find out more about volunteering on the Starship Orion PTO website.

As Redwood City School District faces budget deficits, parent-led organizations like Starship Orion PTO and RCMIS fill the gaps in funding to maintain a high level of educational enrichment for Orion students.

RCMIS's mission is focused on supporting the Mandarin Immersion program goals of bi-literacy and bi-fluency. Historically, funds raised have paid for K-5 Mandarin Immersion aides, Mandarin reading specialist support and Mandarin curriculum development and instructional coaching for Mandarin Immersion teachers. These needs are specific to the health of Orion's MI program and are significant in cost that is not likely to be covered by Redwood City School District in the near future. RCMIS fundraises from Mandarin Immersion program families.

Starship Orion PTO's mission is focused on enriching the educational experience of all Orion students across both MI and Co-op programs. Since RCSD's funding focuses on core English and Math, "wrap around services" including enrichment programs like STEAM, class wide field trips, and community building events are all funded by the PTO. The PTO's budget relies on donations made by parents in both the parent co-op program and the MI program.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

CONTEXT: How should I prioritize my donations to Starship Orion PTO, RCMIS, and class coordinators if I cannot meet the full suggested donation amounts?

While ultimately your family will decide how to make your donations, we encourage equitable giving to ensure you are making donations reflective of the support your student(s) are receiving from organizations at school. Depending on the number of students in your family, we encourage giving amounts proportional to the overall ask.

2025-2026 School Year Contribution Breakdown Examples per Program:

- Mandarin Immersion Family Contribution
 - One student: \$3,200 = \$1,000 PTO + \$200 Class Funds* + \$2,000 RCMIS
 - Two students: \$5,400 = \$1,000 PTO + \$400 Class Funds* + \$4,000 RCMIS
- Co-Op Family Contribution
 - One student: \$1,200 = \$1,000 PTO + \$200 Class Funds*
 - Two students: \$1,400 = \$1,000 PTO + \$400 Class Funds*
- *NOTE: Class Funds are an *estimated* contribution and may be collected throughout the year on an as needed basis or as a one time donation at the beginning of the school year. Ask your class coordinator for additional information.

Again, there is no single correct way to give, and all donations are appreciated.