



## Building Community through Gratitude

This lesson is designed to increase students' understanding of how gratitude improves their own well-being as well as that of those around them.

### Essential Question

How do we work together to create a fair and just classroom community where individual and collective learning is engaging, valued, and liberating for all?

### Guiding Questions

How can showing gratitude toward others affect you, our class, and our community?  
What is the power of gratitude?

### Objectives

- Students will understand the power and importance of gratitude.
- Students will work collaboratively to express gratitude in the school community.

### Advance Preparation

- Prepare student materials
- Display Do Now and Benefits of Gratitude poster
- Have space in classroom for a connection circle

### Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 4.2 (adapt as needed)
- Benefits of Gratitude poster
- Journal page

### Student Materials

- chart paper/poster board
- markers
- sticky notes

### Vocabulary

- Gratitude
- Appreciation

**Do Now**

3 min.

Slide 1: Students share with a partner one thing they have felt thankful for this week.

**Introduction (Framing/Overview)**

10 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 sec.)
2. Slide 4: Convene a quick connection circle with students, focused on saying “thank you.” After students have gathered in a circle, invite them to reflect on their interactions during the last week and think of a time when another student did them a favor or small kindness that may have gone unnoticed or unacknowledged. It could be something as simple as holding a door open or sitting with them at lunch. Invite volunteers to share something kind that someone did for them this week. This circle heightens our awareness of kindness in a public way.
3. After the circle, tell students that the focus of the day is gratitude and how it can enhance our happiness and overall well-being. Display slide 5 and ask students whether anyone can offer a definition of the word **gratitude**. After students have offered definitions, click through to confirm the definition. Display slide 6 and review the day’s agenda with students.
4. (Slide 7) Watch the two-minute video “The Science of Gratitude” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMd1CcGZYwU> to introduce the concept of gratitude and the science behind how gratitude changes our brains.
5. After watching the video, ask students to summarize what they learned about scientific findings on the positive effects of gratitude. Then tell them there have been many studies on the effects of gratitude, confirming the following.
  - a) Gratitude is a positive emotion: it feels good to be grateful. As a positive emotion gratitude can also make you feel more open, creative, and energized.
  - b) Gratitude is linked to physical health outcomes including lower blood pressure and a stronger immune system.
  - c) Because gratitude involves recognizing other people’s kindness, feeling and expressing gratitude helps strengthen relationships.
  - d) For all these reasons, people who are grateful tend to feel happier overall.

Now share the Benefits of Gratitude poster.

**Activity 1: Creating a Gratitude Poster**

22 min.

6. Organize students in teams of three.
7. Slide 8: ask your students to think about people who contribute to making your school a better place. Have them write names of people who have a positive impact on your school community on the sticky

**Individual  
Reflection**

notes provided (one name per sticky note: 2 min.). Then each team agrees on one person for whom to design a poster of gratitude.

8. As groups deliberate to choose on one person for whom to design a poster of gratitude, provide each group with a piece of chart paper or posterboard. Gratitude posters should include the following: (13 min.)
  - a) Name of the person
  - b) A quote of something the person says often
  - c) Three words to describe the person
  - d) An image or symbol that represents the person
  - e) Three things you appreciate about this person
  - f) Explain how this person makes others feel special or positively contributes to the school community
9. Have students share their posters (5 min.). Then discuss how/when students will give their posters to the people for whom they created them (2 min.).

## Activity 2

13 min.

10. Slide 10: Introduce the idea of a gratitude journal to the students as a place where they can weekly keep a list of things for which they are grateful. Optional: Show the video “Gratitude as a Life Skill”: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlQKaCl0\\_xY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlQKaCl0_xY). (Note: this is a fun video, but it does use the word “butthead.” If you prefer not to use the video, you may want to remove the reference from the slideshow.) **Direct Instruction**
11. Have students create a journal to log things they are grateful for, using a google doc, composition notebook, notes app on their phone, page from their 4S journal, or the “Gratitude Journal” sheet provided. **Personal Reflection/ Practice**
12. Display the Gratitude Prompts (slide 11) to help students get started. (Note: these are only suggestions; students can choose from these prompts or create their own categories of gratefulness.) Suggest students list 3-6 things (big or small) that they are grateful for.
13. Have students gather in the same triads from Activity 1 and share three things they are grateful for and why. **Team Discussion**

## Closure

2 min.

Exit Ticket: Have students share how they are planning to incorporate gratitude into their life daily or weekly.

## Extensions

If you wish to assign homework, have students write a letter of gratitude to someone in their lives they are thankful for. Or, have them continue to add items to the list in their gratitude journal.

**Resources:**

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\\_ways\\_to\\_give\\_thanks](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_to_give_thanks)

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>

<https://www.gettingsmart.com/2018/12/building-school-culture-with-gratitude/>

[https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/what\\_we\\_do/major\\_initiatives/expanding\\_gratitude/youth\\_gratitude\\_project](https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/what_we_do/major_initiatives/expanding_gratitude/youth_gratitude_project)

## Some Benefits of Gratitude

### Being grateful...



**IMPROVES PHYSICAL  
HEALTH**



**IMPROVES  
SLEEP**



**IMPROVES PSYCHOLOGICAL  
HEALTH**



**INCREASES  
EMPATHY**



**REDUCES  
AGGRESSION**



**INCREASES SOCIAL  
CONNECTION**



**ENHANCES  
SELF-ESTEEM**



**IMPROVES MENTAL  
STRENGTH**

(Based on Mike Oppland, “13 Most Popular Gratitude Exercises,”  
<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/> )

Gratitude Journal

Instructions

List 3 THINGS or PEOPLE you are GRATEFUL for today and say WHY. Do this twice a week. *For example, “My grandpa surprised me by giving me a ride home from school so I didn’t have to walk in the rain.”*

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