

Business vs. Public Good

Trustees: Bernard Rapoport

Title: Business vs. Public Good

Subject: Civic Education, Government, English/Language Arts

Topic: Civic Responsibility

Grade Level: 9-12

Time: 45 minutes

[View how this lesson plan fits state standards](#)

[View the video](#) or [read the transcript](#)

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access, external speakers, and a LCD projector OR access to a computer lab with Internet access and headphones for each student
- Updated Media Player recommended. [Download QuickTime](#). Problems playing? [Check our Media Help page](#).
- Lesson Plan ([Word](#), [PDF](#))

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

1. discuss causes and motivations of philanthropic/altruistic behavior;
2. compare and contrast motivations and actions;
3. justify the principle of 'giving back to the community'; and
4. practice persuasive writing.

PRE-VIEWING (10 minutes)

1. Present the following quote to the students, by writing it on the board, transparency or other means:

- "If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives." (Robert South, an English churchman from the 15-16th century, an advocate for charitable contributions)
2. Ask students to consider this statement and share their interpretation of its meaning. Elicit several answers.
3. Tell students they are going to watch a short documentary about a person that exemplifies the quote.

VIEWING & DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

1. As a class, watch the American Trustees video about Bernard Rapoport, who helped open a school in Texas that serves a diverse population of students. The video can be accessed online at www.americantrusteesproject.org. If you have difficulties accessing the videos, please visit our [Media Help page](#).
2. Have students consider how Rapoport's commitment to making a contribution embodies the Robert South quote from the pre-viewing exercise.

APPLICATION (20-25 minutes)

1. Ask students if they can give examples of other people giving back to their communities. Elicit several answers. Ask what motivates these other people to help their communities. Inform students that they are going to learn more about philanthropy.

NOTE: You may need to take time to discuss the term philanthropy.

2. Instruct students to go to <http://www.foundations.org/> or <http://www.charitynavigator.org/> and pick a foundation to explore, paying particular attention to:

- the mission and goals;
- the foundation's motivation; and
- areas of support.

NOTE: Since this lesson focuses on the individual effort of giving back to society, it is advisable to instruct students to search for foundations with a personal name attached, rather than a corporate entities, such as Microsoft Foundation or the Boeing Foundation.

3. In case students have difficulties navigating a foundation's website, guide them to the "About Us" section of their website. Good examples are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Susan and Michael Dell Foundation, Soros Foundation, or MacArthur Foundation.

4. As a class, consider the following questions:

- Are there any similarities between founders' motives to contribute to the public good?
- Are the causes they have chosen connected to personal experience? If so, in what ways?
- Why have these businessmen and women chosen to give back to their community in such significant ways?

5. As the discussion comes to a close, ask students about corporate giving and the reasons businesses, rather than individuals, become involved in philanthropic projects.

Homework

Have students conduct research on businesses that have made significant contributions to their communities through donations, creating foundations, or other public works. The students may use the same lists of foundations from the previous activity but focus on the corporate entities. Ask students to create short presentations about their particular business and how their work has contributed to the public good.

NOTE: Depending on skill level, students might need extra time for class presentations, which can be oral or written.

ASSESSMENT

Student may be assessed on:

1. presentation skills and content;
2. graded discussion; and
3. ability to connect insightful comments with specific quotes from video or exercises.