



## GRATITUDE CIRCLE FOR STAFF MEMBERS

*"Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses."*

*—Confucius*

### OVERVIEW

Start staff meetings by giving time for staff members to say "thank you" to each other for kind and thoughtful acts over the past week.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- At the beginning or end of a staff meeting
- Other types of collegial meetings or at parent meetings

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 15 minutes or less

#### LEVEL

- Adult

#### MATERIALS

- None

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Staff will:

- Express gratitude to another staff member for their kind act

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Relationship Skills

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on a small favor or kindness that one of your colleagues showed you in the past week or two. How did this person's act make you feel?

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### THE PRACTICE

- At the beginning or end of a staff meeting, have people take a moment to think about their interactions during the last week and a time when another staff member did them a favor or a small kindness that may have gone unnoticed or unacknowledged.
  - It could be something as simple as holding open a door when they had a pile of papers in their hands, or sharing an article they thought they might enjoy, or covering a recess duty for them.
  - This is not the time for great big thank yous like "Thank you for being such a great partner teacher" or "Thank you for your support as a principal."
- One at a time, as people feel so moved ("popcorn style" rather than going around in a circle), encourage them to speak directly and specifically to the person they are thanking – for example, "Thank you, Sam, for that cup of tea on Thursday morning. It was such a nice surprise on a morning I had so much on my mind."
  - This is a direct thanking as opposed to indirect: "I'd like to thank Sam for bringing me a cup of tea on Thursday morning. It was a nice surprise. I had a lot on my mind that morning."
  - By practicing thanking someone directly, we become more likely to offer thanks in the moment.
- Sam's response can be a simple, "You're welcome."
- When silence seems to indicate that people are finished, say, "We'll wait a couple more moments to see if there are any more sharers before we close the thank you circle for today."
  - Often someone has been getting up the courage to speak and may come forward at this time.
- Note that it isn't necessary that everyone participate every time you have a "thank you circle" or that everyone receive acknowledgement every time.

#### CLOSURE

- Close the practice by mentioning that we seldom get to know about these little kindnesses because of the busyness of school, but they are going on around us all the time. Acknowledging them helps us to remember to make time to offer our gratitude to each other.

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

As you continue to hold gratitude circles during staff meetings, do you notice whether more and more people are participating? Is there a positive shift occurring between staff members?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research on gratitude in the workplace links gratitude to more [positive emotions](#), [less stress and fewer health complaints](#), a greater sense that [we can achieve our goals](#), [fewer sick days](#), and [higher satisfaction with our jobs](#) and our [coworkers](#).

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A positive school climate is built on a foundation of trust and care among staff members. Taking a moment at the beginning or end of a staff meeting for a shared "noticing" of all the little things that the adults do for each other helps to cultivate this foundation, ultimately benefiting everyone – especially the students.

## SOURCE

[Leading Together](#), a program that strengthens relational trust among school staff from the [Center for Courage and Renewal](#).