

With the Best of Intentions: Lessons Learned in K-12 Education Philanthropy

American Enterprise Institute

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Conference papers available at
www.aei.org/event959.

Harvard Education Press will publish the collected studies in October 2005 as *The Best of Intentions*.

Why This Conference?

- Historically, education philanthropy has been a localized, private affair.
- Of course, there have always been exceptions:
 - Carnegie Foundation – TIAA/CREF
 - Ford Foundation – equitable school spending
- In recent years, new donors, nationalized policy, and frustration have fostered a more public role.

Why Now?

- This public role is appropriate.
- But it implies a reciprocal obligation - that donors embrace transparency and accept scrutiny of aims, activities, and methods.
- This can help citizens, policymakers, and practitioners learn from philanthropic efforts.
- It also promises useful lessons for donors.

Central Role in Reform...

- Shaping the national agenda in recent years:
 - **Annenberg Challenge:** “A Booster Shot for Chicago’s Public Schools,” *Chicago Tribune*, 1/31/1995.
 - **Broad Foundation:** “Foundation Awards Aim to Boost Stature of Urban School Districts,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3/16/2002.
 - **Carnegie Corporation:** “Redesigning the American Teacher,” *New York Times*, 4/12/1987.
 - **Children’s Scholarship Fund:** “Taking a Corporate Approach to Remaking Education,” *New York Times*, 1/12/2000.

...as at NGA Summit...

March 2005: Bill Gates Addresses National Governors Association in Washington, DC.

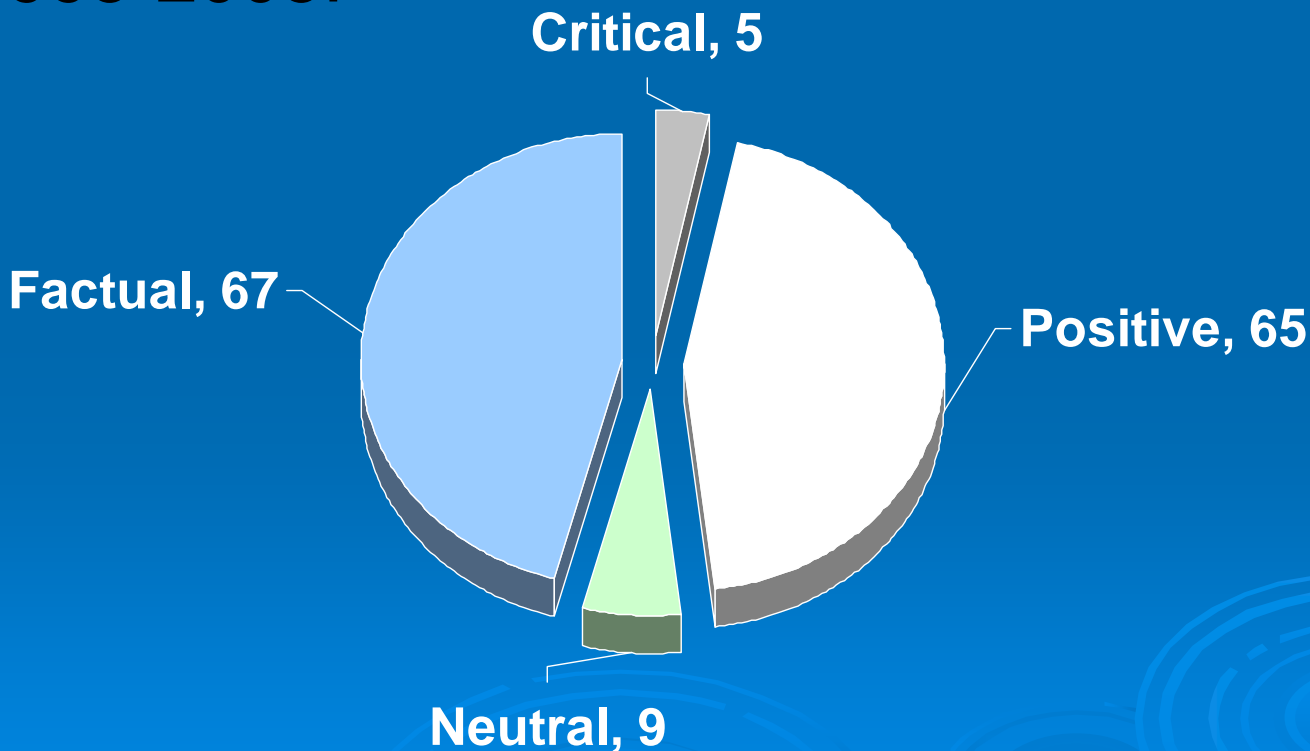
- “Mr. Gates Goes to Washington”
New York Times, 3/1/05, editorial page
- “Summit Underscores Gates Foundation’s Emergence as a Player”
Education Week, 3/9/05, page 1

...and Strong Claims...

- For instance, one philanthropic initiative is “probably the most significant education reform ever undertaken in the state of Texas.”
 - Texas Education Commissioner in 2003 (AP)
- For those who know Texas schooling, that’s a bold statement.

...Yet Little Meaningful Scrutiny

- Tone of 146 major newspaper stories on the education giving by five leading foundations, 1995-2005:



Some Typical Accolades

- **“Grant Helps Principals Get Plugged In”**
Washington Post, 4/24/03
- **“Devotion Pays Off for 2 Teachers; Foundation Awards \$25,000 Prizes”**
Chicago Tribune, 10/13/04
- **“Financier Uses Scholarships to Spur Action”**
New York Times, 5/20/00

If the *Press* Is That Nice—

- It's probably no surprise that reformers, practitioners, and scholars shy away from skepticism.

Three Reasons for Hesitancy

- Donors are, almost by definition, worthy of praise.
- Academics, activists, and practitioners live in a world where support is the ticket to big projects.
- Even the most “insulated” scholars work with educators, policymakers, and colleagues who desire support. Publicly questioning a major donor may leave potential collaborators skittish.

Now, There Is Self-Appraisal...

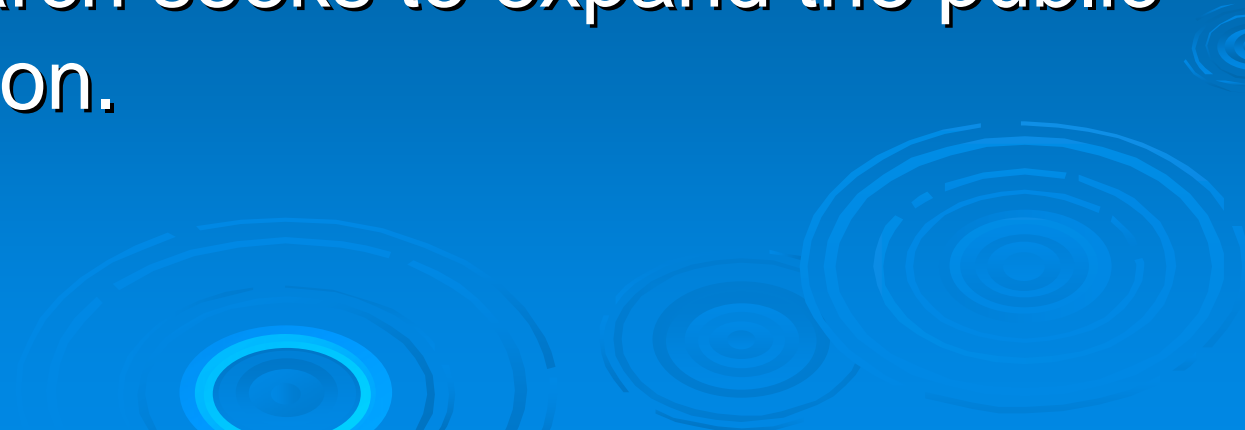
- Foundations do engage in hired evaluations, which are sensible and constructive.



...But...

- Discussions take place in private and primarily include allies and grantees.
- Participants may be hesitant to offend benefactors or allies.
- Less likely than public exchanges to fully explore alternative strategies, challenge assumptions, or question outcomes.

...We Need Public Analysis

- Self-assessment is sufficient for private efforts, but today's givers often seek to influence public policy and spending.
 - Too often, those best suited to raise hard questions hesitate to publicly do so.
 - This research seeks to expand the public conversation.
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The Landscape

- Much has changed as major “new” givers have emerged. What has this meant in practice? (Colvin)
- How are significant efforts to support urban reform playing out? (McAdams)
- How do foundation staff approach the content of school reform? (Loveless)

Approaches to Reform

- How significant is total philanthropic giving to K-12? Where does this money go? (Greene)
- What have we learned from targeted giving on teacher quality, school choice, and research and policy?
(Hannaway, Hassel, Rotherham)

Lessons Learned So Far

- What have we learned from international efforts? (Heyneman)
- What lessons can we take from the history of education giving? (Lenkowsky)
- What lessons can a “new” donor teach? (Katzir)
- What have we learned about giving more strategically and effectively? (Frumkin)

What Next?

➤ We'll close by hearing three leading philanthropic thinkers discuss what this means for:

- Philanthropists
- Policymakers
- Practitioners, reformers, and grantees
- Researchers

How to Access the Studies

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