



Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation

## Frequently Asked Questions 2012

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### General Information

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### **What is the Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation and what does it do?**

The Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation (NOW) is a volunteer-based, nonprofit organization that raises money in order to improve and enhance the education provided in the Mammoth Unified School District.

Amidst a national, historic economic crisis, no state government has been as severely distressed as California, where years of budget troubles preceded the national crisis. Due to cuts, funding delays and policy changes that lawmakers implemented in 2009 to address the state budget crisis, state funding for education in California is inadequate for many basic programs and insufficient to fund any enrichment programs. Local school districts must absorb funding cuts, address cash flow challenges, and plan carefully in order to avoid insolvency. In a small school district such as Mammoth, funding beyond the basics is exceptionally challenging.

Our core purpose as a learning community is to increase student achievement and to close the achievement gap for all of our students. We all realize that for whatever reason our students come to us at different abilities when they start school at the kinder level or when they enter our school system in the later grades.



## Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation

The purpose of the NOW Education Foundation is to support all students in the Mammoth Unified School District by engaging the community in the education of our children.

### **Why do we need the NOW Education Foundation and a Parent Teacher Organization at each school site?**

The NOW Education Foundation and each school site organization (MES PTO, MMSO, and Boosters at MHS) work closely together to provide a quality K-12 education for all children. In fact, representatives from each school organization sit on the NOW Education Foundation board to provide input on NOW Education Foundation decisions.

Each school's PTO has its own Board of Directors that raises and spends funds in the same school year to pay for campus-specific enrichment, technology, school supplies, athletics, and classroom materials to ensure the campus runs efficiently throughout the school year. Generally, the NOW Education Foundation will raise funds for the next school year so that the district can consider these funds in their budgetary process (and potentially include staff salaries). In 2012, the NOW Education Foundation will be raising funds for the 2012-13 year.

Despite their different roles, both the NOW Education Foundation and individual school site organizations will work together to fund critical programs our schools wouldn't otherwise have.

### **What are your current funding priorities?**

Our goal continues to be raising funds to pursue excellence in education. We will have an impact on all of the school sites in alignment with the District's adopted priorities.

Our focus for 2012-2013 continues to be in the following areas:

- *Academic Flexibility*
- *Art & Music*
- *College and Career Exploration*
- *Increased Class Offerings*
- *Language Pathways*
- *Technology*

For more information on each of these priorities, please see below.

### **Academic Flexibility: What exactly does "academic flexibility" mean?**

For many students, a school's schedule does not allow them to take all the courses they wish to explore, because of the restrictive nature of a six-period academic day, smaller teaching staffs, and all the outside activities students pursue. In Mammoth, where we have a small, remote



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school district with limited resources, this becomes even more of a challenge. Here, academic flexibility is achieved through the Independent Learning Center at Mammoth High School and the availability of online and Cerro Coso Community College courses which expand students' options.

The Independent Learning Center gives students, both ski/snowboard athletes and regular program students, the ability to take course work either at an accelerated pace (via online programs, with teacher and tutoring support) or to take courses not readily available through the normal high school curriculum.

### Academic Flexibility Examples:

- An 8<sup>th</sup> grade student from Mammoth Middle School is taking Honors Geometry through the ILC. Most middle schools would not have the ability to accommodate this accelerated class for one student.
- French and Korean are expanded course offerings through the Apex Online Learning Program, and Rosetta Stone. In a high school the size of Mammoth's, the ability to take multiple languages would not be possible without the existence of the Independent Learning Center.
- Students are able to take various honors and Advanced Placement courses, which they would not be able to fit within their six-period class schedules. Honors Geometry, Honors Algebra I/II, AP Chemistry, and Honors English 1/2, are currently being taken by students through the ILC, sometimes condensing yearlong coursework into one semester, in order to accommodate students' needs for flexibility
- To satisfy the University of California's A-G requirements, two seniors have taken a History of Pop Music course offered by Cerro Coso Community College, but completed the coursework through the ILC.

The NOW Foundation currently funds 1.4 full-time equivalent employees (60% of one staff member and 80% of a second staff member) in the Independent Learning Center and tutorial/coordination staff. The web-based programs used by students are also supported by the NOW Foundation.

### **Art & Music: How does the NOW Education Foundation support Art & Music?**

Support of the art and music programs in Mammoth is another priority of the NOW Foundation. Obviously, not all priorities can be addressed in equal measure, but we are striving to keep art and music alive in our schools. Currently, the NOW Foundation supports two online music classes taken by MHS seniors. For the future, we want to refurbish existing musical instruments and add new ones to the district wide music program, along with new sheet music for the music library. Although art is part of the current MUSD curriculum, the Foundation hopes to support after-school art enrichment classes for students at all levels and other art and music enrichment activities.



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- *January 31, 2012 UPPDATE: NEW PROGRAMS NOW FUNDED:*
  1. Arts & Music:
    1. Mac laptop and accessories for music transcription (MMS & MHS)
    2. Art supplies for MMS

**College and Career Exploration: How does the NOW Education Foundation support College & Career Exploration?**

The NOW Education Foundation hopes to provide all students with exposure to career possibilities and college opportunities. For example, in 2010-11, the NOW Education Foundation funded a College and Career Day at Mammoth Middle School, which allowed students to review different career opportunities by speaking to different professionals.

**Increased Class Offerings: What does “increased class offerings” mean?**

A middle school or high school teacher normally teaches five periods daily, within their credentialed subject area. They are not able to offer advanced courses to small numbers of students. MUSD has been able to increase its course offerings via online coursework and Cerro Coso Community College classes.

Students have been able to take a variety of expanded coursework, in English, U. S. History, science, music, French, Korean, and multiple math offerings. These are all classes that the students or staffs would not be able to fit within the traditional school day. When a student is a gifted athlete, a college-bound scholar, and/or a musician or student government representative; they have to make difficult choices within their schedules. Having these increased course offerings available, with the NOW Education Foundation’s support, allows students to “have it all.”

**Language Pathways: What does “language pathways” mean?**

The NOW Education Foundation is supporting the expansion and growth of language programs K-12. We aim to provide exposure to all students to various languages and ensure all students have the opportunity to meet University of California application requirements in foreign language by the time they graduate from MHS.

Examples:

- Through online programs, students can select language classes that would otherwise not be available in the traditional classroom setting. Though ILC, students (currently grades 9-12) can study any language of their choice.
- Through purchase of software, students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade can improve their Spanish skills – touching all levels of ability.



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**Technology: Technology is such a broad category, what specifically are you focusing on?**

Technology is one of the most important aspects to consider as we strive for excellence – both in applying it in the classroom/measuring student success and in assuring our students are technologically savvy!

MUSD has made a commitment to the use of student data and test results to improve academic achievement. The district purchased a data analysis computer software system during the 2010-11 school year to achieve this goal. The system, called OARS—Online Assessment Reporting System, is a web-based data management system. It is a powerful, flexible and easy-to-use tool that allows teaching and administrative staff to monitor and analyze the state and federal government’s standardized testing results and to create, administer and then analyze results of within-District benchmark and unit tests. All this geared towards improving student achievement, both for the gifted and high-achieving student who needs to be challenged and for the struggling student for whom interventions need to be created.

In addition to funding the contracted project manager’s position yearly, the NOW Foundation has supported district wide technology by purchasing hardware and software at all levels for student and staff use.

Examples:

- Two laptop carts with netbooks or iPads at the elementary and middle schools
- EPGY (Stanford University’s Educational Program for Gifted Youth) software for all identified elementary gifted students—60 licenses for this school year
- Study Island software for grades K-5 to provide homework support
- Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math web-based software for grades K-8
- Pending purchases of online second language learning software, academic intervention and academic acceleration for grades K-8
- Apex and Rosetta Stone online course packages for the Independent Learning Center at Mammoth High School (grades 8-12)

**All schools have shown increased growth on the California standards tests (STAR) and two are currently California Distinguished Schools – why do you need even more money?**

We’ll answer this question in two parts:

*What does it mean to be a California Distinguished School?*

Two of our three schools are current California Distinguished Schools and the third has been a past recipient. The State Department of Education honors a small group of outstanding schools each year. Schools must meet strict eligibility criteria from the CDE, submit a lengthy application outlining their overall achievements, two signature practices that distinguish them



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from others, and standardized testing data, in order to be considered. A small number of finalist schools then receive a validation visit by a team appointed by the State. From those finalists, an even smaller number of schools are designated as California Distinguished Schools. This honor is a four-year designation. Distinguished schools may then apply for National Blue Ribbon School status. Both Mammoth Middle School and Mammoth High School are in the middle of four-year terms as Distinguished Schools. The District and the NOW Foundation work hand in hand to promote the continuance of this high level of excellence above and beyond what most schools in California can provide.

### Why do we still need more money if we have accomplished so much already?

The Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation strives to achieve excellence in education above and beyond state and federal requirements. While we congratulate the schools for their progress and achievement, we believe there is always more that can be done in the pursuit of excellence.

## Fundraising

- [How much should I give?](#)
  - [What are the major fundraisers of the Mammoth School NOW Education Foundation?](#)
  - [What is the difference between NOW and the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation \(MMCF\)? How do they support NOW?](#)
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### **How much should I give?**

In last year's fund drive, we received donations ranging from \$10 to \$25,000. We understand that all families have different financial means and we appreciate whatever you can donate. Give what you can - you can make a difference. It is truly a collective effort. That you give is as important as what you give.

**The NOW Foundation has set an optimistic – but achievable – goal of 100% participation from our MUSD families.** We are all in this together and together we can make a difference for our students, schools and community. All children in the District can benefit from the educators and programs that the NOW Education Foundation funds and every gift contributes to a better education. Act NOW!

### **What are the major fundraisers of the Mammoth School NOW Education Foundation?**

Currently we raise funds through partnerships, a fund drive and events. With all of our efforts, money is raised far enough in advance to allow the district to integrate the funds into their plan for the following school year.



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- **Partnerships:** The Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation (MMCF) raises funds to support education through contributions made with online transactions and events held at Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. MMCF, in turn, donates funds to NOW so that we can use the funds strategically at the school sites. We sincerely thank the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation for their support.
- **Fund Drive:** February and March 2012 marks our Second Annual Fund Drive. We ask MUSD families, community members, second homeowners and local business to financially support education in our community.
- **Events:** Through a partnership with the Mammoth Lakes Foundation, we hold an event in early summer to benefit education K – 14. In 2012, the Mammoth Food & Wine Experience will be held July 6-8 in Mammoth Lakes. Educate your palate (and contribute to a great cause!) Additional fundraising events may be developed.

### **What is the difference between NOW and the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation (MMCF)? How do they support NOW?**

The MMCF's purpose is to inspire and motivate youth through education and sports and is striving to become an umbrella foundation for fundraising in Mammoth. With their ability to solicit contributions through ski area transactions, they have the potential to generate considerable revenue. They support education but have other priorities as well including the construction of a student athlete training center on the mountain. MMCF is not close enough to the schools to know how funds should be applied strategically and they rely on NOW to make those decisions.

### **Fund Allocation**

- [How does the NOW Education Foundation determine which positions and programs to fund?](#)
- [How will Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation allocate funds in the 2012-13 school year?](#)
- [How much money was raised for 2011-12 and how were those funds allocated?](#)
- [Why is so much of the money spent on the Independent Learning Center? Does it only service ski team athletes?](#)
- [I see you have other priorities listed in your brochure, why haven't those been funded?](#)
- [How did you spend funds in 2010-2011?](#)
- [How did you spend funds in 2009-2010?](#)
- [Can I specify how my donation will be spent/donate to a specific program?](#)

### **How does the NOW Education Foundation determine which positions and programs to fund?**

The MUSD Board of Trustees and the school administration determine instruction in our schools; that is, what will be taught, who will teach it and how it will be delivered at each school. The NOW Education Foundation's goal is to provide additional funding to support or enhance that instruction.



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The NOW Education Foundation Board determines which programs to fund by collaborating with MUSD administration and staff and ensuring that funded programs support our mission and current adopted priorities.

- Academic Flexibility
- Art & Music
- College and Career Exploration
- Increased Class Offerings
- Language Pathways
- Technology

It is the goal of the NOW Education Foundation to raise money one year in advance so that when the school board makes its budget in the spring/early summer, they know which staff and programs public funding will cover and what additional support is needed from the NOW Education Foundation.

### **How will Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation allocate funds in the 2012-13 school year?**

In 2012-13, funds will be allocated within our six priorities listed above. Once the State releases budget projections and the District analyzes its priorities for the 2012-13 year, we will determine how to best spend the funds. We will also review programs that we have committed to in past years (software, ILC, OARS Mgr.) that require ongoing funding as well as looking forward to new projects to achieve excellence in education.

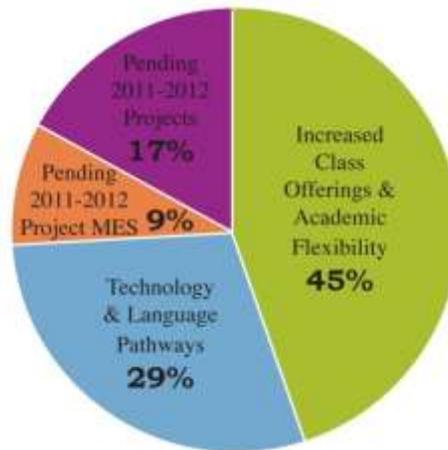
### **How much money was raised for 2011-12 and how were those funds allocated?**

\$280,000 was raised: Our fund drive and events raised \$30,000 and \$250,000 was donated by the Mammoth Mountain Community Foundation.

As of December 31, 2011, funding was allocated as follows: (pending projects will be funded and percentages below will change accordingly)



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Increased Class Offerings & Academic Flexibility

- Independent Learning Center (grades 6-12)
  1. Certificated staff – two teachers
  2. Web-based programs
  3. Tutorial/mentoring support
  4. Contractual employment of a pathway coordinator
- Mammoth Middle School
  1. Tutorial/mentoring support, after school program
- Mammoth High School
  1. Tutorial/mentoring support, after school program

Technology & Language Pathways

- Laptops & iPads with portable self-sustaining carts – (MES & MMS)
  1. Supported major technology initiative at MES (overall initiative included iPads, laptops, infrastructure and carts)
  2. 25 iPads with cart (MMS)
- Web based software
  1. Includes language arts, math, science, reading, and foreign language, for all levels of students, from those needing the most help to the gifted program
- District-wide initiative to foster technology integration, reporting and teacher support (OARS)
  1. Contractual employment of OARS project coordinator

Pending Programs

- Funding earmarked to be spent in early 2012. Please check back – we will post updates as they are available.
- January 31, 2012 UPPDATE: NEW PROGRAMS NOW FUNDED:
  1. Arts & Music:



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1. Mac laptop and accessories for music transcription (MMS & MHS)
2. Art supplies for MMS
2. Technology: Library Tech Center
  1. iPads, printer, desks/chairs, study center
3. Academic Flexibility/Increased Class Offerings
  1. Materials to support AP Classes (MHS)
4. Language Pathways: (Part of Pending Funding for MES)
  1. Recruitment of teachers for Spanish Enrichment Program (Spanish Speaking “prep period” teachers) (MES)
  2. Language arts programs (Treasures and Tesoros textbooks) (MES)

### **Why is so much of the money spent on the Independent Learning Center? Does it only service ski team athletes?**

The first large gift to the NOW Foundation came from the Rusty and Bonnie Gregory family, with the stipulation that it be used to support the advancement of the Independent Learning Center at Mammoth High School. Although there are a number of snow athletes utilizing the ILC to provide the academic flexibility they require, at least half of the students currently enrolled in the ILC are non-athletes—regular students grades 8 – 12 who are taking a variety of courses that they would not normally be able to fit into their schedules. Although this first large restricted gift to NOW was targeted for the Independent Learning Center, the Independent Learning Center is only one facet of the overall NOW Education Foundation’s priorities.

### **I see you have other priorities listed in your brochure, why haven’t those been funded?**

As a new foundation approaching our second annual fund drive, we cannot address all of these priorities each year. Our goal is to have major impacts within these categories and we would rather make a big impact in one or two areas rather than a small impact in all six. Eventually we hope to raise enough to be able to fund programs in all of our focus areas. Please donate now!

UPDATE: We are thrilled to announce that we have allocated funding for arts and music. Please see update above.

### **How did you spend funds in 2010-2011?**

Academic Flexibility at Mammoth High School - Independent Learning Center - funding through restricted donations included teacher salaries, tutors, materials, books and supplies.



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Language Programs at Mammoth Elementary School - funding through restricted donations included support for foreign interns.

College & Career Exploration at Mammoth Middle School – funding of Career Day.

### **How did you spend funds in 2009-2010?**

Academic Flexibility at Mammoth High School - Independent Learning Center - funding through restricted donations included teacher salaries, tutors, materials, books and supplies

### **Can I specify how my donation will be spent/donate to a specific program?**

All donations under \$25,000 must be unrestricted. We believe that our mission is best accomplished when we can focus funds and energy in a way that it most helpful to the District. Smaller donations pool collectively to create a bigger impact.

Donations of \$25,000 or more, especially if recurring annually, can be considered for a donor-specified program as long as it falls within our mission and priorities and allows that program to have sustainability.

## **General School Finance FAQ - MUSD**

- [Overview](#)
- [Nuts and Bolts - Where does funding for Mammoth Unified School District come from?](#)
- [How is money spent at MUSD?](#)
- [How much money is spent per student at MUSD?](#)
- [What does Basic Aid mean?](#)
- [I thought the state Lottery was supposed to provide a significant amount to education?](#)
- [As a community, we just renewed Measure S to increase our school's budget as well as to keep control of the money local. Why do we need even more money from private sources?](#)

### **Overview**

Over these past three years, funding for public education in California has been reduced by \$18 billion. California is presently ranked in the bottom five states in this country in per pupil funding – approximately \$2812 per student below the national average and yet, California has the 8<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world.

We are all are aware of the dismal financial outlook for the state of California. Mammoth Unified School District reduced its general operating budget by \$921,000 last year from a \$12 million budget – or about 7.6%. We again are facing more financial challenges as the Governor



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has “pulled the trigger” on midyear cuts which has been an immediate cost to Mammoth Unified of approximately \$72,000.

The Governor’s Budget for the next school year, 2012-13, indicates further reductions to public education including the elimination of all home to school transportation, approximately \$114,000, and a reduction of \$370 per student for approximately another \$444,000 for the potential reduction of \$558,000 or approximately 4.6% of our operating budget. And to make the equation more complicated, these reductions would take effect on January 1, 2013 if the Governor’s Temporary Tax Proposal fails in November 2012.

Our students deserve world class schools but once again we are asked to do more with less – what program will we cut next?

**Nuts and Bolts - Where does funding for Mammoth Unified School District come from?**

Funding comes from 4 sources: Federal, State, Local Initiatives (i.e. Measure S), and Private Funding/Misc. (including NOW Education Foundation contributions). In 2011-2012, the budget was funded as follows (these numbers are as of December 31, 2011 and subject to change with State budget cuts.):

1. State Funding/Property Tax:           \$9,366,733  
For Mammoth Unified School District, this State funding comes from local property tax due to our Basic Aid classification, see below for more information on “Basic Aid.”
  
  2. State Funding/Other:                   \$607,531  
These funds are all restricted (know as “categorical funds”) to specific programs, including more than two dozen special programs classified as “Tier III”.
  
  3. Federal Funding:                       \$568,672  
These funds are all restricted (know as “categorical funds”) to specific programs, including special education and the title programs.
  
  4. Local Funding:                           \$844,000  
This includes donations (NOW Education Foundation), parcel tax (Measure S), leases and rentals, interest and other
- Total Budgeted Income for 2011/2012:       \$11,386,936



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**How is money spent at MUSD?**

The vast majority of the budget is spent on salaries and benefits. In 2011-2012, \$9,999,996, or 88% of the budget, was spent on salaries and benefits.

**How much money is spent per student at MUSD?**

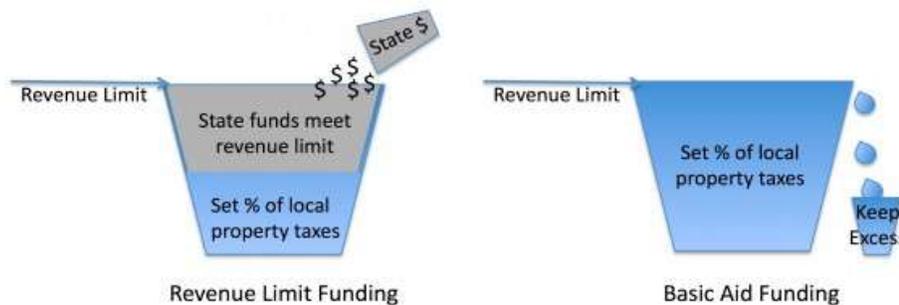
Mammoth Unified School District has approximately 1100 students, so in 2011-2012, spending is budgeted at approximately \$10,000 per student.

As a comparison, the top five states in terms of student performance are Vermont, Rhode Island, Wyoming, New Jersey and Maine – the average per student spending for these states is \$16,000-\$22,000 per student. (School Services of California Newsletter.)

California has some of the highest academic standards in the country and we are among the bottom 5 states in per pupil spending.

**What does Basic Aid mean?**

On a yearly basis, a district is classified as basic aid or revenue limit. To make the determination, you start with property taxes. Each district is allocated a percentage of its local property taxes for schools. This serves as the base part of the funding equation. If the property tax funding is low, then the state provides more money to reach a revenue limit, or the amount of money the state is willing to spend on education in that school district. (The revenue limit, and the percent of property taxes the district keeps, are different for each school district and were set in the 70s.)



If the money from the local property taxes for a district becomes greater than the revenue limit, that district becomes “basic aid” and can keep the funding above and beyond its revenue limit.

**I thought the state Lottery was supposed to provide a significant amount to education?**

This is an often misunderstood element of school funding. Lottery funds account for approximately \$132/pupil in K-12 education. Lottery funds don’t only go to K-12 schools; they support students in all areas of public education including Community Colleges, the University



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of California, the California State University system, Adult Education, Charter Schools and even the schools at the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation – Division of Juvenile Justice receive Lottery funds.

**As a community, we just renewed Measure S to increase our school’s budget as well as to keep control of the money local. Why do we need even more money from private sources?**

The state and federal governments require certain programs to be implemented (class size reduction, special education, for example) but do not fully fund these programs. So to be in compliance with state regulations, the local school district needs to fund these programs.

The District and the NOW Foundation are working hand in hand to promote the continuance of a high level of excellence above and beyond what most schools in California can provide. The Mammoth Schools NOW Education Foundation strives to achieve excellence in education above and beyond state and federal requirements.