

Unique & United

Understanding Philanthropy & Nonprofits

The Students Rebuild: Unique & United project invites young people to explore their identities, celebrate their differences, and use creative expression as a force for empathy, unity, and bold ideas capable of transforming communities.

Through this project, students will:

- Reflect on what makes them unique.
- Recognize shared humanity between individuals, cultures, and communities.
- Use creativity to spark dialogue, challenge assumptions, foster connection, and ignite bold ideas that can change the world.

Purpose

This guide provides educators with key ideas for introducing students to philanthropy, the many ways people contribute to their communities, and the role nonprofit organizations play in the world. It is designed as a two-part mini-unit that can stand alone or extend into deeper project-based learning through exploration of Students Rebuild partner organizations.

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about philanthropy and discover how individuals contribute to their communities through giving their time, skills, creativity, or resources.
- Understand the role and purpose of nonprofit organizations and how philanthropy supports their missions.
- Analyze and compare the missions of Students Rebuild partner organizations to identify causes that resonate with them personally.
- Apply their understanding of philanthropy by creating artwork that supports a chosen partner organization, demonstrating how creative expression can make a positive impact.

Grade Level: 5-12

Time: Est. 2-4 class periods (45-60 minutes each), depending on how much in-class time students are given to complete their creative projects

Materials

- Internet access and device to show the “What is Philanthropy” video
- Projector or screen
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers or pens
- Devices or stations to play partner videos (laptops/tablets or a single projected playlist)
- Headphones (optional)
- Various art supplies (depending on choice of medium)
- Sticky notes or reflection cards
- Pens/markers

Standards

C3 Framework for Social Studies (Grades 5-12)

- **D2.Civ.10.6-8 / 9-12:** Explain the importance of civic action for addressing societal problems.
- **D4.6-8.1 / D4.9-12.1:** Construct arguments or explanations using evidence and communicate conclusions.
- **D4.6-8.6 / D4.9-12.6:** Use a range of deliberative and creative strategies to take informed civic action.

Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- **Self-Awareness:** Recognizing values, strengths, and identity.
- **Social Awareness:** Demonstrating empathy and understanding social issues.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Choosing a cause and understanding its impact.
- **Relationship Skills:** Engaging in collaborative gallery walks and shared reflections.

National Core Arts Standards (Visual Arts)

- **VA:Cr1.1.5-12:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas.
- **VA:Cr2.1.5-12:** Organize and develop artistic work.
- **VA:Re7.2.5-12:** Interpret art or visual material to deepen understanding.
- **VA:Re8.1.5-12:** Interpret meaning in artistic work, including peers' creations.
- **VA:Cn10.1.5-12:** Create artwork based on personal, societal, or global concepts.
- **VA:Cn11.1.5-12:** Relate artistic ideas to social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Part I: INTRODUCING PHILANTHROPY AND NONPROFITS

What is Philanthropy?

Key Ideas

- Philanthropy is the act of giving to improve the welfare of others.
- Giving is not only financial; the giving of resources, such as objects, time, and skills, is also considered part of philanthropy.
- Young people already engage in forms of philanthropy, even if they do not use the term.

Show this video: <https://youtu.be/Kr7nLA9G0T4>

After watching, ask students to define the word philanthropy as they now understand it. Provide the class with an age-appropriate definition of the word philanthropy.

Suggested Teacher Language

Philanthropy is a big word, but the idea behind it is something you have probably done before. Whenever you help someone, stand up for something important, or volunteer your time, you are already practicing philanthropy.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do communities need helpers and problem-solvers?
- Who are the people in your life who help others?
- When have you helped someone or supported a cause?

Concrete Examples of Philanthropy

- Donating to a charity or fundraiser
- Volunteering at a shelter or school
- Sharing skills (art, tech, tutoring) to support others
- Raising awareness on social media
- Organizing a drive or community project

Suggested Teacher Language

There is not one right way to give. Philanthropists look at the tools and resources they have (skills, time, creativity, or money) and use these to make life better for others.

What Are Nonprofits?

Key Ideas

- Nonprofits are organizations whose primary purpose is to serve the public good, rather than generating profits for their owners or operators.
- Their mission and focus are to solve community problems or meet the needs of others.
- Any money they raise is reinvested in their mission.

What's in a Name?

Depending on where you are in the world, nonprofit organizations may be called different things:

- **Nonprofit** – commonly used in the United States
- **Charity** – commonly used in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia
- **NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)** – commonly used internationally, especially in global development contexts
- **Civil Society Organization (CSO)** – often used by the United Nations and in policy settings

No matter what they're called, these organizations share a common purpose: serving the public good rather than generating profit for owners.

Suggested Teacher Language

A nonprofit is a team with a mission. Instead of selling products to make money for owners, nonprofits focus on helping people, protecting the environment, educating communities, and more.

Examples Students May Recognize

- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- YMCA
- Habitat for Humanity
- Make-a-Wish Foundation
- Ronald McDonald House

Suggested Teacher Language - Connection Point

Nonprofits are mission-driven organizations that serve to address community challenges and achieve a greater public benefit. These entities do not generate a profit and often rely on the support of their communities to sustain their operations. Philanthropy is one way people support the work of nonprofits.

How Do Nonprofits Work?

Key Ideas

- Nonprofits vary greatly in purpose and mission, but they often work with and for their communities by filling gaps where services or support are limited.
- They vary in size: from small local groups to large global organizations.
- They often rely on philanthropy to sustain themselves. This is achieved through donations, volunteer work, fundraising events, grants, and strategic partnerships.

Suggested Teacher Language

Think of nonprofits as problem-solvers. No one owns them, though a board of directors governs them. They exist to serve. And they often depend on people, like volunteers and donors (philanthropists), to keep going.

How Philanthropy and Nonprofits Work Together

Key Ideas

- Philanthropy fuels nonprofit work.
- Nonprofits create opportunities for young people to get involved.
- Understanding both helps students see how change happens.

Reflection Prompts

- Why do nonprofits need support from the community?
- How might you contribute to a cause you care about?
- Which nonprofit missions resonate with you personally?
- What benefit might a philanthropist get from helping a nonprofit?

Part II: PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

Exploring Causes and Making Art

Purpose

Students learn about eleven Students Rebuild partner organizations, understand their missions through short videos, and choose one to support by creating artwork inspired by that organization's work. This activity connects the concepts of philanthropy and nonprofits with real-world action.

Step 1: Partner Video Gallery (Research Stations)

Set up a simple video gallery (stations around the room or a digital playlist if you prefer to keep your students stationary). Each station features:

- A short video introducing one of the Students Rebuild partners. All videos can be found here: <https://www.studentsrebuild.org/partners>.
- A 1-2 sentence description of their mission

Please refer to the [Partner Overview handout](#) or the *Students Rebuild website* for summaries of each partner organization.

Teacher Tip

If time is limited, create small groups and assign each group a subset of videos to explore, then have them share highlights with the class.

Student Task

As students move through the videos, they complete a Partner Snapshot Sheet, noting:

- Organization name
- Mission or cause area
- How they imagine young people could help support this mission

Step 2: Compare & Reflect

After watching the videos, students reflect individually or with partners:

Prompts

- Which three organizations stood out to you the most?
- What do these three organizations have in common?
- What issue or mission feels personal or important to you?

- How does the work of these organizations connect to our community or the world?

Step 3: Choose Your Cause

Students select the one Students Rebuild partner whose mission resonates most.

They complete a short Why I Chose This Partner card, explaining:

- Which partner organization would they wish to support through an act of philanthropy?
- What did they learn about the partner organization through the video that made them choose this group?
- How will they use the act of creative expression to support this group?
- Why is this a philanthropic act?

Step 4: Create Artwork for the Partner

Students create a piece of art inspired by the partner's mission. Artwork can be:

- Drawings
- Collages
- Photography
- Digital art
- Mixed media
- Poetry or word art
- Textile or hand-crafted pieces

Suggested Teacher Language

Your art is your voice. Through what you create, you are supporting the mission of the partner you chose. You are sharing their story, raising awareness, and contributing through creativity.

Guiding Prompts

Help students as they plan and execute their creative projects:

- What emotions, ideas, or images represent this organization's mission?
- How can your art inspire empathy, awareness, or action?
- How does your art express gratitude or solidarity with communities the partner serves?

Step 5: Gallery Walk & Share

Students display their artwork and Why I Chose This Partner cards. Peers walk through the gallery and respond by sharing their learnings and inspiration through written comments.

Optional sentence starters:

- Something I learned...
- Something that inspired me...
- Something I am curious about...

Optional Extensions

1. Students create a class video or slideshow highlighting each partner, paired with student artwork.
2. The class creates a graph that shows the total amount of funding their creative expressions generated.

Step 6: Final Reflection

Connecting the act of creating to Philanthropy

Students synthesize what they have learned about philanthropy, nonprofits, and their own role as contributors by reflecting on how their chosen partner and artwork connect to real-world impact.

Suggested Teacher Language

Today, you practiced philanthropy. You learned about nonprofits doing important work, you identified the causes that matter to you, and you created something to support those missions. Philanthropy is about giving what you can to help others, and your artwork is a powerful form of giving.

Step 7: Share Your Students' Artwork

Submit your students' artwork at Studentsrebuild.org.

For each piece of artwork submitted or student engaged, Creative Visions will donate \$5, up to \$1M, to the organizations your students just learned about!