

Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Lesson Plan

AGE

Middle School; can be adapted for other ages

TIME

45 minutes

INTRODUCTION

This lesson plan invites students to think about the *tzedakah* box as a ritual object and to reflect on the ways in which the *tzedakah* boxes they are familiar with do or do not represent their *tzedakah*-giving practices. Using text, personal reflection, art and student interviews, it sets the stage for students to design their own *tzedakah* boxes that express the realities of where, to whom and why they give *tzedakah*. This lesson enables students to participate in the Student Track of the *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition*, which challenges artists, designers and conceptual thinkers to create a *tzedakah* box for the 21st century that reflects where, to whom and why people give *tzedakah* today.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze the *tzedakah* box as a ritual object.
- Students will reflect on how *tzedakah* boxes can both represent and influence how we give.
- Students will design *tzedakah* boxes that reflect a range of competing *tzedakah* values.

MATERIALS

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- *Tzedakah* Box Memories page (provided below)
- 10-15 *tzedakah* boxes (see preparation section below)
- Images of *tzedakah* boxes (provided below)
- *Tzedakah* Box Tour page (provided below)
- *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track, A Guide for Schools* (provided below)

PREPARATION

- Ask students to bring one *tzedakah* box from home. (If students don't have *tzedakah* boxes or would prefer not to bring them in, they can bring a photograph or picture of a *tzedakah* box instead.)
- Bring in your own *tzedakah* boxes and those of your friends and colleagues to supplement the students' boxes.
- Try to include some examples of *tzedakah* boxes that are from specific organizations.
- Set up part of the room like a museum exhibit with *tzedakah* boxes the students brought from home and images of other *tzedakah* boxes.

LESSON PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

- a. Tell students that Jewish practice is full of ritual objects that help us perform *mitzvot*, and ask them to brainstorm some. Examples may include: *kiddush* cups, *tallitot*, *chanukiot*, *mezuzot*, etc. Point out to students that these ritual objects can be designed in very different ways and that their designs can reflect their purpose and can also evoke different feelings in us when we use them. Explain to students that in this session they will examine the *tzedakah* box as an important Jewish ritual object that helps us do and think about the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. They will think about

how the design of a *tzedakah* box expresses its purpose and can even affect how we do the *mitzvah*. At the end, or after the session, they will have the chance to design their own *tzedakah* boxes.

2. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE TZEDAKAH BOX (10 MINUTES)

- Divide students into groups of three or four and give each student a copy of the *Tzedakah* Box Memories page.
- Ask students to read the short text on the page with their groups and to discuss the questions below the text.
- Bring the full group together and thank the students for sharing their *tzedakah* memories with one another. Encourage students to visit www.wheredoyougive.org/post/51 to share their *tzedakah* memories. Explain that their early memories of *tzedakah* and *tzedakah* boxes probably continue to influence how they respond to the different *tzedakah* boxes that they will see today.

3. TZEDAKAH BOX TOUR (10 MINUTES)

- Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to look at a variety of different *tzedakah* boxes. Invite students to walk around the room looking at the *tzedakah* boxes and the images of *tzedakah* boxes.
- Ask students to complete the *Tzedakah* Box Tour page as they walk around the room.

Option: Give students different colored stickers with which to vote for *tzedakah* boxes. For example, students can put their red sticker next to the *tzedakah* box that is their favorite, their blue sticker next to the *tzedakah* box they think is most unusual and their green sticker next to the *tzedakah* box that most motivates them to give *tzedakah*. This will allow you to see if there are particular *tzedakah* boxes that attract a lot of attention from students and to focus the following discussion on those *tzedakah* boxes in particular.

4. DEBRIEF AND DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

- After students have completed their worksheets, bring the students together to debrief using the questions on the worksheet as a guide. Choose from the questions below:
 - What features did most of the *tzedakah* boxes have in common? (You may want to prompt students and ask specifically about features such as slots for coins, a way to get the money out, the word *tzedakah* appearing in Hebrew or English, the name of a specific organization, etc.)
 - What were some of the main differences among the *tzedakah* boxes?
 - Which *tzedakah* box do you like most? Why?
 - Which *tzedakah* box do you think is most unusual? What is unusual about it? Why do you think the designer chose to make it this way?
- Remind students that the design of a ritual object—in this case a *tzedakah* box—can actually influence how we feel or act when we use that object. Discuss which *tzedakah* boxes motivated students to give *tzedakah* and why.
- Explain to students that a *tzedakah* box can not only motivate people to give, but can also help people think about where they are giving. Ask students to share one cause or organization that they or their families donated to in the past year. Write their responses on chart paper or a whiteboard. Highlight the variation among the causes and ask students how they decide where to give. Take a few responses and then ask students to think back to the *tzedakah* box that they liked the most or the one that would motivate them to give. Ask students: Does that *tzedakah* box remind you in any way of where you give or how you decide where to give? If so, how does it do that?

5. INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT COMPETITION (10 MINUTES)

- a. Invite students to imagine that they could design and create a *tzedakah* box that would reflect where they give and help them and others make decisions about where to give. Encourage students not to design a *tzedakah* box that advertises for a particular organization or cause, but rather one that makes people think about where they give and why. Give students a few minutes to either draw a sketch or make a list of what elements such a *tzedakah* box would include. If there is time, ask a few students to share their sketches or lists.
- b. Explain how the *tzedakah* box competition will work in your school, including when submissions are due and what students can win. A guide to running a competition in your school (and to connecting to the *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track*) is included at the end of this lesson plan. In addition, official *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track* rules will be available beginning on January 10, 2012 at www.wheredoyougive.org/students_and_teachers/student_track_rules.

Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Tzedakah Box Memories

Please read the following text about a *tzedakah* box.

The characters in the text are:

- **Mr. Kantor** – an elderly member of the synagogue who collects *tzedakah* during services
- **The gabbai** – the main character of this text, responsible for helping to organize synagogue services

As the men rock back and forth, Mr. Kantor moves down the center aisle, using his cane for support. He stops before each man and holds out the *pushke*, the small tin box used to collect money for Jewish charities. One of the *gabbai's* memories from childhood was the blue *pushke* that his mother's parents—his *bobba* [grandma] and *zayde* [grandpa]—kept on the lace doily in the center of their small kitchen table next to the heavy crystal salt-and-pepper shakers. Their *pushke* had a Jewish National Fund logo on the side and a coin slot on top, like a piggy bank. Each night his grandfather emptied his loose change into it. When he had dinner with his grandparents at their house, his *zayde* would hand him the coins to drop into the slot, one by one.¹

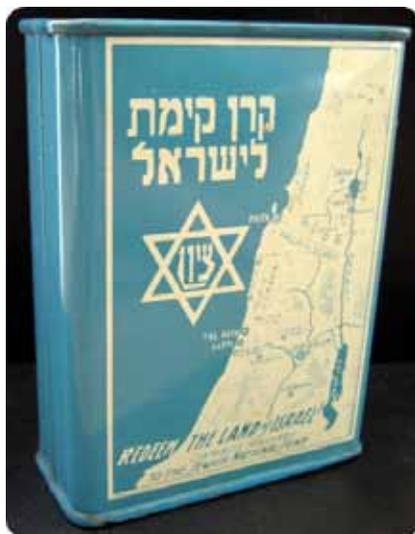
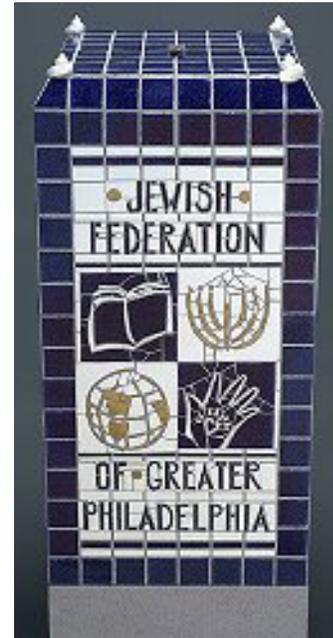
¹Michael Baron, *The Mourning Sexton* (New York: Doubleday, 2005) 7.

With your group, please talk about the questions below:

1. What memories does the *gabbai* recall when he sees the *tzedakah* box in the synagogue?
2. What did your first *tzedakah* box look like? Where did you get it or who gave it to you?
3. Share a favorite memory about a *tzedakah* box.



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Tzedakah Box Images



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Tzedakah Box Images



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Tzedakah Box Images



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track Tzedakah Box Images



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track

Tzedakah Box Tour

1. What features did most of the *tzedakah* boxes have in common?
2. What were some of the main differences among the *tzedakah* boxes?
3. Which *tzedakah* box do you like most? Why?
4. Which *tzedakah* box do you think is most unusual? What is unusual about it? Why do you think the designer chose to make it this way?
5. Which *tzedakah* box (or boxes) would motivate you to give *tzedakah*? Why?



Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track

A Guide for Schools

Where Do You Give? Reimagining Tzedakah for the 21st Century, features a national design competition, online interactive media and educational resources that engage the Jewish community in critical questions about where we give, to whom and why.

The *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition* challenges artists, designers and conceptual thinkers to create a *tzedakah* box for the 21st century that reflects where we give, to whom and why.

Students ages 18 and younger are invited to participate in the *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track*, which will be held from January 10, 2012 to March 26, 2012. The competition challenges students to design a *tzedakah* box that will inspire users to think deeply about where they give, to whom and why. Submissions must be two-dimensional—either drawings or photographs of three-dimensional creations—and must be accompanied by an artist’s statement that explains the design and the Jewish values that it reflects. For official rules and more information about how to submit a design, visit www.wheredoyougive.org/students_and_teachers/student_track_rules. A panel of judges from AJWS and Babaganewz will select three student winners. Student Track winners will be featured on the *Where Do You Give?* website at www.wheredoyougive.org, and have their designs included in a nationwide mobile tour along with the winners of the general competition.

In addition to encouraging your students to submit entries in the official *Where Do You Give? National Design Competition: Student Track*, schools are also invited to run their own independent competitions at any point throughout the school year. The following guidelines will help you plan a competition that will enable students to use art and design to reflect on *tzedakah* as well as to connect students to bigger conversations about *tzedakah* in our modern world.

GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING A WHERE DO YOU GIVE? DESIGN COMPETITION IN YOUR SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM

DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

Consider whether to run the competition within each class or grade, or whether to open it up to the whole school. If you open it widely, you may want to create categories for different ages.

DETERMINE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Consider whether to require students to submit three-dimensional physical boxes or photographs or drawings of their design. Drawings or photographs may be easier to create and manage, but physical boxes have the advantage of being functional and also allow for the possibility of creating a museum exhibit after the competition.

You may want to require students to include an artist’s statement that explains their design. If you are connecting the competition to your *tzedakah* curriculum, an artist’s statement can be an excellent form of assessment if it asks students to reference elements of the curriculum.

DETERMINE WHEN AND FOR HOW LONG THE COMPETITION WILL RUN

Consider connecting your school’s competition to your school’s calendar. You may want to schedule the competition to coincide with a *tzedakah* unit in a particular grade or a Jewish holiday that includes *tzedakah* themes like Purim or Pesach.

Determine whether you expect students to work on their designs at home or whether you plan to devote class time to the creation of their designs.

Determine how long the competition will run. You may want to limit it to a few weeks to give students enough time to work on their designs but not too much time so that you lose momentum.

SET THE CONTEXT FOR THE COMPETITION

The competition is intended to provoke reflection and dialogue about where we give, to whom and why. Consider supporting students in their exploration of these questions through lessons, speakers and other programs. For additional resources on these topics, visit www.wheredoyougive.org.

You may also want to use the competition to support your school's existing *tzedakah* curriculum or *tzedakah* initiatives. It can serve as an assessment tool to gauge students' understanding of the concepts and themes in your *tzedakah* curriculum. Alternatively, the competition can be used to generate enthusiasm and interest in your school's *tzedakah* initiatives and educational units.

Consider sharing with students sample designs from the national competition to inspire them in the creation of their own designs. Designs can be viewed at www.wheredoyougive.org.

You may also consider running the competition as an annual program for a particular grade that studies *tzedakah* intensively or for *b'nai mitzvah* students.

Where Do You Give? provides a lesson plan to introduce the competition to students. To download the lesson plan, visit www.wheredoyougive.org/students_and_teachers/student_competition_lesson_plan.

SELECT JUDGES AND DETERMINE PRIZES

Decide whether your school's competition will be judged by a select panel of faculty/student leaders and/or by student vote. If you decide on a popular vote, be sure to plan when, where and how the voting will take place as well as who is eligible to vote.

Consider offering prizes that reinforce the *tzedakah* values that are embodied by the competition. For example, you may want to make the prize a donation to the winner's organization of choice.

CONTINUE THE IMPACT

Where Do You Give? will continue the impact of its design competition by creating a traveling exhibition of the winning and finalist designs. Consider doing something similar with your school's competition by displaying students' designs in a prominent location in your school. You may also want to include photographs of the designs in your school's newsletter or on its website.