



WHAT IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THIS

"I hope you find, as I did, that happiness comes from noticing and enjoying the little things in life."

—Barbara Ann Kipfer

OVERVIEW

Students deepen their understanding of gratitude by imagining what life would be like without certain things in our classrooms or schools.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 20-30 minutes

LEVEL

- Upper Elementary

MATERIALS

- A copy of "[What If We Didn't Have This](#)" pdf cut into separate cards
- Bowl, box, or bag to put cards in
- Writing materials

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify common things in the classroom and school environment that they are grateful for, by imagining what their day would be like if they didn't have these things

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to look around you and choose a common object, such as a chair, desk, window, pen, or paper. What would life be like without this object?

INSTRUCTIONS

- Ask the class:
 - *Have you ever thought what it would be like in our classroom if we had no chairs? Close your eyes and see if you can imagine what that would be like.*
- After a few moments, ask the students to share their thoughts about what a classroom without chairs would be like. Ask:
 - *How many of you feel grateful that we have chairs to sit on in this class?*
- Explain that the class is going to do an activity that involves thinking about things that are part of our classroom and school, and imagining what it would be like if we didn't have them.
- Ask for a volunteer to draw one of the "[What If We Didn't Have This?](#)" cards from a hat, and have this student read the card aloud. Ask the class to think for a moment: What would it be like if we didn't have this in our school or classroom?
- Have students work in small groups to write a short paragraph about this.
- Alternatively, students can draw their own card, and write about the different things they have chosen.
- At the end of the activity, ask:
 - *As you look around the classroom, are there things that you feel grateful for now, that you didn't notice before?*
- Encourage the students to keep noticing things in the classroom and school that they are grateful for.

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect on how it felt to notice everyday objects and feel grateful for them. How might they do this at home or in their community?

EXTENSIONS

- Students' writing can be compiled into a "What If We Didn't Have This?" book or bulletin board.

- Students can suggest new items to make “What If We Didn’t Have This?” cards for. These can be based on other materials found in the classroom. Or, cards can be made based on themes such as clothing, types of transportation, etc.
- Older students may be aware that some schools may not have all the supplies that they have. Consider organizing a collection of school supplies for children in the community that may need them, or for a school in the community that may have fewer resources.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice if students are expressing more gratitude for common objects in their environment after doing this practice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In addition to its [benefits for adults](#), research suggests that [gratitude is also good for youth](#), going hand in hand with greater hope and optimism, higher satisfaction with life, and fewer health complaints.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Students who experience greater positive emotions tend to put in [more effort](#) to overcome obstacles, [engage in classroom activities](#) more, and be [less stressed](#) at school. In addition, positive mental health in childhood is linked to educational achievement and [professional success](#) later in life.

SOURCE

“[Nurturing Gratitude From the Inside Out: 30 Activities for Grades K–8](#)” was originally developed by [The Inner Resilience Program](#), in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).