

# Learning to Give

*Year-End Evaluation Report 2003-04*

*Overview and Recommendations*

Jean Baker  
Robert L. Church  
Robert E. Floden  
Leah R. Kirell  
Brian D. Silver  
Mark I. Wilson  
Edward W. Wolfe  
Diane L. Zimmerman

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Advancing Knowledge.  
Transforming Lives.



# Learning to Give

## *Year-End Evaluation Report 2003-04*

### *Overview and Recommendations*

Jean Baker

Associate Professor, Counseling, Educational Psychology, &  
Special Education

Robert L. Church

Vice Provost Emeritus, University Outreach & Engagement

Robert E. Floden

Professor, Teacher Education; Director, Institute for  
Research on Teaching and Learning

Leah R. Kirell

Research Assistant, Teacher Education

Brian D. Silver

Professor, Political Science; Institute for Public Policy &  
Social Research

Mark I. Wilson

Associate Professor, Geography; Institute for Public Policy  
& Social Research

Edward W. Wolfe

Assistant Professor, Counseling, Educational Psychology,  
and Special Education

Diane L. Zimmerman

Director, Advancement: Communication and Information  
Strategies, University Outreach & Engagement

---

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY



University Outreach  
& Engagement  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing

September 2004

**Copies of this report are available from**

University Outreach & Engagement  
Michigan State University  
Kellogg Center, Garden Level  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
Voice: (517) 353-8977  
Fax: (517) 432-9541  
E-mail: [outreach@msu.edu](mailto:outreach@msu.edu)  
Web: <http://outreach.msu.edu>

© 2004 Michigan State University.  
All rights reserved.

The views expressed are solely those of the authors.

For more information about this report, contact Diane L. Zimmerman, Ph.D., at the above address or phone number, or e-mail: [zimmerdl@msu.edu](mailto:zimmerdl@msu.edu)

**Senior Editor**

Diane L. Zimmerman

**Production Editor**

Linda Chapel Jackson

**Funding**

This report was supported in part by a contract with the Council of Michigan Foundations and Michigan State University.

Michigan State University is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institution.

# Overview and Recommendations

*Robert L. Church*

As the MSU evaluation team completes its seventh year of formal evaluation of the Learning to Give (LTG) Project, we will use the opportunity of this year-end report to integrate the various components of the evaluation, completed over these past seven years and planned for the next two years, into an overall assessment strategy of the Project's successes in heightening K-12 student knowledge of and commitment to philanthropy and civic engagement among young people. We will explore the most productive way to combine the results gathered in the early years of the Project, when the evaluation goal was to provide formative information, and the most recent years, when the focus has incrementally moved toward outcome evaluation.

This plan for 2003-04's year-end report is appropriate for two reasons. First, as planned, relatively few evaluation tasks were completed this year. Most of the team's energy focused on preparing and testing instruments for measuring student learning and classroom climate. Second, the LTG Project team is considering a change in the evaluation schedule of activities for 2004-05 and 2005-06 so that it has in hand a major evaluation report of the Project's accomplishments by Fall 2005 in order to help secure long-term support for sustaining and expanding Learning to Give as a national curriculum initiative.

The evaluation plan for LTG has sought to determine the Project's accomplishments in several areas.

## *Student learning, attitudes, and behavior*

- The degree to which students at various grade levels acquire knowledge of the concepts contained in the LTG lesson plans and an ability to apply that knowledge appropriately.
- The degree to which exposure to the LTG lessons encourages students to value and participate in contributing to the communities in which they live.

## *Teacher valuation of the LTG materials*

- The degree to which teachers choosing to use the LTG lessons find them relevant, age appropriate, and inclusive of sufficient enrichment materials to stimulate and challenge the students.
- The degree to which teachers value the lessons and believe they are positively affecting student learning, attitudes, and behavior.
- The degree to which teachers believe the lessons and the overall LTG Project fulfill a need in their classrooms and schools.

- The degree to which teachers persist in using LTG materials and lessons.

#### *School climate*

- The degree to which the use of the LTG lessons in a school building stimulates responsibility and cooperation, that is, the “climate,” of the school.
- The degree to which school leaders—principals, curriculum specialists, etc.—believe that using the LTG lessons in their schools encourages a more cooperative, responsible, and giving school climate.

This report very briefly reviews the work that has been done in each of these areas, the evidence of accomplishment accumulated to this point, and the scheduled evaluation tasks remaining, and gives a preview of the likely conclusions that the evaluation team will be able to draw at the end of the process.

## ***Student Learning***

The evaluation team has sought to assess student achievement in learning the concepts embedded in the LTG lessons in two ways.

First, Professor Robert Floden and his team read work that students at the twelve “research” schools generated during their LTG lessons and rated them according to their demonstration of each student’s ability to understand the various aspects of philanthropy and identify their manifestation in the work of philanthropists and leaders they studied in class as well as to describe how the concepts apply to new scenarios. The evidence indicates that more than three-quarters of the students (73% in two prior years; 80% in 2003-04) have grasped the concepts and can “apply them appropriately within the classroom context.” Fewer than half of those students who grasped the concepts displayed the ability to “apply them appropriately beyond the classroom context,” that is, the ability to understand how those concepts apply beyond the materials given in the lessons. Over the three years of reading student work, the team has recorded a steady rise in the complexity of the concepts that the students employ in their written work and growing sophistication in the ways that they employ them. Because not all classrooms in a school used the LTG materials and because of student transfers, it has not been possible to determine how many students whose work was analyzed this year had participated in LTG lessons in prior years. Nonetheless, the fact that the students’ work evidences increased understanding of more complex concepts than had been true of work analyzed in earlier years suggests both persistence and accumulation of learning as students experience the LTG curriculum repeatedly. The detailed report of the 2003-04 examination of student work is contained in Appendix A.

Second, Professor Edward Wolfe of the MSU evaluation team has developed a series of normed and standardized tests designed to measure student mastery of the concepts that the LTG lessons seek to teach (Appendix B). Twelve different field test forms (5 elementary, 4 middle school, and 3 high school) were administered in spring 2004. A few schools were able to administer two forms, one as a pre-test and one as a post-test. Each form contained approximately 20 multiple choice and open-ended items. Results of the field testing will guide the final choice of 35 high quality items for each school level, from which will be constructed initial operational test forms to be administered as pre- and post-tests in 2004-05.

**Table 1. Preliminary Pre-Test/Post-Test Comparison**

	<i>Elementary Students</i>	<i>Middle School Students</i>	<i>High School Students</i>
Students tested	176	139	389
Average pre-test score	13.47	9.45	6.89
Average post-test score	14.74	9.42	7.73
Average raw score gain	1.25	-0.03	0.84
Percentage change	5%	0%	3%

Although the field test process was designed to test the validity and reliability of the items in the test banks, the team was able to compare the results from those schools that were able to conduct pre- and post-testing (Table 1). At each grade level, students (176 at the elementary level, 139 at the middle school level, and 389 at the high school level) took a pre-test and a post-test and were exposed to an undocumented number of lessons based on the Learning to Give program between these test administrations. At the elementary and high school levels, students exhibited modest gains in raw scores and percentage of correct answers—an increase of 1.25 raw score points or 5 percentage points at the elementary level and an increase of 0.84 raw score points or 3 percentage points at the high school level. There was no change at the middle school level. The increases at the elementary and high school levels were statistically significant. It should be noted that the forms administered as the pre-test and post-test were still being piloted; the final, fully-validated test forms will likely differ from them to some degree. Also, it is not clear how many of the students taking the pre- and post-test battery had had prior experience with LTG lessons; this round may not, therefore, have been testing a true before and after (LTG lessons) situation.

## *Student Attitudes and Behavior*

### **Student Survey**

In 2002 and 2003 Professor Floden and his team developed and administered a survey that sought to elicit information about student philanthropic activity and attitudes. This student survey will be administered again during fall 2005 to a wider spectrum of schools. The exact number is pending consideration of whether the CHESP, Grand Valley, and Indiana cohorts are to be included. The survey included questions based on those found in two national surveys—the 1996 and 1999 telephone National Household Education Survey (NHES) and Independent Sector’s “Measuring Volunteering Toolkit” published in 2000—to provide a means of comparing LTG student responses to a representative sample of students across the nation. It also included some questions targeted at unique LTG goals such as students’ future plans for philanthropic activity. In order to facilitate further comparisons between LTG students and a large national sample, the survey will be augmented for the 2005 administration with items from the 2002 survey conducted by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) regarding student participation in civic and democratic activities.

Responses to the first two administrations of the survey revealed that two-thirds of respondents reported giving money or objects to a charity within the past month; only about 5% indicated that they had never given. Furthermore, about 90% of the students

indicated that they would like to volunteer or donate in the future. These survey questions were among those unique to this survey and thus we have no national comparison; however, the current and future commitment to philanthropic activity is quite high among LTG students.

Survey responses also indicated that those who had experienced LTG lessons during the year of the survey were almost twice as likely to report participating in community service activities that year as were those in the national sample. Those who participated did so at a somewhat less intense pace (in terms of hours per week and/or number of weeks of participation) than those in the national sample who participated in community service, as would be expected given the much higher participation rate among LTG students. The evaluation team notes that the very high rate of participation in community service among LTG students relative to the national sample probably reflects, in large part, the fact that LTG students usually participate in a service-learning project each year. It is also probable that the lower intensity rates (that is, fewer hours or weeks of participation among LTG students responding to the survey) stem from the fact that far more LTG middle school students responded to the survey than did older high school students, who would be more likely to have taken part in longer and more complex community projects. The evaluation team has not been able to measure whether students who had experienced the LTG lessons for more than one year responded in the 2002-03 survey differently from those who were new to the LTG experience. The team will analyze the data from the 2005-06 survey with an eye to distinguishing responses from those with multi-year experience with LTG lessons; however, the data as collected may not sustain such an analysis.

## **Classroom Observation**

This year the evaluation included a new component—observation of the LTG lessons as they were used in classrooms. The observations had two goals: first, to ascertain some of the effects of participation in the lessons on students—particularly through observing their behaviors during the lessons; and second, to document effective teaching methods and authentic learning during the lessons, particularly focused on instances of teachers extending lessons to reinforce and enhance student learning. Professor Jean Baker and her team reviewed LTG objectives, selected observational methodologies that seemed most likely to elicit evidence pertaining to those objectives, and conducted a series of pilot tests. (The series was truncated because of scheduling difficulties.) Those tests established that the diversity of LTG lessons and teacher approaches to them required the use of an informal, qualitative, narrative methodology rather than a formal one based principally on counting occurrences of predetermined student and teacher behaviors. Therefore, Professor Baker's team intends to proceed during the fall of 2004 with a program of classroom observation that will produce narrative evidence of the degree to which students become engaged in the lesson's learning activities, their spontaneous observations about philanthropy and civic responsibility, and the different instructional strategies adopted by teachers and their effects on student participation. The team expects that these observations will produce a good sense of the classroom context and student reaction to the LTG lessons. A fuller report of this aspect of the 2003-04 evaluation is found in Appendix C.

## *Teacher Valuation of the LTG Materials*

There are two initiatives that the evaluation team is pursuing in order to document teacher reaction to the Project's materials. Neither was administered during 2003-04.

### **Past Teachers**

The first initiative is an online survey, developed by Professor Mark Wilson, of all teachers who have written and/or used LTG materials since the inception of the Project, except those currently using the lessons in schools that have "adopted" the curriculum who will be included in the written survey (described below). It was originally hoped that this survey would be completed in the spring of 2004 and administered a second time in the spring of 2006. It is now scheduled for administration early in the fall of 2004. This survey is designed to assess the LTG Project's long-term use by teachers by asking those who have previously participated in the Project's development or training (but who no longer have direct contact with the Project) questions about: (1) whether and how they are using LTG lessons and materials in their classrooms, (2) whether they are continuing to teach about philanthropy and civic engagement but using different materials and/or strategies, and (3) how they assess the impact of their work with LTG and its materials on themselves and their students. The survey will tell us more about the persistence of LTG initiatives among teachers for whom the Project has ended its training and incentive support. See Appendix D for a draft copy of the survey that will be used.

### **Current Teachers**

The second aspect of the team's work in depicting teachers' attitudes toward the LTG Project and its materials involves the administration of a written survey, comprising multiple choice and open-ended questions, to teachers who are currently using the LTG lessons in schools that have committed to using LTG lessons in at least one classroom at each grade level. The survey, designed by Professor Brian Silver and administered four times (to somewhat different groups of teachers each time) during the Project's first six years, has formed a key component of the formative evaluation process. It has focused primarily on teacher perceptions of the quality of LTG materials and the training that accompanied their introduction. The pattern of responses over those four administrations has been almost uniformly positive, with each successive group indicating that they found the Project's goals clearer, its expectations of teachers more explicit, and its support and training of teachers more adequate. The survey has found a consistently high valuation of the LTG lessons' age appropriateness and assessment strategies. In response to a question added to the survey for the 2002 and 2003 administrations, all of the teachers indicated that they felt that the LTG lessons they used enhanced and enriched their students' "understanding" of philanthropy—two-thirds said "a great deal," and one-third said "some." The evaluation team intends to continue probing teachers' valuations of the LTG Project through a modified version of this survey. The schedule calls for the team to survey teachers in the three new cohorts of schools (CHESP, Grand Valley, and Indiana) during the spring of 2005, with a focus on determining whether, as the Project devolves responsibility for introducing teachers to LTG onto others, those teachers agree with previous respondents that the Project's goals and expectations are clear, its supportive materials are useful, and its lessons are successful in increasing student understanding. Finally in the spring of 2006 the team will survey all teachers in the five

cohorts of schools that have agreed to use those materials in at least one classroom at each grade level.

## *School Climate*

The evaluation team began to work on gathering information about “school climate” in some of the schools that use the LTG curriculum in some or all of their classrooms. The team sought to develop measures that would provide a basis for comparing climate in LTG schools with that in other schools. Professor Jean Baker and her team constructed two student surveys, one for high school students and one for elementary children, that combine items from, among others, the National Education Longitudinal Survey, the Vessels’ Schools Climate Scale for Children,<sup>1</sup> and the Opinion Survey for Students. The team also developed a survey for school teachers and administrators based on the Vessels’ School Climate Questionnaire. The team selected those items that were most relevant to assessing LTG objectives—safety, respect, and belonging to a community at school; commitment to the common good and helping others; and tolerance and giving. The team also analyzed several Michigan surveys that speak to school climate, but found that their items’ emphasis on character education did not provide the necessary focus on the LTG objectives and none had been applied statewide. Because all items selected for the surveys have been used in previous research, the responses to the surveys to be administered next year in the LTG schools can be compared to a large pool of responses from other schools. It must be pointed out that although different patterns of response in the LTG schools will indicate differences between those schools and those in the national samples, variables other than the LTG curriculum may have affected those differences.

The surveys will be tested for psychometric adequacy in early fall 2004 and administered in eight schools during late fall 2004. Professor Baker’s report and copies of the three surveys are available in Appendix C.

## *Recommendations*

1. In light of the Project team’s desire to have as much data as possible analyzed and reported by early fall 2005, we recommend three alterations in schedule: (a) that the online survey of teachers be administered only once—in fall 2004—foregoing the spring 2006 administration; (b) that the two administrations of the written teacher survey be combined into a single administration during the spring of 2005 directed at all teachers in Michigan and Indiana who are using the LTG materials in schools that have agreed to include LTG lessons in at least one classroom at each grade level; and (c) that the school administrator debriefing focus groups be scheduled during the fall semester of 2005 rather than in spring of 2006.
2. The written survey of teachers has focused primarily on issues involving the introduction of LTG materials to schools and teachers; the adequacy of the support teachers using the material receive from the Project personnel, Web site, and distributed materials and from their colleagues and supervisors; and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Vessels, G. G. (1998). *Character and community development: A school planning and teacher training handbook*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

quality of the lessons themselves. In the next administration the survey should be modified to include more probing of teachers' evaluation of how their use of the LTG lessons has affected student learning, behavior, and attitudes.

3. The evaluation team is concerned that the evaluation plan has not paid sufficient attention to assessing the Project's strategies for generalizing the LTG curriculum materials to a national audience of K-12 teachers and their students. The Project has invested a great deal of time and care in establishing its lessons in perhaps a hundred schools in Michigan. Responses to the teacher surveys indicate that the Project has become extremely proficient in introducing the materials in these chosen schools and supporting the teachers in their use of them. All the indicators are that the teachers who use them like the materials and feel they have a beneficial effect on the students. Next year's persistence study will tell us more about the materials' staying power among teachers who no longer receive support from LTG.

It is clear that a far less labor intensive method of expanding the reach of the LTG materials must be put in place. The Project has used various forms of publicity, developed a Web site containing lessons and supporting materials, held summer workshops for teachers, and started to involve local universities to recruit and support schools in their area to use the LTG lessons. But at the end of the seventh year of the Project, no measures yet exist as to the effectiveness of any of these methods, singly or in combination. Getting the Project's lessons widely adopted in schools already burdened with numerous requirements is an immensely difficult problem, but its difficulty is the very reason that more attention must be focused on the issue of efficient and effective dissemination. The evaluation team recommends that the Project consider what data it will need, if any, to answer potential funders' questions about how the Project intends to disseminate its lessons and materials widely across the country.