



## Public vs. Private Schools: Who's leading the charge in giving back?

Studies reveal that the development of prosocial behaviours amongst schoolchildren such as sharing with and helping others is positively associated with [academic outcomes](#). Beyond the classroom, the [cognitive competencies](#) and social-emotional skills that learners develop as a result of practicing these behaviours also contribute to [success later in life](#), with these being a significant predictor of their future education, employment and criminal activity, among other outcomes. With this in mind, Deb Zelezniak, CEO at the [Santa Shoebox Project](#) says that empowering pupils with opportunities to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others should be part of the school curriculum.

“I am proud to commend the 120 public and private schools that participated in last year’s Santa Shoebox Project and are leading the charge in South African education by setting a noteworthy example for others to follow,” she shares.

Reflecting on these results, Zelezniak highlights that in 2023, local schools pledged over 10,000 shoeboxes containing personalised gifts of essential items and treats for underprivileged and socially vulnerable children throughout South Africa and Namibia. “While the country’s private schools collectively donated more shoeboxes, this was only marginally higher than their public-school counterparts, with one government school donating 1,071 – more than double the contribution of the top-giving private school.”

She notes that this seemingly paradoxical situation highlights an interesting dynamic. “Schools with more resources, typically private institutions, would be expected to have higher donation totals. However, [research](#) suggests that individuals with fewer resources often exhibit a stronger tendency towards prosocial behaviours. This concept is further supported by our own anecdotal evidence whereby hundreds of prominent private school networks with tens of thousands of learners aren’t supporting charities.”

“Prosocial behaviours can be modelled and taught to learners from all economic backgrounds,” points out Zelezniak. “This is essential as prosocial behaviours have been proven to help [bridge the gap](#) in educational attainment between children from underprivileged backgrounds and their more privileged peers.”

Tiffiney du Preez, Deputy Principal of the School Governing Body (SGB) at Eunice Primary, which was responsible for the most pledges in 2023, says, “Our pupils have learnt that donating selflessly and with love to the less fortunate will bring joy to their lives and those they help.”

“In line with our 2024 theme, *A Step Towards Brighter Tomorrows*, I urge all schools - both public and private - to incorporate lessons on giving back into their educational programmes for the year. The difference that can be made on learners, and of course those on the receiving end of their prosocial efforts, is well-worth the investment,” concludes Zelezniak.

To this end, the Santa Shoebox Project will be connecting classes in donor schools with recipients in the same age groups – making these lessons in giving more personal and profound.

For more information, visit <https://santashoebox.org.za>.

## **About the Santa Shoebox Programmes**

Traditional Santa Shoebox: Over the last 18 years, 1 226 756 Santa Shoeboxes, each containing eight specified items of treats and essentials, have been given to underprivileged and socially vulnerable children throughout South Africa and Namibia. From 01 September each year, Santa Shoebox donors choose their beneficiary child/ren by name, age and gender and are given the child's clothing size. Each personalised shoebox reaches the very child for whom it was pledged.

Virtual Santa Shoebox: These shoeboxes are purchased online by donors and are available year-round, meeting the needs of donors who live too far from drop-off points, are too busy to shop or have health issues. Components are chosen by the donor on the Santa Shoebox website, the shoeboxes are packed by the Santa Shoebox Team and delivered to children attending far-flung rural facilities. A Virtual Santa Shoebox contains the eight specified items, as well as additional items, such as a lunchbox and books. A Virtual Santa Shoebox costs R450 plus an optional delivery fee of R30.

Santa Shoebox Legacy: All Santa Shoebox Project operating costs are covered by corporate sponsors. Privately donated funds have been accruing under the SSB Legacy Fund which are now being used to bring permanent change to the lives of Santa Shoebox beneficiary children and the impoverished communities in which they live.

Fiduciary information: As a Level One Contributor to B-BBEE, the Santa Shoebox Project earns 100 points on the generic scorecard, and with Section 18A status, is able to provide a tax-deductible receipt in recognition of donations. The Project is an initiative of the JOG Trust (IT2671/2009). The Trust is registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO-930031301), a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO 102-098) and holds a current ICPR in support of 100% SED compliance.

Social media:

TikTok: @santa.shoebox

Facebook: /SantaShoebox

X: @SantaShoebox

Instagram: /santashoebox

YouTube: The Santa Shoebox Project

Pinterest: /santashoebox