The future of philanthropy may rest on our ability to ensure future generations of philanthropists by teaching our children how to give and serve.

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Teaching philanthropy to children: Why, how, and what

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PHILANTHROPY PLAYS a critical role in American society. Acts of individual generosity, whether contributions of money, goods, services, or time, provide help for the homeless, food for the hungry, care for the ill, and aid to those in need. They help create solutions to difficult medical problems, provide excellence and opportunities in education and the arts, underwrite programs for children, and ensure care for animals and the environment; they help fill many of our societal and human needs.

Examples abound in every community—from local hospitals to shelters for the homeless, from the Red Cross to the United Way, from day care centers to colleges and universities. Never was this more evident than in the unprecedented outpouring of generosity of every kind from individuals in virtually every community across the country as a result of the September 11, 2001 tragedy.

It is clear that individuals are the backbone of philanthropy. According to INDEPENDENT SECTOR (2001), nearly 1.5 million 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations support philanthropic causes. These organizations are made up of individuals who serve on

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boards of directors, give their time as volunteers, and donate their money or property. Indeed, *Giving USA 2002* (AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, 2002) reports that of the $212 billion in charitable giving for 2001, 83.5 percent was given by living individuals or through the estates of deceased individuals.

Therefore, it is apparent that if American society, as most Americans have come to accept it, is to persist, philanthropy must remain strong. But how does one become philanthropic? And how can our society ensure that the tradition of philanthropy will continue to remain strong and grow?

Many for whom this is a critical issue believe the answer to the second question lies in being proactive with our nation's children. We must teach our children how to become philanthropic if we expect to maintain philanthropy as a cornerstone of American society. We must help children become aware of the problems in their communities and the way individuals and organizations work to solve those problems. And we must help them learn how they, as individuals, can and should make a difference to society through their own personal efforts.

In the past decade, efforts to teach values and caring to children and young people have proliferated. Local and national youth organizations, public and private schools, and community foundations have developed programs designed to instill values. Service requirements have been instituted in high schools, and a few values-based school curricula have been developed. With increased public attention on values, a number of books designed to help parents teach values to their children have come onto the market. But are these efforts effective? And do they incorporate the best pedagogical methods for teaching values?

On a smaller scale, some organizations have focused specifically on teaching philanthropy and have developed curricula to do so. But even so, questions remain. Should the value of philanthropy, manifested by the behaviors of giving and serving, be taught formally, outside the home? If so, whose responsibility is it? And exactly what should be taught?

This chapter attempts to address the questions posed and summarize current thinking in each of these important areas.

How philanthropy is learned

The process of acquiring the value of philanthropy, as with the acquisition of all values, is complex. In 1996, a study by Bentley and Nissan presented, for the first time, a complete review of existing research on how school-age children learn philanthropy. The study identified key factors that lead to altruistic behavior. It concluded that effective learning occurs when a child witnesses a primary caregiver or other influential adult, such as a teacher or a religious or youth organization leader, modeling voluntary behavior that is intended to help others. The learning is strengthened when the adult is knowledgeable about philanthropy and helps the child understand the cause and effect of philanthropic behavior, describe the benefits of the behavior to others, and respond to others' feelings and needs. Finally, learning is greatly enhanced when children are given the opportunity to engage in giving and serving activities.

Others (Bremner, 1996; Grusec and Kuczynski, 1997; Morsberger, 1997) agree, emphasizing the importance of parents and other adult influencers demonstrating and talking about values and commitment and, by extension, philanthropy. In addition, other factors contribute to the development of a sense of moral responsibility, which may, in turn, lead to philanthropic behavior. These include a caring neighborhood, participation in religious life, an adult mentor, youth group activity, schools that promote helping others, and opportunities for community service (Daloz, 1998; Search Institute, 1998).

We may conclude, then, that the acquisition of the value of philanthropy and its resulting behaviors of giving and serving are the consequences of three primary types of learning: (1) modeling, which involves seeing and hearing, (2) cognitive learning, which

combines thinking and discussing, and (3) experiential learning, which involves doing.

Why philanthropy should be taught

Many scholars believe that values closely affiliated with philanthropy, such as kindness, compassion, respect, responsibility, and caring, need to be taught both in the home and in schools. Some (Ediger, 1998; Spaide, 1995) think that teaching young people to be charitable and help others helps them achieve self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. Ryan and Bohlin (1998) assert that children who are taught values have the tools to make good and wise choices. These reasons emphasize the teaching of philanthropy as a means to build strong and positive attitudes in young people.

Others (Campoy, 1998; Grusec and Kuczynski, 1997; Tyree, 1997) express concern about the disintegration of shared values resulting from the effects of a changing society. They identify several key issues that have a negative impact on children's values. These include the breakdown of traditional family structures, as evidenced by divorce, single-parent families, working parents, mobility and the resulting lack of extended family units, and less involvement in church and religious activities.

Another factor is the change in societal values, as demonstrated by the increasing acceptance of violence, poverty, and lack of personal responsibility that has negatively affected the transmission of positive values, including philanthropy. In fact, Spaide (1995) compares a past, in which the tradition of charity was transmitted from one generation to the next, to a present, in which more and more children have lost the impulse to be charitable and any sense of their ability to respond to others' needs. The teaching of philanthropy can be seen as a means to counteract negative influences.

A survey by Cone/Roper (2000) found that 92 percent of Americans (mostly ages forty-five to fifty-four) believe that encouraging children to participate in charities helps them become better citizens; 96 percent of Americans believe parents' charitable giving and

volunteering is a good way to teach children about helping others; and 94 percent believe parents play a key role in getting kids involved. However, in spite of those statistics, more than two-thirds of parents say their children are not involved in charitable activities. Parents are not doing what they *say* should be done.

There are many compelling reasons for teaching philanthropy. One is that philanthropy is a positive value that is important to the health of our communities and society. If the importance of giving and serving is not passed on to future generations by parents, schools, and a variety of community organizations, philanthropy may not survive. Indeed, several authors (Jeavons, 1994; Payton, 1995) believe the future of society may depend on our ability to make sure our children have the capability for empathy and the inclination toward generosity. They believe the teaching of philanthropy encourages its practice and should be a part of the public or private education of all Americans.

Philanthropy teaching today

In an ideal world, the value of philanthropy would be learned by all children at a very young age from observing and talking with parents and other adults who model philanthropic behavior. Each generation would teach the next, and there would be no need to consider whether and how to teach philanthropy to children. Unfortunately, ours is not an ideal world, and learning of this type appears to take place much less frequently than was the case even a few decades ago. Consequently, organizations with a commitment to the development of positive values in young people and the maintenance of the quality of our communities are attempting to fill the gap.

Over the past several years, a few national, regional, and local organizations have developed curricula to teach aspects of philanthropy to young people. These organizations include youth-serving organizations like the Girl Scouts, 4-H, community foundations, service and research organizations like INDEPENDENT SECTOR and

the Search Institute, and professional associations like the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Several organizations are working in concert with public and private schools. A few curricula are written for children as young as five years of age, but most tend to focus on children in middle school, ages ten to thirteen, and continue through high school.

Most of these programs were developed independently. Although it appears that some materials were shared, often the creators of the programs started from scratch. And although every effort is to be applauded, the fact remains that there is little consistency in what is being taught, how it is being presented, and who is doing the teaching.

It is curious that almost no research has been undertaken to review or evaluate what material is being presented and how it is being taught. However, a recent study (Bjorhovde, 2002) identifies key philanthropic concepts and pedagogical methods thought by educational researchers, psychologists, sociologists, and fundraising practitioners to be important for a comprehensive philanthropy curriculum. Although that study's search for philanthropy curricula found surprisingly few, eleven curricula were identified and examined to determine the frequency with which the philanthropic concepts are presented and the teaching methods are being employed. The following is an overview of the findings of that study.

Key philanthropic concepts

The findings of the study indicate that four types of concepts should be included in a philanthropy curriculum: (1) factual concepts, (2) motivational concepts, (3) procedural concepts, and (4) personal development concepts.

The *factual concepts* embrace a broad range of ideas about what philanthropy is, its history, the place of philanthropy in American society, its relationship to government and the marketplace, and the role philanthropy plays in the life of a community. These concepts are important for children to absorb because they not only

identify philanthropy as a critical societal force but place it in a context that is meaningful to them.

The *motivational concepts* include the reasons people have for being philanthropic, the notion that everyone can be a philanthropist through giving and serving, regardless of personal wealth, and the idea that individuals can and do make a difference. As a part of the learning process, it is critical that children understand why individuals of all ages participate in giving and serving activities, as well as the fact that they themselves can make a difference to another person or to the quality of their world.

Procedural concepts deal with how the process of philanthropy is carried out. They cover the structure of the nonprofit community, how organizations within that community operate, how an individual's philanthropic actions are facilitated by these organizations, and how the results of philanthropy, such as contributed money, goods, and services, are distributed.

Most philanthropy today, although certainly not all, takes place under the auspices of a national or community nonprofit organization. It is important that children begin to understand how they can make a difference by getting involved with organizations as volunteers and as donors.

The final group encompasses *personal development concepts*, which involve the development of values and skills, such as understanding one's own desire and ability to help others, whether those others are known or unknown; wise decision-making skills, particularly with regard to individual choices about causes to support and organizations with which to become involved; learning about the ethical and moral responsibilities of philanthropy, such as the rights of donors and the obligation of nonprofit organizations to honor a donor's intentions and use contributions and other resources responsibly; and identifying one's own values in order to determine which of the many societal needs and quality-of-life issues have personal meaning. An exploration of these topics is crucial because they help children understand themselves and their feelings, as well as give them tools to help them be better humans and better citizens.

Key pedagogical methods

The pedagogical or teaching methods recommended for values learning fall into two groups: (1) cognitive (thinking) and (2) experiential (doing).

Cognitive methods. The cognitive methods—those that emphasize intentional mental activity—include (1) reporting and discussion, (2) reflection and processing, (3) modeling, (4) writing, and (5) emotional exploration. Reporting and discussion is a traditional form of learning in which children hear or read a story, article, or lecture, report verbally on what they have read or heard, and then participate in a guided discussion of what is important. Reflection and processing involves activities that allow children to absorb the learning and connect it to their own experience. The third method is modeling; children learn about philanthropic behaviors by seeing and talking with adults or older children who actively demonstrate those behaviors. Another method involves children writing stories about historical figures or local figures in their community who are recognized for their philanthropy; or they might write biographies of people who are philanthropic or autobiographies that describe their giving and serving experiences.

The final cognitive method—one that may be the most controversial—is emotional exploration. This method focuses on discussions that help children understand how they feel about certain situations and needs that might result in philanthropic behavior.

Experiential methods. Experiential teaching methods help children feel comfortable with concepts they are learning; these methods give them actual practice with an intended behavior and a sense of successful performance. The methods fall into three types: (1) activities, (2) service projects, and (3) giving. Activities include many types of active learning processes, such as games or role-play exercises.

Service projects encompass a wide range of group undertakings designed by teachers, youth or community leaders, or the students themselves; the class or club engages in volunteer activity to benefit individuals, groups, or nonprofit or community organizations. Examples range from visiting the elderly, reading to children in day

care, and building trails in parks to doing yard cleaning in poor neighborhoods, collecting food for the hungry, and creating a fundraising event to support a charity that helps abused children. Such projects can have enormous impact because children experience what they can accomplish and how others can be helped by their efforts.

The final experiential learning type is giving. Children are encouraged to make a personal contribution from their own resources to support either the cause their group has selected or one that is important and meaningful to them. It should be noted that the topic of giving is often considered controversial by teachers and youth group leaders. The reasons for this are many and include a perceived taboo against talking about money, a sensitivity to the great variation in income levels of children's families, and the leaders' own inexperience with giving money away. But the fact remains that a significant aspect of philanthropy is financial. In order for children to fully understand philanthropy, the notion of looking at one's own personal resources and determining how much one can share in order to make a difference must be discussed and actual giving experienced.

A curricular report card

A study by Bjorhovde (2002) sought to determine the frequency with which the eleven curricula present the identified philanthropic concepts and use the recommended pedagogical methods. However, it is important to recognize that the number of philanthropy curricula in existence is limited, and many of the organizations whose material is included in the study did not purport to create a comprehensive curriculum to teach philanthropy. Several were written to teach a specific aspect of philanthropy, to address a specific population of young people, or to provide a guide to help organizations set up programs that provide certain kinds of experiences for participants.

That being said, the analysis shows that five of the eleven organizations have created programs that merit recognition. These include

- The Council of Michigan Foundations' program, Learning to Give: The K–12 Education in Philanthropy Project
- The Girl Scouts' Strength in Sharing Program
- The Community Partnerships with Youth's initiative
- Youth as Philanthropists: Developing Habits of Giving and Sharing
- The AFP New Jersey chapter's Youth in Philanthropy 2001.

Details about three of these programs are found in later chapters.

Another program—the Michigan Council of Foundations' Learning to Give: A Family Foundation Guidebook—is a guide for families with family foundations. As thorough as any program curriculum, it not only presents all of the key elements that are found in the others listed but, because it is written for parents, it incorporates modeling in a way that cannot be duplicated in the other curricula.

Each of these curricula is a thoughtful course of study with defined learning objectives and expected outcomes. Each includes the highest percentage, between 95 percent and 74 percent, of both the recommended philanthropic concepts and effective pedagogical methods. Each is written for a targeted audience and provides thorough and appropriate curricular materials. And, in four cases, each can serve as a valuable model for others seeking to build a philanthropic curriculum that is either school-based or youth-organization-based. Nevertheless, none covers every identified concept or uses every recommended teaching method.

Of the remaining six curricula in the study, five fell in the middle range, covering between 68 and 42 percent of the curricular elements; one was significantly lower, covering only 21 percent.

So, what can be learned from this information? Certainly, progress is being made. More organizations have developed or are in the process of developing curricula specifically to teach philanthropy than were doing so as few as six years ago. Many, whether by happenstance or design, are managing to teach some or many of the important philanthropic concepts. Most are using a significant number of the teaching methods found to be effective for values learning.

Finally, it is obvious that a number of the organizations taking responsibility for teaching philanthropy are recognizing the importance and value of collaboration. More and more, the leadership of youth groups, schools, community foundations, professional fundraising organizations, and community-based nonprofit organizations are working together to provide powerful learning experiences for children so they will know what philanthropy is and why it is important and, it is hoped, become philanthropic themselves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that much remains to be accomplished. The teaching of philanthropy to children outside the home is still in its infancy, and the development of formal curricula to accomplish the task is a recent phenomenon. But if effective teaching of philanthropy is the means to perpetuate it, then several critical needs must be addressed.

The first is the need to bring all of the organizations with an interest in philanthropy curricula to the table, perhaps under the umbrella of a national organization. It is important for these organizations to explore ways to collaborate in order to enhance quality and consistency, reduce duplication, coordinate efforts in curriculum development, and encourage wider acceptance and use of philanthropy curricula. In addition, such a group might undertake these important and needed tasks:

- Compiling a complete list of existing philanthropy curricula
- Determining an "approved" list of philanthropic concepts to be included in all philanthropy curricula
- Reviewing existing teaching materials and developing new materials for schools, youth-serving organizations, and parents
- Summarizing best practices from successful programs for use by other organizations teaching philanthropy
- Developing a method of program review to be made available to organizations

- Creating a program of public relations and advocacy to sell the importance of teaching philanthropy in every community

A second need is the development of and a delivery system for a consistent and thorough program to train teachers how to teach philanthropy. Equally important is the need for organizations to require volunteers, professional fundraisers, youth leaders, public school teachers, or religious leaders who will be teaching the material to go through training prior to working with children.

Finally, new grant and research support is essential. Studies are needed to find answers to the many questions that remain about teaching philanthropy and to encourage scholars in all associated fields to undertake research that specifically applies to philanthropy. Some of the important questions are these:

What measures effectiveness in a philanthropy curriculum?
What variables have an impact on effectiveness, and how can they be controlled or modified?
What are the expected outcomes from a philanthropic learning experience?
How can philanthropic behavior be measured?
What is the appropriate pre- and post-testing instrument for evaluation knowledge about philanthropy, attitudes toward philanthropy, and philanthropic behavior and skill?
How can the long-term impact of philanthropy learning be assessed?

Until methods are developed to determine whether a child has absorbed the value of philanthropy and to measure the resulting behaviors, both short and long term, efforts to teach philanthropy will continue to be well-intentioned shots in the dark.

Philanthropy is critical to the preservation of American society. It must be preserved and strengthened. To ensure that there will be future generations of philanthropists, philanthropy must be taught. It is our obligation to determine how to do it right.

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