

6-12 Character Education Lesson Plan: Gratitude



Character Education Objective: This lesson exposes students to the research illustrating the benefits of gratitude, and suggests activities to help students develop a habit of expressing gratitude.

Core Alignment:

- HS – Essential Concept and/or Skill: Demonstrate leadership skills, integrity, ethical behavior, and social responsibility while collaborating to achieve common goals.
- MS – Essential Concept and/or Skill: Demonstrate leadership, integrity, ethical behavior, and social responsibility in all environments.

Lesson:

Expressing gratitude is one of the simplest ways to demonstrate caring to other individuals. Moreover, research shows that expressing gratitude has the added benefit of raising our happiness levels, making us more productive and healthier, especially if we make gratitude a habit.

Start the lesson by showing students the following videos.

- Video #1 showcases the research demonstrating the long-term benefits of expressing gratitude – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCV-mEsASLA>
- Video #2 shows an example of one gratitude activity in action. Namely, individuals in this video wrote a letter to someone in their life whom they wanted to thank. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3G5sdUUd1Y&list=PLzvRx_johoA94j1Jbq18J-fEaB_NgvchN&t=0s&index=9

After watching the videos, review the benefits of expressing gratitude with students. Remind students that the long-term benefits of expressing gratitude are only felt if we make expressing gratitude a habit. Invite students to participate in one (or several) gratitude habits. (You can also assign one or more of these activities).

- **Gratitude Journal:** Each day, students journal about what they are grateful for over the previous 24 hours, and why they are grateful for that event, person, object, etc. (You can also create a shared Google Document where students write their gratitudes each day for others to see, if desired).
- **3 Gratitudes:** Ask students to share three things they are grateful for each day. Students can do this in groups, in a journal, as homework with their parents, etc.
- **Random Act of Kindness:** Each day students should spend two minutes writing an e-mail, or making a phone call praising or thanking someone for something they have done (texting not allowed). Students may choose a friend, family member, teacher – anyone deserving of praise or thanks.
(You can also do this in-class. Each day, have students draw the name of another student in the class. Students then have a week to write down three things they appreciate about the person they drew. Students should

be encouraged to look beyond, “I like your shoes,” or “your notebook is pretty.” Instead, they should notice when their person has contributed to the class, or helped a classmate, or something more substantive. At the end of the week, collect the three things and distribute them to the class. Students should not know who wrote about them.)

Students should complete each activity daily for a minimum of 21 days in order to form a habit. You can also combine any of these activities with the Thanksgiving Facebook challenge of expressing gratitude for something each day leading up to Thanksgiving.

This is also an excellent opportunity to help students develop a growth mindset. Encourage students to express gratitude for mistakes they have made, and the lessons they have learned from those mistakes.

Parent Connection:

Send parents the video link(s) viewed in class. Encourage parents to participate in the gratitude challenge (journaling, 3 gratitudes, random act of kindness) you have assigned your students. Or, ask parents to participate in the gratitude challenge seen in the video – write a letter to someone they are grateful for, and ask them to read the letter.

You may also choose to encourage parents to use Thanksgiving as an opportunity to share 3 gratitudes around the dinner table. Or, share their gratitude letter at Thanksgiving.

Learn more about character education.