

## **Buckets into another sea**

Jay P. Greene

This paper builds on the author's 2005 chapter in "With the Best of Intentions: How Philanthropy Is Reshaping K–12 Education." In 2005, Greene reported that philanthropic giving was far too small relative to public school funding to produce system-wide change. Too often, he concluded, philanthropies were trying to change school systems through the sheer force of their dollars, without appreciating that broad change requires altering policy so that the larger pool of public funds are spent differently. This time, Greene analyzed nearly 1,600 grants from the largest foundations focused on school reform and found that foundations have in fact modified their approach and are now focusing more on changing public policy. Unfortunately, he argues, their efforts at changing policy are often undermined by a failure to understand that successful and enduring policy change requires the cultivation of constituencies that can advocate for a policy independent of foundation support. Greene suggests that foundations may have money for policy advocacy, but they do not have natural constituents, only mercenaries. Advocating for policy change without self-sustaining constituents to support and protect those policies, he suggests, is as ineffectual as trying to change school systems with the sheer force of private dollars—and will amount to little more than pouring buckets into another sea.

## **"Singing from the same hymnbook": Education policy advocacy at Gates and Broad**

Sarah Reckhow and Megan Tompkins-Stange

Two of the most prominent new philanthropic foundations, the Bill and Melinda Gates and Broad Foundations, have doubled down on their efforts to directly shape federal education policy and politics. This paper will illuminate the advocacy funding strategies that contributed to the alignment of the two foundations' policy priorities (including the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, and charter schools) with the federal policy agenda. An array of foundation-funded interest groups has helped promote these priorities; as one Gates official explained in an interview, "Anybody who cares to look would find very quickly that all of these organizations [are] suddenly singing from the same hymnbook." Reckhow and Tompkins-Stange trace grants using foundation tax returns and examine policy advocacy by analyzing the congressional testimony of Gates and Broad grantees. Drawing on analysis of giving and dozens of in-depth interviews with current and former foundation officials, they explore how these foundations developed their advocacy strategies, how their strategies have unfolded, and what these activities mean for policy and practice.

## **How old and new education foundation granting differ**

Jeffrey W. Snyder

Research and popular coverage suggest that "new" K–12 education donors, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates and Walton Family Foundations, typically prioritize return on investment, invest in an overlapping set of grantees, and focus on venture philanthropy and policy advocacy for issues like teacher evaluation, charter schooling, and the Common Core State Standards. However, long before these groups emerged, "traditional" education donors, such as the Ford and Carnegie Foundations, dominated K–12 grantmaking. How have these groups responded to changes in the sector? Have they altered their approaches? Does their giving or activity look any more like that of their newer brethren? Using 2000, 2005, and 2010 grant data, Snyder explores whether and how traditional foundations have altered their

giving. Two primary findings emerge. First, old and new foundations maintain distinct priorities. Second, old philanthropies do not converge grants into organizations sharing multiple funders to the same degree as new foundations. These, among other findings, show that old foundations continued to operate differently than new foundations, even as groups such as Gates and Walton became increasingly prominent K–12 philanthropies.

### **Inside foundations: Eight lessons from funders and grantees on education giving**

Alexander Russo

Starting sometime in the mid-2000s, education grantmakers began looking beyond programs and direct services and started funding a new set of activities, including policy development and advocacy. Some also began to give differently, narrowing their pre-established priorities to a select few ideas or approaches and demanding that grant recipients set and meet more concrete metrics as a condition of receiving funds than they had in the past. But did these new activities and grantmaking strategies work any better than what had come before? Russo attempts to answer this question through interviews with veteran grantmakers and nonprofit leaders. What have foundation veterans learned about what works over the last decade, what successes and failures have they experienced with these different approaches, and how have they responded? This paper provides a blunt, candid look at what grantmakers and grantees think about the evolutions that have taken place over the past decade and what, if any, lessons they provide going forward.

### **The Gates Foundation MET Project: Paying attention to pedagogy while “privileging” test scores**

Dana Goldstein

In 2013, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released findings from the largest-ever randomized controlled trial of American teaching practices, called Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project. How is this research received by scholars, policymakers, and practitioners when the sponsors of that research — and political allies, including the president of the United States — have already embraced the reforms being studied? And is anyone paying attention when the conclusions appear to contradict, or at least complicate, some of the core assumptions of that reform agenda? Relying on interviews, past scholarship, and an examination of foundations’ financial data, this paper traces the history of the MET Project, which exists within a century-long tradition of foundation-funded research closely tied to advocacy and policy change. MET is unique, however, in that it was released during a time of profound and quick-moving policy change on the very reforms being studied.

### **The backlash against “reform” philanthropy**

Michael Q. McShane and Jenn Hatfield

Although education philanthropy has occasionally been met with skepticism in the past, today’s philanthropic ventures have been met with unprecedented hostility in some quarters. From the Walton Family Foundation’s forays into school choice to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s support of the Common Core to the Arnold Foundation’s push to restructure pensions, education philanthropy has become a lightning rod for criticism. This paper attempts to quantify the backlash by analyzing press coverage over time of four foundations involved in education reform (Gates, Broad, Walton, and Arnold). When did the criticism become noticeable? How widespread is it? Just how deep and how

broad is the backlash? Are the critics singing a single tune or is the backlash comprised of strange bedfellows? The second half of the paper features interviews with prominent philanthropy critics from across the political spectrum. Why do they oppose these efforts? Is it because of who is doing it, what they are doing, or how they are doing it?

### **A thoughtful critique of contemporary edu-giving**

Larry Cuban

This paper analyzes the prevailing criticisms of the current generation of educational donors (the Bill and Melinda Gates, Broad, and Walton Foundations), such as desire to privatize schools, reduce public participation, and avoid public accountability for errors in making grants. Cuban briefly discusses these criticisms and then moves to the question of why donors have continued to make grants to school organizations when they have largely ignored, neglected, and overlooked their mediocre record in implementing grants aimed at altering what teachers and students do daily.

### **Philanthropy goes to college**

Andrew P. Kelly and Kevin J. James

While elementary and secondary education has been the subject of a well-financed and controversial reform movement over the past 15 years, American higher education has traditionally been viewed as the best in the world and has flown below reformers' radar. Foundations have also viewed colleges differently than the troubled public schools. Instead of making grants to reform the way colleges operate, funders have traditionally subsidized colleges to do more of what they already do or have: research, physical space on campus, and scholarships to increase access. As Kelly and James argue in this paper, however, this world has changed significantly over the past six years with the emergence of the Bill and Melinda Gates and Lumina Foundations and their brand of strategic philanthropy. These foundations have focused their resources on promoting a completion agenda by funding groups outside of academia and investing in advocacy and coalition-building activities that make the case for higher education reform. Using grantmaking data from 2012, the authors show how Gates' and Lumina's portfolios look very different from other, more traditional higher education foundations and discuss the implications of this shift for higher education.