



## LOOKING FOR GRATITUDE IN SCHOOL

*"The more grateful I am, the more beauty I see."*

— Mary Davis

### OVERVIEW

Students take a silent walk around school, noticing people for whom they are grateful and then expressing their gratitude to those people.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 30-45 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Pre-K & Lower Elementary

#### MATERIALS

- Index cards and pencils
- Whiteboard and markers
- Drawing/writing materials

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Notice people in the school community that they feel grateful to
- Express their gratitude towards those people

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

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

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Think of someone at school who has done something to make your job a little easier, helped you out during a difficult time, or made the school a better place. Take a moment to either say, “thank you” to that person or to write them a thank you note. How do you feel after expressing your gratitude to this person?

## INSTRUCTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

- Ask the class:
  - *When you feel grateful, what are some ways you show it?*
- Write down their ideas on the board. Ideas may include things like saying “Thank you,” writing a note, giving a gift, hugging, making something that shows your gratitude, etc.
- Ask:
  - *Are there other ways people sometimes show they are grateful? Have you ever seen or heard someone show gratitude in another way?*
- Add any additional ideas to the list.

### GRATITUDE WALK

- Then tell the class that they are going to take a silent walk around the school and see if they can notice people they feel grateful to.
  - To help the class feel settled and ready to focus, have them close their eyes and take five deep, slow breaths. When they open their eyes, encourage them to walk quietly so they can focus.
  - With older students, provide index cards and pencils to write notes while walking or ask students to remember one or two people to write about later.
  - During the walk, encourage students to notice anyone that has helped them, been kind to them, or makes the school day easier for them.

- Lead the class around parts of the school they are familiar with--classrooms of younger grade levels, the office, rooms where special classes take place, or the cafeteria. If possible, walk outside to the playground, or where a crossing guard may be standing. Walk at a somewhat slower pace than you normally would, allowing the class time to notice people they are grateful for.

---

## EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

- When you return to the classroom, ask:
  - *Who did you see, or think of, that you are grateful to?*
  - *If you thought of more than one person, choose one person to think about. Why are you grateful to this person?*
  - *How can you/we show gratitude to this person? Point out the list of ways to show gratitude that the students brainstormed before the walk.*
- Depending on students' responses, they may work individually on a way to show gratitude (such as by writing a note or making a piece of artwork for that person).
- Alternatively, it may be more appropriate to create a group expression of gratitude, such as a dictated letter of thanks that you write on a large sheet of paper, a piece of group artwork, a video, or a treat (such as a batch of cookies) that the class bakes.
- Make time for students to personally deliver their expressions of gratitude.
- Have a class discussion about how it felt to show their gratitude. How did the person they expressed gratitude to react?

---

## CLOSURE

- Have students reflect on how it felt to express gratitude to a person in school. How might they express gratitude to someone in their family or community?

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice whether students are expressing gratitude more often to people in the school community after doing this practice?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a study, students in various grades either wrote and delivered a [Gratitude Letter](#) or journaled about their daily activities and feelings. The Gratitude Letter led to more positive feelings afterward; two months later, students who started the experiment relatively low in positive emotion showed significant improvements.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

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. [Grateful adolescents](#) also have better relationships, receiving more social support from others and being more kind and helpful in turn.

Like adults, however, students may miss opportunities to express their gratitude. The Gratitude Letter offers them a chance to reflect on the people who have made their life better, and to reach out and connect (or reconnect) with those people. As the instructions suggest, this can be fun and meaningful.

## 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](#).