Fall festival planning kit

A head start for your PTO or PTA board. Take what's useful and change the rest.

Timeline

12 weeks out

- [ ] Pick a date and check it against the school calendar
  Look for clashes with sports, conferences, and holidays.
- [ ] Get approval to use the school grounds
  Ask about parking, restrooms, and who will open and lock up.
- [ ] Choose an event lead and a small committee
- [ ] Set the budget and any fundraising goal
  Decide whether this is a fundraiser or a free community event.

10 to 8 weeks out

- [ ] Ask the school about insurance and food rules
  Rentals, outside food, and raffles can all have rules. Your school or district can tell you what applies.
- [ ] Choose the games and activities
- [ ] Decide how you'll handle food
  Food truck, bake sale, or a PTO-run stand. Check the school's rules first.
- [ ] Book rentals, a DJ, or a food truck
  Ask about cancellation and weather policies before you sign.
- [ ] Add a save the date to the school newsletter

6 weeks out

- [ ] Share the volunteer signup link
- [ ] Ask local businesses for donations and raffle prizes

4 to 5 weeks out

- [ ] List the supplies each game needs
- [ ] Design the flyer
- [ ] Send the flyer home and post it online
- [ ] Decide ticket prices and how you'll take payment
- [ ] Plan how you'll label common allergens

2 to 3 weeks out

- [ ] Follow up on empty volunteer spots
- [ ] Order prizes and decorations
- [ ] Confirm every vendor, with arrival times
- [ ] Finalize the rain plan
  Decide who makes the call, when, and how families will hear.

The final week

- [ ] Send a reminder to families
- [ ] Buy everything on the shopping list
- [ ] Print signs, tickets, and allergen labels
- [ ] Get change and set up cash boxes
- [ ] Draw a map of where everything goes
- [ ] Pick up food and any last-minute items
- [ ] Check the forecast and make the rain call

Festival day

- [ ] Walk the site before volunteers arrive

After the festival

- [ ] Thank volunteers, donors, and the school staff
- [ ] Count the money and record receipts
- [ ] Reimburse anyone who paid out of pocket
- [ ] Write down what to change next year
  A few quick notes while it's fresh can save next year's board a lot of time.

Volunteer spots

A sample to adapt. Add, cut, or rename spots to suit your school.

Spot	When	People
Setup Crew Set up tables, games, signs, and decorations.	3:00 PM to 5:00 PM	6
Ticket Table Greet families and sell tickets.	4:45 PM to 6:30 PM	2
Game Booths: First Shift Run a game and hand out prizes. No experience needed.	4:45 PM to 6:30 PM	6
Game Booths: Second Shift Run a game and hand out prizes. No experience needed.	6:15 PM to 8:00 PM	6
Food Table Serve food and keep the table stocked.	4:45 PM to 8:00 PM	4
Face Painting Simple designs. Bring your creativity.	5:00 PM to 7:00 PM	2
Cleanup Crew Pack up games, take down signs, and leave the grounds clean.	7:45 PM to 9:00 PM	6

Sample budget

Placeholder amounts to help you get started, not real prices. Swap in your own numbers.

Item	Example	Our budget
Inflatable or activity rental	$400	
Food and drinks	$300	
Prizes	$150	
Game supplies	$100	
Decorations	$75	
Paper goods and napkins	$50	
Flyers, signs, and tickets	$40	
Total	**$1,115**	

Shopping list

Warehouse club

- [ ] Drinks and water
- [ ] Snacks
- [ ] Plates, cups, and napkins
- [ ] Trash bags
- [ ] Hand sanitizer and wipes

Party or dollar store

- [ ] Small prizes
- [ ] Tablecloths
- [ ] Balloons and banners
- [ ] Face paint and brushes

Craft store

- [ ] Pumpkin-decorating supplies
- [ ] Markers and poster board
- [ ] Ring toss and bean bag supplies

Office supply store

- [ ] Roll of tickets
- [ ] Cash box
- [ ] Tape, scissors, and zip ties
- [ ] Sign holders
- [ ] Name tags for volunteers

Easy things to overlook

Who makes the rain call

Everyone will ask, so it helps to agree early on who decides and by when.

Cleanup volunteers

Setup spots tend to fill first. Listing cleanup as its own spot makes it easier to fill.

A backup for the event lead

A shared plan means one sick day doesn't have to stop anything.

School rules for rentals

Your school or district may have insurance or vendor rules worth checking before anything is signed.

Notes for next year

A few notes the week after can save next year's board hours.

Want it all in one place?
PineBoard can hold your tasks, volunteers, shopping, and budget together, and copies the plan to next year. Try it free for 60 days at pineboard.app.