

Students Helping Students

Lesson Plans

Social Entrepreneurship Lesson #1: What is Social Entrepreneurship?

*“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day.
Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.”
- Confucius*

Overview

This lesson introduces students to a major new approach to making a difference. This new worldwide trend is called social entrepreneurship, the act of adapting business strategies for solving important social, educational, or environmental problems. Students will be introduced to other young social entrepreneurs and learn about what they are accomplishing. Their projects illustrate why, what, and how they do what they do. Resources include suggested websites, readings, and an interview with noted writer David Bornstein, author of *How to Change the World*.

Subject: Social Studies

Grades: 5-12

Time Needed: One to two 50-minute class periods

Materials: Computers connected to the Internet, copies of the [David Bornstein interview](#)

Learning Goals

- Students will learn about the concept, activities, and impact of social entrepreneurs worldwide.
- Students will gain new perspective on possible careers.
- Students will experience what it is to be a social entrepreneur.

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a revolution that is fundamentally changing the way many approach social and environmental problems. It's becoming a global force for change. "Social profit" replaces "financial gain" as social entrepreneurs solve major problems through traditional business processes. If business entrepreneurs are the catalysts and innovators behind economic progress, then social entrepreneurs are the catalysts and innovators behind social progress, replacing short-term charity sources to create sustained solutions worldwide.

A 2005 report by the Shell Foundation, *Enterprise Solutions to Poverty*, argues that pouring aid into developing countries is an ineffective strategy to combat poverty. It is a strategy that does very little to improve conditions over the long term. There could never be enough funding to make an appreciable dent on the scale of poverty that still exists. It further argues that the money that is available should be targeted toward initiatives to stimulate local economic development that relies on cultivating local entrepreneurs. Business know-how should be provided to assure long term success. It calls on corporations and their foundations to support these efforts as a strategy to generate entrepreneurial economies all over the world. (The report can be found here: <http://www.shellfoundation.org>)

In K-12 education, service learning has a longstanding tradition of engaging students in direct experience helping through service-oriented projects. Social entrepreneurship casts service learning in a new light, taking it one step further. Help students see the progression from helpful but short-term projects through to long-term, sustainable solutions.

For more on the trend, read the August 22, 2005, *Seattle Times* article on the increase in venture capital funding for social innovations:
http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/business/technology/2002447909_btview22.html

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

- Entrepreneur, enterprise
- Social entrepreneurship
- Charity
- Sustained
- Social profit
- Risks and rewards

Additional Resources and Learning Connections

- [Interview of David Bornstein](#)
- Definitions of social entrepreneurs
 - Ashoka Foundation Definition
www.ashoka.org/fellows/social_entrepreneur.cfm
 - About Social Entrepreneurship from the Skoll Foundation.
www.skollfoundation.org/aboutsocialentrepreneurship/index.asp

- Duke University's Fuqua Center of Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE)
www.fuqua.duke.edu/centers/case/about/sedefinition.htm
- Examples of social entrepreneurship projects
 - Grameen Bank - www.grameenfoundation.org/
 - *The New Heroes* – www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes
 - Grassroots.org - www.grass-roots.org/stories.shtml
 - Youth Venture - <http://youthventure.org>
- Organizations that support social entrepreneurship
 - Skoll Foundation - www.skollfoundation.org/
 - Schwab Foundation - <http://schwabfound.org/whatis.htm>
- Instructional materials for teachers about service learning
 - National Service Learning Clearinghouse
http://servicelearning.org/resources/lesson_plans/index.php
 - National Service Learning Partnerships
www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=TR_index

Instructional Procedures

*"Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day.
Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."
- Confucius*

1. Introduce the idea of social entrepreneurship through the use of this proverb. Either write it on the board and engage the entire class in a class discussion, or divide the class into groups and have each group review and explain their understanding of this proverb.
2. Discuss. Write students' ideas and suggested interpretations on the board.
3. Make the connection to *social entrepreneurship*. This ancient proverb aptly describes the goals of a true social entrepreneur. There are many kinds of social entrepreneurs, and there may be different definitions that make sense to your students. However, help them focus on the main concept of enabling those in need to solve their own problems by creating opportunities for them to develop and manage solutions to local challenges.
4. Next, ask the class to create a solid definition for "social entrepreneurship." For example:

Social entrepreneurship is an emerging global trend moving in to replace or amend pure charity (giving a man a fish) by helping that man in need gather his own means of feeding himself and his family, without relying on others' charity. Essentially, the goal of a social entrepreneur is to help people help themselves, (teaching that person to fish).

They may use the Internet, dictionary, or other information source. One audio resource is an interview of David Green, who articulates his definition of social entrepreneurship in a series of audio clips. (Click on the audio portions of the Web site found on the right: www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/meet.) A print resource is the Q&A with David Bornstein highlighted above in Resources. Additional online resources are included above; many include definitions. Have students write their own version.

5. Next, tell the students that they are going to pretend to be a formal funding organization (as a simulation). This organization only funds projects that meet specific funding criteria, which they now need to generate. Ask the students to develop funding criteria they would use when choosing projects to support. This might include specific kinds of projects (such as those focused on education or hunger) or how long the project's impact will be sustained, who are the partners, etc. Write the criteria on chart-pak or on the board to guide planning. The criteria will help the "organization" evaluate proposed projects for impact and funding.

In the following activities the class will divide into groups; explore examples of social entrepreneurial projects in groups; prepare, present, and listen to group presentations about potential projects; then select one to fund, based on the posted criteria. This will generate discussion and force students to defend their choices, asking them to articulate their understanding of social entrepreneurship, and build on their new awareness of projects with sustainable impact.

6. First, as a class review one or two of the case studies provided below (many others can be found in the Resources section):
 - *Food from the 'Hood* - www.grass-roots.org/usa/foodhood.shtml
 - Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy (Dr. V.) and David Green
www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/meet/green.html

Discuss as a class how closely these two projects match the class criteria.

7. After the class discussion, group the students and ask each group to review more sample projects of social entrepreneurs by exploring additional examples online (using the websites listed under Additional Resources above).
8. While groups are reviewing and discussing examples, ask them to think about the *risks and rewards* involved in starting a social entrepreneurship project. Many ventures do not succeed immediately. Ask students to consider how successful social entrepreneurs learn from failure and overcome setbacks.
9. After giving students time to explore and review, ask each group to select *one* project they think is especially promising and meets their criteria. Each group should then prepare a presentation for the class, present its choice, and defend it as the best choice for funding.

10. After presentations, ask the entire class to vote on their choice. Encourage discussion and debate. Review how closely the final choice meets the class criteria. Students should be prompted to reflect on how well the criteria helped guide their decision, helping to set boundaries around choices and discussion. Social entrepreneurs need to learn to be focused on what they truly want to accomplish; it's helpful to point out the value of developing clear criteria for success as a necessary process.

Suggested Extensions

- A natural extension of this lesson is for students to generate an idea as a class, or in small groups, and follow the model of other social entrepreneurs by developing a solution to a local challenge or one they choose to support in the world. The additional lessons provided on the Room to Read Students Helping Students website outline other ideas and resources for creating an entrepreneurial project, complete with case studies and examples.
- Teachers could choose to use this extension opportunity to integrate other content areas such as math and language arts. Students might write letters to publicize an issue or to ask for support. Math activities could include planning and tracking the financial means and results of creating a product to sell, providing real-world experiences in the entrepreneurial process.
- As a writing extension, have students use this comment from author David Bornstein as a prompt:
 - For many social entrepreneurs, “... *failure is one of the many steps en route to eventually succeeding. That’s a big thing—perhaps the single biggest thing. For every idea these people have that works, they’ve got 19 others that didn’t.*”
- Have students write about a personal experience when they learned from failure. Or, with older students, have them research and write about an inventor or social entrepreneur who had to overcome challenges and setbacks to achieve success.

These teacher resources were developed by the Learning Innovation and Technology Consortium (LITC). LITC develops educational programs and materials in support of problem solving, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.