



Multiple, Smaller Gatherings as an Alternative to a Gala **March 17, 2027**

Instead of relying on a single large gala, Champions For Learning could host several smaller gatherings during FY27. These events would focus on connecting donors more directly with our mission while generating comparable net revenue and building deeper donor relationships. These gatherings would be designed not only to generate gifts, but also to introduce new donors to Champions For Learning and deepen relationships with existing supporters.

Concept:

The concept is based on the idea that “birds of the feather flock together”, i.e. a trusted donor who is passionate about CFL can be an effective donor acquisition partner with his or her friends and acquaintances. He or she is an enthusiastic supporter of CFL and they are saying to the invited friend “why don't you become a supporter as well?”

The nature of each gathering is that it is in the donor host's home or perhaps at a club to which the host belongs. It is private, intimate, social, and focused. But most importantly, it is believable. Why? Because “my trusted friend has asked me to his/her home to talk about something important that means a lot to him/her.” Holding the gathering in a home or private club provides a more authentic, intimate experience than another location would provide. A smaller gathering allows donors to hear directly from students and teachers in a setting that allows them to connect more powerfully and personally with the needs and opportunities.

The idea would be to hold four to six events that would be designed to generate the net revenue that we could otherwise receive from a gala, while creating a strong connection between the donor and our mission than a gala would. Even if the net revenue is the same, greater potential exists for retaining donors and gift amounts long term.

Each event might include 20 to 30 guests with the inclination and capacity to give. The focus is on getting the right people in the room, not on casting a wide net for potential donors. Increasing the number of guests beyond 20 to 30 would make the gathering less intimate, undercutting the “birds of the feather flock together” feeling.

Event Elements to Prepare

1. Host is trained in the concept, how to invite, how many to invite, how to set an expectation with guests as to what to expect, how to ask and how to handle objections and no's, and what to do and expect.
2. A project/program might be selected that the host is excited and perhaps supports.
3. Collateral and ask material is prepared.
4. Before the event but after the guest list is finalized, a list of the guests coming is made along with the host's estimate of what each invitee can give. The sum of those numbers will help guide the determination of the goal for the event.

Event Sequencing

1. Guests arrive, are offered appetizers and drinks, and then settle in a comfortable area. This approach, in contrast to a sit-down dinner, keeps the focus on the problems we want to partner with the guests to solve and shortens the length of the gathering.
2. Host welcomes guests, explains the purpose of the gathering, as well as the elements and sequencing of the event.
3. Host introduces CFL personnel present. Guests introduce themselves
4. A brief informal program of approximately 8 to 15 minutes focuses on a societal problem CFL is addressing. The program would likely include a student and teacher speaking and perhaps a compelling video. A CFL person presents the project and the need for funding.
5. Host spontaneously chimes in throughout the informal program to explain why he/she is involved and supportive. He/she states a financial goal for the event and explains how participants' gifts will make a difference. He/she then asks those present to participate as well and suggests a range of giving. He/she hands a commitment card out along with a pen and asks for a commitment. **Then there is silence for up to five minutes. NO talking. No distractions.**
6. Host collects cards and shares that he/she will report back to the group on what will be accomplished because of the commitments made.
7. More appetizers and drinks are offered and the event winds down without pressure in an informal way.

Post Event

1. A letter from Eric and host sent to guests thanking them for their gift and providing options for payment. A promise is made to stay in touch and report on program progress. There is also an invitation to be in touch if there are questions or to be more tangibly involved.
2. A series of YMAD (you made a difference) touchpoints are made – at least once a month to let the person know how their gift has affected the lives of students and teachers.
3. Six months later, the host invites those participating to the house again to hear a full report on how things are going to reinforce that donors made a difference. Guests could be invited to bring a friend or acquaintance. Student and teachers benefiting from the giving would also be present to thank the donors. Remaining needs could be shared as a very soft ask but no formal request would be made.