



## GRATITUDE FOR OUR FOOD

*"We learned about gratitude and humility--that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean...and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect."*

—Michelle Obama

### OVERVIEW

Students visualize the many people who have bought them their food and express their gratitude for each person.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime throughout the school year
- During a food-centered social studies or science unit, such as "Mapping Food in Our Community" or "Health and Nutrition"

#### TIME REQUIRED

- Day 1: 30 minutes
- Day 2: 15 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Upper Elementary

#### MATERIALS

- large sheets of flipchart paper
- drawing/writing materials
- fruit for each student (sensitive to any food allergies)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Demonstrate awareness that behind tangible things that they may feel grateful for, there are many people whose efforts have created those things

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Social Awareness

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on something for which you are grateful and the chain of people who made it possible for you to have this item. You might visualize each person and mentally thank them. Notice how you feel after expressing your gratitude.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### DAY 1

- Ask students to think of how many different kinds of fruit they can name. List the different fruits that are mentioned on the board. Then take a "vote" by show of hands to see which fruit is the favorite of the most people in the class.
- Explain that they are going to do a short visualization about all the people who made it possible for them to enjoy this delicious fruit. Ask everyone to sit comfortably, close their eyes, and take a few deep breaths.
- Use the sample script below, which uses the example of strawberries, and adapt it as needed (for example, some fruit, like bananas, may have traveled on a boat and a truck):
  - *Let's imagine fresh strawberries. Think about what they look like, how they smell, and how they taste. Where do they grow? Imagine someone planting strawberry seeds in the soil on a farm...Imagine the sun shining on the small plants as they grow...Imagine the rain that falls on them, or maybe a person who waters them...maybe there is someone who pulls out the weeds so the strawberries can grow...*

- *Now imagine the strawberries are ripe... Who comes to pick them?... Think about how hard that person works, bending over to pick lots of strawberries... Now imagine someone putting those strawberries into containers...*
- *How do the strawberries get to a store near you?... Imagine the person who put the strawberry containers onto a truck... the person who drove the truck to your stores... the person who brought the strawberries from the truck into the store... the person who put the strawberries on the shelf at the store...*
- *Who sells you the strawberries?... See if you can imagine yourself paying that person... thanking them... and then bringing home the delicious strawberries to eat...*
- Ask students to take a few deep breaths and bring their attention back into the room.
- Have students form groups of four; give each group a large sheet of paper and drawing materials. Ask them to:
  - Discuss what you visualized for a few minutes.
  - Now draw a picture that includes all of the people, tools, and natural elements necessary to produce the strawberries that you enjoy.
- As students complete their drawings, point out that there are many people involved in making it possible for them to enjoy strawberries. Ask them to:
  - Imagine how you would express gratitude to the many people if you could.
  - Add these expressions of gratitude to your drawings.

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## DAY 2

- Save the drawings for the next day and, if possible, buy a container of strawberries (or whatever fruit the students selected) to bring to class the next day.
- Post the drawings around the room and give students the chance to circulate and see each other's work.
- Ask:
  - *What have you learned about gratitude from this activity?*
- Then, give each student a strawberry, instructing them to hold it in their hands and not to eat it yet. (If you plan to bring fruit, be sure to choose one that no one is allergic to.) Ask them to silently reflect on the following questions:
  - *Notice the weight, texture, and temperature of the fruit. What is it like?*
  - *Do you remember all of the people we discussed yesterday, whose work helped to produce the strawberries?*
  - *Let's remember that without the sun and water and soil, there would be no strawberries.*
  - *Recall the messages of gratitude you wrote on your drawings, and feel that gratitude.*
  - *Now, slowly take a small bite of the strawberry. Taste it and enjoy!*

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## CLOSURE

- Ask to students to reflect on how it felt to think of all the people who had helped bring this fruit to them. Did it change how they think about food and where it comes from? How might they encourage others to be grateful for all those people?

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

If you regularly hold gratitude circles in your classroom, do you notice whether students express gratitude for people beyond their immediate circle of friends and family?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In one study, elementary schoolers who were taught [“benefit appraisal”](#)--or a thinking process that helps them consider why a person did a kind act for them, what the cost to the person was, and what benefits the students received from it-- reported more positive emotions and showed more grateful attitudes and behaviors than other students, both immediately and months later.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Students who express gratitude tend to be more [socially adjusted](#) and to show greater school bonding. Thus, encouraging gratitude may improve students’ relationships with peers and teachers, which in turn helps to create more positive classroom and school climates. In addition, using gratitude to guide students in forming strong friendships in upper elementary may then increase the likelihood of [healthy friendships in middle school](#)--a key element in increasing students’ academic achievement and prosocial behavior.

*Note: All three studies were done mainly with white students, hence, the findings of these studies may not be applicable to students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds.*

## 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](#).