

# Why children should be taught philanthropy

August 20 2013, by Jackie King

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"Philanthropy" is usually a word we associate with the world of adults and rich people. Increasingly though, children from a spread of socio-economic backgrounds are participating in and learning about what it means to be philanthropic, both at home and at school.

As well as helping those in need, the evidence shows getting children involved in philanthropy has positive effects for the children, their families and society more generally.

It might just be the key to helping your children be happier, smarter and more successful.

## Why should we teach philanthropy?

The younger the child is when the discussion begins about giving, the

more it becomes a matter of practice and [habit](#) that continues into [adulthood](#).

According to [developmental psychologist](#) Marilyn Price Mitchell, children who perform acts of kindness experience increased [wellbeing](#), [popularity](#) and acceptance among [peers](#). This, in turn, leads to better [classroom behaviour](#) and higher [academic achievement](#).

There is a place for both families and schools to teach philanthropic values and encourage related actions. A recent UK Study, [Growing Up Giving: Insights Into How Young People Feel About Charity](#), found that young people are interested in and positive about charities and have "great charitable expectations". Interestingly, the report finds that schools "lie at the heart of the bond between young people and charities" and is the primary means by which [charitable giving](#) is encouraged.

However, the report found that amongst 9-11 year olds, three times as many children felt that discussing philanthropy with their parents would encourage their increased philanthropic engagement.

## **Where to start**

How do we start [teaching children](#) about philanthropy?

There are a [plethora](#) of causes, activities and means by which children can become involved in philanthropic acts, regardless of financial means. Beyond individual acts of volunteering and fundraising, families are increasingly becoming involved with groups of like-minded families in "giving circles".

Earlier this year, the Australian Council for Educational Research's dialogue series on Leading, Learning in Education and Philanthropy cited [Kids in Philanthropy](#) (KIP), as one of a number of innovative

programs to encourage family based giving.

"Giving circles", like KIP, offer an opportunity for member families, who may not necessarily be able to afford large donations, to combine their funds with other members to create a single or series of impactful grants.

Giving circles necessarily promote discussion, as decisions about what cause to support, how much to give, what activities and workshops to organise, are made jointly by all members in consultation with their children.

What are children learning?

Through the experience of family based philanthropic organisations donor children are benefiting, just as the recipients are.

They learn about worlds beyond their own experience. They also learn confidence in public speaking, how to make a case, how to choose a [charity](#), research skills, fundraising and entrepreneurial skills, tolerance and empathy. They also learn how to organise through setting up cake stalls, garage markets, bike-a-thons and walk-a-thons.

Through this experience they can then define what philanthropy means to them and what change they would like to see in the world. They learn, just by small acts of giving, how to become a change maker, what it means to be a good person and citizen as well as learning from and teaching others how to collaborate and make a difference. They learn about the multiplier effect of small acts and the large impact that can have on their communities.

From an educational perspective, these skills reflect what children learn at school and fit squarely into the priorities of the newly released Draft

Years 3–10 [Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship](#).

The ACARA document states that the curriculum encourages the development of "personal and social capability" via the application of personal, interpersonal and social skills and behaviours; through working collaboratively and constructively in groups; developing their communication, decision-making, conflict resolution and leadership skills; and learning to appreciate the insights and perspectives of others.

There are many valuable models for encouraging children's involvement in philanthropic activities. Time will tell how these programs impact individual donor children and beneficiaries. But it is clear that beginning at a young age in the family context will have positive flow on effects for the world in which these children live and give.

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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