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Environmentalism Embraced at an Early Age

Has your child ever lectured you on the importance of recycling?

This [LA Times article](#) highlights a new set of children's books with a green edge to them. Perhaps the Cato Institute should commission a sociologist to study whether the modern elementary school curriculum is ramping up the next generation to become Al Gore to the third power.

Given that I have no memories at all of anything I learned at the vaunted Scarsdale School System, I have no problem with my son being taught some righteous ideas about what is good and moral behavior. But, the economist in me keeps thinking about tradeoffs. Somehow the broad concept of "tradeoffs" is not a major topic in elementary school curriculum. My son has also pointed out to me that his classmates are happy to redistribute other people's stuff but are not very generous with sharing their own stuff.

An interesting line of research has examined children's consistency of preference orderings. Do children make "rational choices"? Bill Harbaugh has some important work [on this topic](#) . If we extend the right to vote to children, would we be more likely to have carbon pricing? My guess is that health care wouldn't be such an exciting issue to these 8 year olds. There would be a large "Cash for Lego" program and President Obama would easily win a second term.

But, anticipating that today's deficits will lead to higher future taxes for their birth cohort --- the young today might act like tough Bob Barros and vote for fiscal discipline.
