



Nurturing Gratitude From the Inside Out

30 Activities for Grades K–8

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Science Center

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Nurturing Gratitude from the Inside Out

30 Activities for Grades K – 8

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Introduction

Why Teach About Gratitude?

Gratitude has been defined in many ways. Researchers Jeffrey Froh and Giacomo Bono define it as “the appreciation people feel when somebody has done something kind or helpful for them or when they recognize the good things and people they have in their lives.”¹ Robert Emmons, a leading researcher on the impacts of gratitude, calls it a social emotion, because “it requires us to see how we’ve been supported and affirmed by other people.”² Gratitude is also thought of as a personality trait, “a life orientation to notice and appreciate the positive in life.”³ For Owen Griffith, this life orientation is a choice, one that can “re-wire” our brains and replace a habitual tendency toward negativity with one of optimism.⁴ People who practice gratitude face problems and challenges in their lives, but they do so with a sense of resiliency and an ability to reframe problems as possibilities for growth.

Emmons and other researchers have found that when adults regularly practice gratitude (usually through the use of a gratitude journal), there are physical, psychological and social benefits.⁵

Physical benefits include:

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Increased participation in exercise and taking care of health
- Longer and better quality sleep

Psychological benefits include:

- Higher levels of positive emotions, including joy and pleasure
- Greater sense of being alert, alive, and awake
- Increased optimism and happiness
- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Increased resilience
- More patience
- Greater motivation to achieve personal and professional goals

Social benefits include:

- Greater helpfulness, generosity, and compassion
- Increased capacity for forgiveness
- Greater tendency to be outgoing
- Higher relationship satisfaction
- More altruism
- Fewer feelings of loneliness and isolation

Research on gratitude with children and teens has only been carried out relatively recently, but findings suggest that many of the types of benefits found in adults who practice gratitude may also apply to young people.⁶ For example, a study that followed 10-to 14-year olds over four years found that those who exhibited gratefulness tended to be happier, more optimistic, less depressed, less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and more satisfied with school, family and themselves.⁷

Gratitude also appears to positively impact students' academic experience. Teens who exhibit gratitude tend to have higher grades than their less grateful counterparts, and are more engaged in schoolwork, hobbies, and their communities.⁸ Sixth and seventh graders who regularly kept gratitude journals reported greater satisfaction with their school experience, a finding that is associated with more eagerness to go to school and a belief that they are learning more.⁹

Teens with a high level of gratitude are reported to be less envious and less materialistic.¹⁰ They also have more hope and a stronger sense that life has a purpose. In both younger and older adolescents, high levels of gratitude are associated with better social support from family and friends, and giving more emotional support to others. One study found that feeling grateful motivated adolescents to help others and contribute to society.¹¹ This group of findings is significant in light of the fact that some teachers worry that cultivating gratitude in schools may lead to students feeling complacent and self-satisfied. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. We can feel grateful for what is good in our lives, while still working to change what is not. These findings may be related to the fact that gratitude strengthens feelings of relationship and connection with others. Those connections may foster a greater willingness to take action on behalf of others.¹²

Griffith describes developing an attitude of gratitude as similar to developing our muscles –just as regular exercise builds our muscles, the regular practice of gratitude strengthens our ability to notice the good in life, even during times of stress. By incorporating gratitude activities and practices in the classroom on a daily basis, we can help students – and ourselves – become more aware of the gifts that surround us: the beauties of nature, the smiles of our friends, the taste of our food, the caring of the classroom community. By noticing and taking time to fully appreciate these simple, but often overlooked gifts, we increase our daily experience of positive emotions. This contributes to building the strength and resilience that supports children and adults alike during difficult times.

When teaching about gratitude in a school setting, it is important to keep in mind that the school community is made up of adults and children who differ in terms of culture, race, socioeconomic status and religious background. This may mean that they also differ in the way they express and practice gratitude. In some cultures, and contexts, verbal expressions of gratitude are common, while in others a gesture, a reciprocal act of kindness or caring, a simple or elaborate ritual, or giving a small token or gift may be seen as more appropriate. How gratitude is expressed to another might differ depending on how familiar one is with the other person. Gratitude may also be expressed differently to a peer, as opposed to someone with a different social status. Welcoming discussion of

these and other differences in the classroom will deepen students' understanding of gratitude.

In conversations about gratitude, it is essential to be mindful that some children may be living with significant challenges. These may include illness, family stress, the loss of a loved one, abuse, neglect, exposure to violence, discrimination, and economic hardship. Children who receive adult support (from their home, school, or community) in dealing with these challenges may have a heightened sense of gratitude for all that is in their environment that enables them to cope. On the other hand, children with fewer support systems may find it difficult to identify life events they feel grateful for.

Gratitude cannot be imposed from the outside. Suggesting that children “look on the bright side” in the face of personal struggle, community suffering, and/or systemic inequities would be very dismissive. Froh and Bono suggest that an appropriate response to children for whom high levels of stress makes the experience of gratitude challenging is to listen deeply, empathize, and acknowledge their feelings. An example might be to say, “That sounds really difficult...I can see why you are feeling like it can be hard to think of something to be grateful for.” Allowing children to be seen and heard, even when they are distressed, lets them know that their feelings are valid. By helping them understand and express their emotions, teachers can contribute to building children's resilience, as well as their capacity to understand and acknowledge the feelings of others – which is essential to gratitude.

Another consideration that may arise when exploring gratitude in the classroom is the influence of materialism. In a society oriented to consumerism, students may tend to focus on material things when considering what they are grateful for. They may feel envious of the possessions of others. Or they may take their possessions for granted, finding it difficult to value and appreciate what they do have. Introducing gratitude practices in the classroom can help diminish the sense of entitlement with which some students approach life. Through becoming more mindful of how to express gratitude, or through doing acts of kindness for others, they can experience both “giving” and “receiving” in ways that have a deep emotional impact. This can heighten awareness of the many intangible sources of good in our lives.

Begin With Yourself!

Teachers who want to begin developing gratitude in their classrooms often find it helpful to begin by exploring gratitude practices for themselves. Research suggests that teachers who exhibit gratitude feel more satisfied, accomplished and have more emotional reserves. Experiencing the benefits of gratitude firsthand can enhance your work with students by helping you be more in tune with how they will engage with the activities in this guide.

One place to begin is with the Video and Reading Lists in the *Resources for Teachers* section at the end of this guide. It contains resources that delve more deeply into the

research on gratitude, as well as ones that can be used for personal contemplation, or to inspire thinking about ways to work with students.

Trying out gratitude practices before using them with students will help deepen your understanding of the impact of this work. Here are some practices to try:

- Gratitude Journal: This is a well-researched tool for increasing our experience of gratitude, and the positive benefits associated with it. Use a notebook to write down at least three things per day that you are grateful for. Many people like to do this before going to bed at night. A variation is to take one item from your daily journal and write about it in more depth, acknowledging the intention of the person who you are grateful to, and the efforts they made. You can also write in detail about how their actions benefitted you.
- Gratitude Visit: Think of someone still living who has had a positive impact on your life. Write a letter to that person, describing in detail how their influence has benefitted you. Then make an appointment to visit that person, and read the letter aloud. Notice your emotions as you do so, as well as the emotions of the recipient.
- Strength Hunt: Once a day or once a week, take an inventory of the strengths you have drawn upon at home and at work. Reflect on times when you made difficult decisions, handled a challenge skillfully, resolved a problem, or made peace with others. Acknowledge in writing the ways that you have grown and learned from experience.
- Children's Strength Hunt: A variation is to make an index card or blank notebook page for each child in your class. Try to write down at least one strength that you observe in each child during the week. Keep adding to the list throughout the school year. It can be especially useful to do this with a child that you find difficult to work with. Notice what changes as you focus on the positive characteristics of each child.

Using This Guide

Each activity in the Guide follows a consistent format:

Grade level: The activities in this guide are divided into three grade levels – Grades K-2, Grades 3-5, and Grades 6-8. Many activities can be adapted for use with different grade levels.

Learning Objective: The learning objective describes the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes that are developed in each activity.

Gratitude Concept: Each activity addresses a specific concept related to gratitude (which is linked to the Learning Objective). Central to these activities are the ideas of intention, benefit and cost. According to Froh and Bono:¹³

- Acts of kindness that inspire gratitude are usually done on purpose, with *intention*. Someone has noticed us, thought about what we need, and chosen to do something to meet that need. Reflecting on the intentions behind these acts deepens our sense of gratitude.
- A related idea is that each act of kindness has a *cost* to the person who performs it. The cost may include time, effort or something that was given up, as well as any financial cost. When we understand those costs, we gain a deeper appreciation of the person who acted in a caring way.
- Finally, others' acts of kindness *benefit* us personally in ways that may be material, emotional, and/or social. Noticing and acknowledging the ways we benefit from others' actions enhances our gratitude.

Other key themes in this guide include:

- Bringing mindful awareness to the process of noticing the good in our lives
- Noticing and practicing gratitude for:
 - Material things
 - The actions of others
 - The qualities of ourselves and others
 - Nature's gifts
 - Being fully aware in the present moment
- The range of emotions associated with gratitude
- The importance of expressing gratitude
- The variety of ways that gratitude can be expressed
- The cycle of positive emotions that are generated when we engage in acts of kindness to others.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children learn and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

- Understand and manage emotions
- Set and achieve positive goals
- Feel and show empathy for others
- Establish and maintain positive relationships
- Make responsible decisions.

Five social-emotional competencies have been identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as foundational.¹⁴ The table on the next page lists those competencies, and ways in which gratitude practices can support their development.

SEL Competencies	How Gratitude Practices Support This Competency
Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.	Students develop a deeper awareness of their thoughts and feelings when they reflect mindfully on their experience of gratitude. Choosing to express gratitude also enhances students' confidence and optimism.
Self-management: The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.	Choosing to respond with gratitude, when experiencing kindness from others, requires students to regulate their thoughts, feelings and actions.
Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.	By considering the intentions and efforts of those they are grateful to, students develop social awareness. In particular, they develop the ability to take the perspective of others and to empathize with them.
Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.	When they express gratitude, students establish and maintain healthy relationships with others. Planning and carrying out acts of kindness toward others also strengthens relationship skills.
Responsible decision making: The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.	In choosing to express gratitude, students practice responsible decision-making and enhance the well-being of others, themselves and the world around them.

Materials: The materials listed for each activity are deliberately simple and low-cost. An internet connection and a TV or projector will be required to show the videos, which are listed by grade level at the end of this guide in the *Children's Videos* section. Publication information for the children's books referenced in the materials lists can be found in the *Children's Books* section.

Activity: The process of each activity is described in detail. This can be adapted to suit the needs of the group. Some activities have two parts, which can be done on different days. Some activities can be done more than once, to deepen children's learning.

Extensions: Each activity includes suggestions for one or more ways to follow up or extend students' learning.

Considerations:

Curriculum Integration: While the activities in this guide can be used in a stand-alone format, almost all of the activities can be integrated into the English Language Arts curriculum, as they engage children in speaking, listening, reading and writing. For example, many activities involve "collaborative conversations" with a partner or small group about things students are grateful for. Those conversations require listening with care and asking questions for clarification. Interviewing activities also encourage the practice of posing questions. Many can also be readily integrated into Art, Social Studies, or Science.

Writing experiences are integrated throughout the activities, beginning with the youngest children who may use a combination of writing and drawing to convey their experiences and opinions. In describing acts of kindness that they or others performed, and the responses that followed, they practice writing a sequential narrative. In writing about the intentions behind those acts, they use dialogue to convey thoughts, feelings and motivations of characters. Older students draw on different sources of information through interviews and historical research.

A number of the activities are based on children's books. As children listen to or read these stories, they develop a sensitivity to language, including figurative language, and learn new vocabulary. They describe how characters respond to major events and challenges, and explore points of view. They consider the motivations and feelings of the characters in events related to the idea of gratitude. Using books on gratitude during read-alouds periodically will enhance children's understanding.¹⁵

Daily practices for children: In addition to the activities in this guide, many teachers find value in establishing daily or weekly classroom practices and rituals involving gratitude. Some examples include:

- Gratitude journal: These are as effective with students as they are with adults! Encourage students to write 1-3 things they are grateful for at the end of each school day.

- Three minutes of gratitude: At the end of the day, set a timer for three minutes, and invite the class to briefly share something they have felt grateful for since waking up that morning.
- Closing circle: Establish a practice of holding a Friday afternoon gratitude circle to close the week. At this time, ask each student to share one thing from their gratitude journal that stands out to them from the week.
- Gratitude “detectives”: Ask students to watch for examples of kind and caring behavior by their classmates. When they see an example, they can write it on a card and deposit in a special box created for this purpose. At the end of the day or week, read the cards to the whole class.
- Appreciations: If you have been doing a “Strength Hunt” (see “Begin With Yourself!” above) for each child, end the week by telling each child something specific that you have appreciated about them during that week. Or write them a brief note of appreciation on a sticky note.

Enjoy using this guide, and deepening the role of gratitude in your life, and the lives of your students!

Activities: Grades K-2

Activity 1

Giving Thanks

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will create a definition of gratitude, and will be able to name what they feel grateful for.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

“Gratitude” is a sense of thankfulness or appreciation for the good in our lives. We can be grateful for tangible things, for things others do for us, and for personal characteristics or qualities in ourselves or others. We may also experience gratitude for the natural world, and non-material things such as love, health, nature, etc.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- *Bear Says Thanks* by Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman
- Drawing/writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK

Alone in his cave, Bear feels bored. He decides to invite his friends for dinner, but then realizes that he has no food in his cupboard. But along comes his friend Mouse with a pie, and Bear says, “Thanks.” One by one, more friends visit, each one bringing food, which Bear thanks them for. A wonderful feast is ready, when Bear says how badly he feels that he doesn’t have anything to share. The animals hug him and reassure him that it is alright – that Bear has stories he can share! Once more, Bear says, “Thanks,” and the animals join in a feast.

ACTIVITY

- Introduce the book by encouraging the students to look at the cover. Ask:
 - What animals do you see here?
 - What does it look like they are doing? How can you tell?
 - What do you think they are feeling? How can you tell?
- Begin reading the book. As students realize the pattern in the text, encourage them to complete the sentence, “And the bear says...”
- Pause the story when the bear frowns because he has no food to share. Ask:
 - How is bear feeling now?
 - What do you think the other animals will say or do?
- Pause again at the page that says, “...the friends feel grateful for their good friend Bear.” Ask:

- What does the word grateful mean?
- At the end of the story, ask:
 - What were some of the things that Bear was grateful for?
 - Yes, Bear felt grateful for all the things his friends brought, but what else did he also feel thankful for?
 - Bear didn't have any food to share – but the animals were still grateful to him. What were they grateful for?
 - Can you think of a time you were grateful to someone – maybe a time when you said “Thanks” to another person?
- Give them a few moments to think more about a time they were grateful to someone. Then have them turn to a partner and share their idea.
- Ask:
 - Would anyone like to share their ideas with the whole group?
- As you hear their responses, point out the different examples of being grateful for objects or possessions, for actions that show caring or friendship, or for personal qualities, etc.

EXTENSIONS

- Have student's role-play the story, or act it out using puppets.
- Have the students draw a picture of what they were grateful for, and write or dictate about what their picture shows.
- Post the gratitude pictures on a bulletin board, or make them into a class book.

Activity 2

Sharing Gratitude Stories

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will practice speaking about a time they felt grateful, and listening to someone else's experience of gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Gratitude requires the ability to notice the caring actions of others. By intentionally noticing and naming those actions, we develop our capacity to feel gratitude.

SEL COMPETENCIES

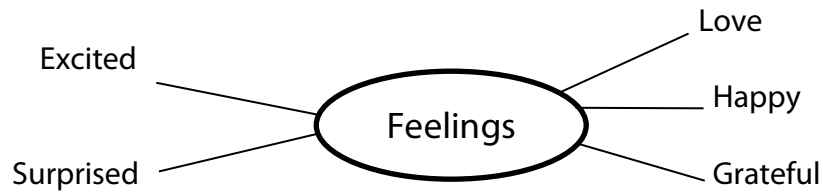
Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and markers
- Drawing/writing materials

ACTIVITY

- Explain to the class that they are going to talk to a partner about a time that they felt grateful, and listen to their partner share an experience as well.
- First, have the class close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Say:
 - *"Think of a time when someone did something kind for you. Maybe they gave you something ... or showed you that they cared for you ... or helped you in some way ... Try to see a picture in your mind of that person ... and what that person did ... and how you felt ... When you have that picture in your mind, open your eyes."*
- Have students form pairs. Put two or three questions on the board for the listeners to ask. Have students decide who will ask the questions, and who will answer them.
 - "When did someone do something kind for you?"
 - "What did you feel?"
 - (For older students) "How did you show that person what you felt?"
- After the first person has had a chance to answer the questions, have students reverse roles.
- When pairs have finished their questions, ask:
 - What were some of the feelings that you talked about?
- Record the feelings mentioned in a web:



- Point out that when someone does something kind or caring for us, we may have lots of different feelings, including feeling grateful.
- If the students discussed how they showed their feelings toward the person who was kind or caring to them, ask for examples of what they said or did. Responses may include:
 - I said “thank you.”
 - I gave her a hug.
 - I smiled.
 - I wrote a note.
- Point out that there may be many ways to show you are grateful.

EXTENSIONS

- Have students draw a picture of what they discussed.
- Have students write a few sentences or a short paragraph about what they visualized, how they felt, and how they may have responded.

Activity 3

Caring Intentions

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will identify the intentions of characters in a story who do acts of kindness for others.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

People who do acts of kindness for others usually do so intentionally. When we understand their intentions, our gratitude deepens.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

- *Miss Tizzy* by Libba Moore Gray
- For Extension: Drawing/writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK

Miss Tizzy always wears a purple hat with a flower in it. She lives in a pink house with a yard full of flowers that spill onto the sidewalk. Each day of the week, she welcomes the neighborhood children to her home for a different fun activity – baking cookies, putting on puppet shows, making a marching band, playing dress-up, roller-skating, and more. The children love it all – and they love Miss Tizzy. But one day, Miss Tizzy is sick and doesn't get out of bed. The children don't know what to do without her. Then they decide to do for Miss Tizzy all the things she has done with them. They bake her cookies, put on a puppet show for her, play music outside her house, etc. At the end of the book, Miss Tizzy is still in bed, but smiling deeply about all the ways the children have shown that they care.

ACTIVITY

- Tell the class that you are going to read them a story about Miss Tizzy, a woman who does many kind things for children in her neighborhood. Show the cover of the book, and ask students:
 - What do you see?
 - What are your first thoughts about Miss Tizzy?
- Read the book. As the different activities are described, ask:
 - What do you think the children are feeling? How can you tell?
 - What do you think Miss Tizzy is feeling? How can you tell?

- On the page where the children bring their art work to “people who had stopped smiling,” ask:
 - How do you think the people felt when they got the childrens’ drawings?
- At the end of the story, ask:
 - How do you think Miss Tizzy felt after the children did their acts of kindness?
 - Why do you think Miss Tizzy chose to do all those fun things with the children?
 - Why did the children decide to do what they did for Miss Tizzy?
- Point out that people who do kind and caring things for others usually do them on purpose. They mean to make others feel good.
- Form small groups. Give each group one of the scenes from the book (corresponding to one of the days in the week). Ask the groups to think about what the children in the book could have said to let Miss Tizzy know that they understood why she did these caring things, and that they were grateful.
- Ask groups to share their ideas, or act them out in a short skit.

EXTENSION

- Ask: “Is there someone in your life who cares about you the way Miss Tizzy cares about the children in the book? Or in another way that shows that they care?” Have students draw a picture of that person, and write what they are grateful for. Or, they can write a note to that person, expressing their gratitude in a way that shows they understand why this person cares about them.

Activity 4

Gratitude in School

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will notice people in the school community that they feel grateful to and express their gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

It is important to express gratitude when we feel it – and there are many ways to do this.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

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

ACTIVITY

- 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.
- 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 who 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.
- 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 the 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?

EXTENSION

- Have students visualize a family or community member that they are grateful to. Ask them to find a way to express what they are grateful for and why. Encourage students to share these expressions of gratitude with the family or community member, and report back on what that experience was like.

Activity 5

Acts of Kindness

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will identify ways that they have acted with kindness and caring toward others.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

When we choose to do something that benefits others, we often benefit ourselves emotionally.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Drawing/writing materials

ACTIVITY

- Explain to students that we often feel grateful when others do things for us that show kindness, caring and helpfulness.
- But there are also times when the students themselves have done things that are kind, caring and helpful to someone.
- Ask students to close their eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Then, ask them to visualize a time they showed kindness to someone else, using these prompts:

"Think of someone that you have been kind to ... or someone you helped ... Maybe it is someone who said "Thank you" to you recently ... Try to see a picture of that person in your mind ... Silently raise your hand when you have thought of someone ... (Be sure each student has raised their hand before continuing.)

*Now remember what you did for that person that was kind or caring or helpful ... See yourself doing it ... How do you feel inside?
What is the other person saying or doing when you are kind to them? ...
How does that feel to you?"*

- Invite the class to open their eyes. Ask for a few volunteers to share:
 - Who did you show kindness to?
 - What did you do?
 - Why did you want to do this?
 - Did the other person show gratitude in some way? How?
 - If that person showed gratitude, how did it make you feel?
- Ask students to draw a picture of what they visualized, and write a caption for it. Or write a short paragraph about it, using the format on the worksheet on the next page.

EXTENSIONS

- Encourage older students to keep a journal about times when they show kindness to others, the reasons they do this, and their feelings about it.
- Discuss with the class an act of kindness that they could do for someone in the school. Help them carry it out. Afterwards, have students describe how that person reacted, and how the students felt when they did the act of kindness.

My Acts of Kindness

I showed kindness to _____

This is what I did: _____

I did this because _____

This is how _____ showed gratitude to me:

I felt

Activity 6

What Friends Do

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will notice that showing kindness to others often leads to others showing kindness to them. Students will realize the importance of expressing both kindness and gratitude in a variety of ways, including words and actions.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Acts of kindness are usually done intentionally. They often prompt a “virtuous cycle” of gratitude and reciprocal kindness. Expressing gratitude can bring happiness to both the person who expresses it, and the person who receives it.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- *Splat Says Thank You!* by Rob Scotton
- Drawing/writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK

Splat the cat and Seymour the mouse are friends. When Seymour is sick in bed and covered in spots, Splat wonders how he can make Seymour smile. Splat pulls out a book he made for Seymour, which he calls the “Friendship Book.” In it, Splat has written about the many caring and helpful things that Seymour has done for him. By the time he finishes the book, Seymour has lost his spots and is no longer sick.

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - What is a friend?
 - How do you know when someone is your friend?
 - How do you show someone that you are their friend?
- Tell the class that you are going to read them a book about a cat named Splat and a mouse named Seymour. Splat and Seymour are good friends; as you read, ask the class to watch for ways they show their friendship.
- Pause after the first page, which shows that Seymour is sick. After Splat wonders, “How can I make Seymour smile?” ask:
 - If you had a sick friend, what would you do to make your friend smile?

- Continue reading, noting the many ways that Seymour has shown caring and friendship to Splat. As each act of kindness is described, point to the words “Thank you” on each page, and encourage students to say them along with you and Splat.
- At the end of the story, point at the picture of Seymour. Ask:
 - What is different about Seymour now?
 - How do you think Seymour is feeling?
- Students may notice that he is no longer covered in spots; he looks happy and is not sick any more. Ask:
 - What do you think helped Seymour get better?
- Have the class recall some of the ways that Seymour showed friendship to Splat. Write these ideas on the board. For example, students might mention:
 - Gave a flashlight so Splat could read in bed
 - Brought cupcakes
 - Woke Splat up when he overslept
 - Didn’t tell Splat’s secret
- With older students, point out that some of these ways of showing friendship involve giving things that Splat could touch; others involve actions that show caring and kindness, without material things. Have students identify these differences in the list.
- Finally, ask:
 - Why did Splat read the “Friendship Book” to Seymour?
 - Why do you think Seymour did all the kind things for Splat?
 - If there was one more page in the book, where Seymour could say or do something that would show Splat how he feels after hearing the “Friendship Book,” what would that be?
- Have the class draw their ideas for a new last page of the book, showing how Seymour might respond to Splat. They can make a caption for their pictures, and/or include words that Seymour might say.
- Allow students to share their work. Point out how Seymour’s kindness led Splat to show that he cared when Seymour was sick; and Seymour to respond with gratitude in return.

EXTENSIONS

- Have students draw a picture of a time someone in the class showed friendship or caring to them. Encourage them to write a sentence about their picture, in the style of Splat's "Friendship Book," ending with an expression of thanks. When students have finished their drawing and writing, set aside a time when they can express their thanks out loud to the person they drew or wrote about.
- Put students' drawings and writings about examples of caring acts together into a class "Friendship Book." Update the book on a regular basis as students do more acts of kindness, and express gratitude to each other.

Activity 7

Kindness Buddy

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will notice how doing acts of kindness for others builds positive feelings in the classroom.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

The practices of extending kindness to others and expressing gratitude deepen social connections.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Slips of paper or index cards with the name of one student per card
- Bag or box to hold the slips of paper
- Writing materials
- Large ball of yarn

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - Can you recall a time that someone did something for you that was kind or helpful?
 - Can you describe for us how it made you feel?
- Explain:
 - *This week, everyone in the class is going to have a chance to do something kind for someone else, and to have someone else do something kind for you.*
 - *Each of you will get the name of another student in the class.*
 - *That student will be your "kindness buddy" for the week.*
 - *At least once during the week, do something kind or helpful for your kindness buddy without telling them you are their "kindness buddy".*
 - *At the end of the week, you will get to find out who your kindness buddy was.*
- Place the cards with names of the students in a bag or box. Have students draw a name. If they draw their own name, they can put it back and draw a second time. If there is an odd number of students in the class, add your own name and draw a child's name.

- After drawing names, suggest that students take some time individually to think about what their act(s) of kindness might be. Encourage students to be creative and challenge them to think of as many as they can. They may want to write ideas down as a reminder to themselves – but be sure they keep these a surprise!
- Set a time for sharing who the kindness buddies were. Remind students the day before of that time to ensure no one is left out of the final activity.
- Before revealing who the kindness buddies are, you may want to first have students think about or write down all the kind things that other students did for them that week and try to guess who their kindness buddy could be. This does not need to be shared.
- At the designated time, ask students to sit or stand in a circle. Ask for a volunteer to be the first student to speak and demonstrate:
 - Take the ball of yarn and loosely wrap it once around your wrist.
 - Then say: “My kindness buddy is _____, and my act of kindness was _____.”
 - Then, gently roll or toss the ball of yarn to your kindness buddy.
 - The kindness buddy will have a few moments to share how the act of kindness made them feel and say a few words of gratitude.
 - Then the buddy will reveal in the same way saying: “My kindness buddy is _____, and my act of kindness was _____.”
 - Then, wrap the yarn once around their wrist and finish by rolling or tossing the ball of yarn to the next kindness buddy.
 - This will continue until everyone has shared who their buddy was.
- The entire class will now be joined in a web of yarn. Ask:
 - What does this web mean to you?
 - How did it make you feel to do something kind for your kindness buddy?
 - How did it make you feel when your buddy did something kind?
 - How do acts of kindness connect us to each other?
 - How can we help each other to do more acts of kindness?

EXTENSIONS

- The activity can be repeated regularly, with children choosing a new kindness buddy each week.
- Students can extend the activity to adults in the school, and plan surprise acts of kindness to carry out.

Activity 8

Appreciating Our Bodies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will practice deepening awareness of their bodies, and experiencing a sense of gratitude for all that their bodies allow them to do.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

We can choose to develop gratitude by paying attention to aspects of ourselves, others, or our environment, that we may sometimes taken for granted.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and marker
- For Extension: Drawing/writing materials

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - What is one amazing thing your body has done today?
- Write responses on the board.
- Tell the class that they are going to spend some time noticing their bodies and all the things they can do. Bodies have many different parts, so they are just going to notice a few of them today.
- Ask students to get into a comfortable sitting or lying position, depending on space. Invite them to close their eyes so they can really notice how their bodies feel. Direct their focus to three or four different parts of their bodies, depending on their attention span. Encourage them to notice how that part of the body feels, recall how they have used that part of their body today, and feel a sense of gratitude for that part of their body. Use the text below as a guide for how to do this (adapt the text to your class and classroom):

"With your eyes closed, start to pay attention to your breathing...how the breath goes in and out of your body...Inside your chest, you have lungs that take air in and let it out...Do you feel your chest moving when you breathe in and out?...Do you feel your belly moving?...You can put your hand on your chest and your belly and notice if you feel them moving...This happens all day long, even when we are not paying attention to it...Take a moment to say 'Thank you' to your lungs and for your breathing.

Now pay attention to your feet...how they feel where they are touching the floor...your socks... your shoes...Do they feel warm or cold?... Heavy or light?... Now think about some of the things your feet have done today...Try to see a picture in your mind of where your feet have been, and what they have done for you today...Take a moment to thank your feet for what they do for you.

Now pay attention to your arms... how they feel where they are touching the floor (or your chair, desk, the rest of your body)...Do they feel warm or cold?... Heavy or light?... Now think about some of the things your arms have done today...Try to see a picture in your mind of what your arms have done for you today...Take a moment to thank your arms for what they do for you.

Now pay attention to your ears...you can touch them if you would like to... Are they warm or cold?...What sounds are your ears hearing right now?... Now think about some of the things your ears have heard today...Try to see a picture in your mind of where those sounds were coming from...Take a moment to be thankful for your ears and what they can do for you.

Choose one more part of your body and say 'Thank you' silently for all that it does for you every day.

Take a few more deep breaths... and open your eyes."

Note: Adapt script as necessary to acknowledge any differences in the physical abilities your students may have (ie. Leg braces, asthma, visual impairment).

- Ask students to share what this experience was like for them. Then ask if anyone wants to share something that their feet (arms, ears, hands) have done that they feel grateful for.
- After students have had a chance to share, ask them to:
 - Draw a picture of one of the things you saw a part of your body doing during the visualization.
 - Now, add a caption that says why you are grateful for this part of your body.

- Students can read these aloud to the class. You may want to revisit the question that you began the activity with, and see if their answers have changed. Ask:
 - What is one amazing thing your body has done today?
- Invite the class to show their gratitude for their bodies by giving themselves a hug!

EXTENSIONS

- This activity can be repeated on different days, each time focusing on different parts of the body – legs, arms, stomach, heart, eyes, nose, etc. Students can also repeat the drawing activity, ultimately creating a personal book about gratitude for their bodies.
- A number of children’s books can be found that teach children about their bodies, including organs such as the heart, lungs, and stomach that constantly work without our conscious awareness. These books can be used in conjunction with this activity.¹
- Discuss with the class ways that we can take good care of our bodies -for example, eating healthy food, getting enough sleep, getting exercise, washing our hands, etc. Keeping our bodies healthy is a way to show our gratitude.

Activity 9

A Poem to the World

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will identify something in the natural world that they appreciate and are grateful for, and will create a collage or poem that expresses their gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Our gratitude can extend not only to people, but to the world around us. Noticing things in the natural world that are sources of beauty, joy and awe can enhance our sensitivity to, and appreciation for our environment. This can, in turn, lead to a greater willingness to take action to care for the environment.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- *Dear World* by Takayo Noda
- Drawing/writing materials
- For Extension: Magazines, scissors, glue, and construction paper

ABOUT THE BOOK

Dear World is a collection of poems, written as children's letters addressed to something in the natural world that they notice and appreciate – a bird, the dawn, apples, snow, the sun, stars, etc. It is important to note that some of the poems, such as "Dear Valentines," are not about something in the natural world; others, such as "Dear Trees," do not focus on appreciation or gratitude. The majority of the poems, however, are suitable for this activity.

ACTIVITY

This activity has two parts. They can be done on two different days.

Part 1:

- Introduce the class to the book *Dear World* by explaining that the author has identified things in nature that are beautiful, that she appreciates, and which give her joy. She has made pictures of those things, and written poems to them, expressing gratitude.
- Read a few of the poems to the class. Ones that are particularly suitable for this activity are "Dear World," "Dear Bird," "Dear Dawn," "Dear Apples," "Dear Snow," "Dear Sun," "Dear Tulips," and "Dear Stars."
- After each poem, ask:
 - How do you think the author feels about the subject of the poem (for example, the bird, or the apples, etc.)?
 - How can you tell?

- How do you feel about the subject of the poem (for example, the bird, or the apples, etc.)?
- If you were writing a poem or a letter to a bird or to apples, what would you say?

Part 2:

- If possible, take the students outside for a walk around the playground or school grounds. Ask them to notice things in nature that they like, that make them happy, or that they are grateful for. These may include things like the sky, sun, clouds and rain. There may be trees, flowers, or other plants that they appreciate. They may notice birds, insects, or other small animals that they are interested in.
- If there is a park near the school, arrange to walk in the park and have students notice aspects of the natural world that they are grateful for.
- When students return to the classroom, have them create a list of things they observed that they feel grateful for. Then encourage them to write a poem or letter to one of those things, expressing their gratitude.
- Have the children read their poems or letters aloud to the class.
- Ask:
 - What else can we do to show our appreciation for the natural world?
 - How can we show kindness and caring for the environment?
- If possible, develop these ideas into an actual project that students can carry out, such as removing trash from an outdoor area, planting flowers or a tree, making bird feeders, starting a recycling project in the school, etc.

EXTENSIONS

- Poems can be compiled into a class book.
- Point out to the class that the illustrations in *Dear World* are cut paper collages. Invite students to make their own collages about things in nature that they appreciate. Provide magazines with pictures of the natural world, along with construction paper, glue and scissors. Students can use these collages to illustrate their poems or letters.
- This activity could be done around Earth Day.² Explain to the class that Earth Day is celebrated around the world on April 22 by communities of people who want to celebrate and care for the environment.

Activity 10

Beauty Everywhere

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will use singing as a way to express gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

Strengthening our ability to notice the world's gifts deepens our gratitude, and our daily experience of positive emotions.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

- Internet access and TV/projector
- Whiteboard and marker
- *What a Wonderful World* by George David Weiss and Bob Thiele
- Download or stream video: [Louis Armstrong: "What a Wonderful World"](#)
- Download or stream video: ["What a Wonderful World: Playing for Change"](#)
- Drawing/writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is an illustrated version of the song "What a Wonderful World," made famous by singer and jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong. The activity can be done with or without the book.

ACTIVITY

- Tell the class that you are going to teach them a song called "What a Wonderful World." Ask:
 - From the title of the song, what do you think it might be about?
- Read the book to the class, encouraging them to say the lines after you.
- Then, show the video *Louis Armstrong: "What a Wonderful World."* This has the original version of the song, sung by Louis Armstrong, along with beautiful images that relate to the words (length: 2:24). Write the lyrics on the board first or turn on the closed-captioning so that students may read the words. Encourage the class to sing along!
- A second video, *"What a Wonderful World: Playing for Change"* features the same song, sung by children's choirs in Uganda, France and the United States (length: 3:40).

- Ask:
 - Who would like to share their thoughts about the videos?
 - What words or pictures would you use, if you were writing a song called “What a Wonderful World”?
- Ask students to close their eyes for a minute and see what “wonderful world” ideas come to their minds. Have a few volunteers share.
- For younger students: Ask them to draw a picture of something they think is wonderful in their world, and write a caption beginning with the words “I see...”
- For older students: Have them try writing their own verse to the song. Rhyming is optional! This may be done individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class. Encourage students to illustrate the song they create.

EXTENSIONS

- Make a video of the class singing “What a Wonderful World,” either the original Louis Armstrong version, or a version they write themselves. Share the video with parents as a way to let them know that the class has been learning about gratitude.
- Find an occasion for students to perform their “wonderful world” songs – for example, at an assembly or a parent meeting.
- Make a visit to a nursing home and perform the song(s) for an audience there. Ask the audience what they would put in a song about our wonderful world. Notice any expressions of gratitude!

Activities: Grades 3-5

Activity 1

A Time I Felt Grateful

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will define gratitude, and give an example of a time they felt grateful. They will notice that there are many types of things we can feel grateful for.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

“Gratitude” is a sense of thankfulness or appreciation for the good in our lives. We can feel grateful for material things, the actions of others that show care, aspects of the natural world, and non-material things that inspire us or enrich our lives.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

- Sticky Notes
- Pencils
- Four signs, posted in different corners of the room, which say “Things We Own,” “Kind Actions,” “Nature,” and “Other Important Things”
- For Extension: Writing paper/drawing materials

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - Think of someone that you said “Thank you” to recently.
 - Take a few moments to think about this silently.
 - Now turn to a partner and talk about who you thought of and why.
- When pairs have finished speaking, ask:
 - Who can share an example of a time you said “Thank you” to someone, and why?
 - Does anyone know what the word “gratitude” means?
- Explain that “gratitude” refers to the feeling we have when we appreciate other people for being kind, or for doing caring things. Give an example from your own life, such as: “I felt grateful when someone held the door for me this morning because I was carrying heavy bags.”
- Discuss how we can also feel gratitude when we appreciate tangible things that we have, things that someone gives us, or things that are part of our daily life that we may not give much thought to. Give an example from your own life, such as: “I felt grateful for my dinner last night, because I was really hungry and it was delicious.”

- Demonstrate how many people also feel grateful for things in the natural world. Give an example of this, such as: "I feel grateful for the rain that gives us water to drink, and helps plants grow."
- Discuss how sometimes we feel gratitude for things we cannot directly see or touch, but which are nonetheless important, such as health, our heritage or traditions, fairness, ideas that inspire us, or just being alive. Give another example from your own life, such as: "I feel grateful when I get to learn something new, because learning helps my mind grow."
- Explain that we often show gratitude by saying "Thank you" to someone. When we feel gratitude, we say that we are "thankful" or "grateful."
- Give a sticky note to each student. Ask them to jot down a short note about a time they felt grateful and what they were grateful for, or who they were grateful to (this may be the same idea that they shared, or a new one).
- Point out the four signs in the four corners of the room. Tell students to:
 - Look at your sticky note, and think about which of the four signs, "Things We Own," "Kind Actions," "Nature," and "Other Important Things," best describes what you wrote about?
 - Move silently and stand near the sign that describes your idea.
 - If your idea doesn't match one of the signs, stand in the center of the room. Any students in the center may come up with a new category.
 - Share what you wrote within your group.
- If there is only one student in the center of the room, ask them to share what they wrote and the new category. Discuss the new gratitude category as a class.
- Ask for one or two volunteers from each group to give an example of the type of gratitude indicated by their sign or new category.
- When examples from each group have been shared, tell the groups to move together clockwise to stand next to a new sign. Have students again discuss things that they feel grateful for that would be described by this new sign (they do not need to write these down). Ask for an example or two from each group.
- If time allows, continue the clockwise rotation until everyone has moved through all four (or five) stations.

- Discuss:
 - Which examples were easy to think of? Why might that be?
 - Which examples were hard to think of? Why might that be?
 - What examples of gratitude did you hear that surprised you?
 - What did you learn about gratitude from this activity?

EXTENSIONS

- Have students write a paragraph or draw an illustration of what they are grateful for. Post these on a bulletin board.
- Encourage students to look at any tangible “things” that were discussed. Who are the people who gave them those things? Think about the people that helped to make them. Include those people in your gratitude!

Activity 2

Feelings of Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will practice observations skills and identify the emotions related to gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

By observing carefully, we can see non-verbal clues to what others are feeling. Gratitude requires the ability to notice the actions of others. We feel gratitude for the actions of others that benefit us.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

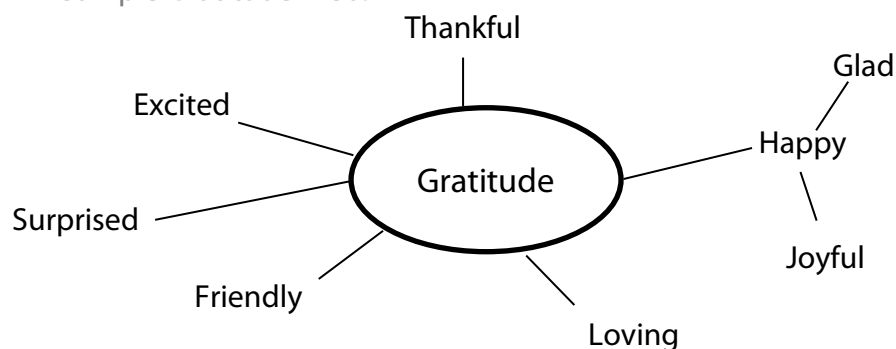
- Sticky notes or index cards
- Pencils
- Whiteboard and marker

ACTIVITY

- Divide the class into pairs. Ask students to decide who will be person A and person B. Give out an index card or sticky note and a pencil to each person – explain that this activity has two parts, and that person B will use their card and pencil in the first part; person A will use their card and pencil in the second part. Then give instructions as follows:
 - Person A thinks for one minute about a time they felt gratitude toward another person; if they like, they can close their eyes while doing this. Encourage them to think about where they were, who they felt grateful to, what the person did that made them feel grateful, how they responded, and any other feelings they had about this person – without speaking.
 - While A is visualizing this, B observes their partner very carefully. On the card, write anything that you notice changes about A – for example, changes in their facial expression, how they are holding their hands, movements in their shoulders or anywhere else, how they are breathing, etc. Write your observations on the card, along with any words that you think describe the feelings that A might be having.
 - After one minute, ask students to reverse roles, so that A is the observer, and B visualizes a time they felt gratitude.
 - After the second round, have students share with their partners their observations, and the feeling words they came up with.

- Bring the class together and make a “Gratitude Web.” Write the word “Gratitude” in a circle in the center on the board. Ask the class to share the feeling words that they wrote during the partner activity, and any others that come up. As they name feeling words, draw a line from the word “Gratitude” and write the feeling word, creating a web of words. Try to cluster similar words together as you write. (Some students may mention feeling words that describe the person they visualized – this is fine, just try to cluster those words together.)

- Sample Gratitude Web:



- Finally, ask the students:
 - What do you notice about the words?
 - Why does gratitude bring up these other feelings?
- Use this as a chance to point out that we feel grateful when other people do things that have made our lives better in some way, large or small. With older students, explain that we feel grateful when others do things that benefit us.

Note: While most of the words in the web are likely to express happiness, appreciation, love, etc., it is possible that the visualization may bring up other feelings as well. For example, a child who feels grateful for the kindness of a grandparent who has recently passed away may feel sadness come up while remembering their kindness. If this comes up, be sure to acknowledge the sadness (or fear, worry, or whatever emotion the student might mention), without pushing the student to focus on gratitude instead. It may be a time to introduce the idea that we can feel more than one feeling at the same time. For example, in this scenario, a teacher might say, “I’m so sorry that you lost your grandmother. This must be a very sad time for you. I can see that remembering her brings up sad feelings, as well as all the loving feelings that you are grateful for.”

EXTENSION

- Post the Gratitude Web in the classroom and encourage students to add words as they continue to learn about gratitude. These words can be used in writing activities.

Activity 3

Expressing Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will “put themselves in the shoes” of a person to whom they feel grateful, and imagine what the person’s reasons for acting kindly might be. Students will practice expressing gratitude verbally and in writing.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Those who act in ways that benefit us generally do so intentionally. When we express gratitude, we can share both our understanding of the intention behind a caring act, and the benefits we receive from it.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Optional: Whiteboard and marker

ACTIVITY

- Explain to students that when people do things that we are grateful for, they often do them intentionally. This means that it is not an accident that they act in ways that are caring; they do caring things on purpose, because they want to.
- Ask students to take a few deep breaths, close their eyes and recall a person that recently did something kind, caring or helpful for them. It may be another student, a family member, a neighbor, or someone at their school. Encourage them to replay the scene in their mind, and how they felt.
- With eyes still closed, ask students to:
 - Think about why they think this person did this kind, caring or helpful act.
 - What was their intention or reason for doing this?
 - What did you feel?
- When students are ready to open their eyes, have them jot down a few thoughts about what they felt the intention of the person they recalled was.

- Ask each student to turn to a partner and describe what they visualized. Their description may include:
 - What the person did that made you feel grateful;
 - What you think their intention was; and
 - How you benefited from what this person did.
- Working in these pairs, have students pick one of the incidents described and come up with a short skit about the experience of gratitude. The skit should focus on how you can express your gratitude to a person who does something kind, caring or helpful.
- Allow time for pairs to perform their skits. You may want to record some of the language used to express gratitude on the board.

EXTENSION

- Ask students to think back on the experience of gratitude they visualized, and write a note expressing their gratitude to the person they recalled. Remind the students to mention the intention of this person, and how they personally benefitted from this person's actions. Encourage students to send or deliver these notes.

Activity 4

Another Way of Saying Thanks

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to say “thank you” in American Sign Language (ASL) and brainstorm non-verbal ways of expressing gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

We can express gratitude through gestures, signs, and actions, as well as words.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- *Thanks a Million* by Nikki Grimes
- Whiteboard and marker

ACTIVITY

- Ask:
 - Think of someone in the class that you are grateful to.
 - Now, think of what that person did to make you feel grateful.
 - When someone does something kind for you, how does it make you feel?
 - What do you usually say to someone when they do something kind for you?
 - And what if that person speaks a language other than English?
 - Does anyone know other ways to say “thank you” in another language?
 - What if a person was deaf or hard of hearing? How would you express your gratitude?
- Read “A Lesson from the Deaf,” from the book *Thanks a Million* by Nikki Grimes. Let the class know that they will learn how to say “Thank you” in ASL which is one way that people who are deaf or hearing impaired can communicate. The sign for “Thank You” in American Sign Language is illustrated below or view the video of the sign (the link is available in video resource list).
- Read the poem a second time, demonstrating the sign for “Thank you” using the actions described in the poem, or illustrated below, with the class following.

ASL:



"Thank you"

- Ask students to find a partner, _____ and think of something they are grateful to that person for or something they are grateful for in general. Then read the poem and sign "thank you" while facing their partner. Ask them to share why they are grateful.
- Ask:
 - Have you ever expressed your gratitude to someone in a way that didn't use words?
 - Did anyone ever express gratitude to you in a way that didn't use words?
- Have students close their eyes and spend a minute or so in silent reflection thinking about a way they can express gratitude without using words.
- Then, ask for examples of ways that they or others have expressed gratitude without words. List these on the board. Possible examples may include hugging, kissing, smiling, giving a gift, making a favorite food, sharing something you drew or painted, etc.
- Ask:
 - How did you know that these things were ways of expressing gratitude?

EXTENSIONS

- Share this quote with students: "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." - William Arthur Ward. Ask students to discuss or write about this quote. Why is finding a way to express gratitude so important?

Activity 5

Gratitude Mirror

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will deepen their understanding of gratitude through “embodying” this concept.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

The experience of gratitude can bring about positive emotions that can be expressed both verbally and physically.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management

MATERIALS

- Internet access and TV/projector
- Download or stream video: [Grateful: A Love Song to the World](#)
- Optional: Handout of Lyrics (p. 46-47)

ACTIVITY

- Point out to the class that sometimes we show gratitude through actions or gestures, as well as through words. Ask students to think for a moment about a movement or gesture that conveys the feeling of gratitude.
- Have the class stand in a circle and explain that you will demonstrate the Gratitude Mirror. Name something that you are grateful for, and simultaneously make a gesture or motion that demonstrates gratitude. Ask the students to both repeat what you said and mirror back your motion.
- Once they have the idea, ask a student to continue the Gratitude Mirror by naming what s/he is grateful for and demonstrating their gesture or action. Keep the activity moving around the circle at a fairly quick pace until everyone in the class has had a chance to have their words and movement reflected back to them. End the activity with a round of applause.
- Ask:
 - What was it like to have your motion and what you were grateful for, reflected back to you by the group?
 - Why did you choose the motion or gesture that you did? Does it have a special meaning for you?
- Show the video *Grateful: A Love Song to the World* (length: 5 minutes). Ask students to notice the movements that the singers and dancers are making and how these express gratitude.

- Show the video a second time. Have students sing along to the chorus below or use the full lyrics on the next page. If space allows, they can also do their own “grateful” movements. (Remind them to look around at where others in the room are, and to be mindful of their personal space, and the space of others.)

Chorus for “Grateful: A Love Song to the World”

All that I am,
All that I see,
All that I’ve been and all that I’ll ever be
Is a blessing,
It’s so amazing
And I’m grateful for it all, for it all

EXTENSIONS

- Students can work in pairs or small groups to create a “human sculpture” or “statue” that expresses the idea of gratitude. They can take turns demonstrating the pose they come up with to the class.
- Students can create their own song or video about gratitude.

“Grateful: A Love Song to the World”

By Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmood

Verse 1:

You're my life,
You're my breath,
You're a smile
You're my guest
You're the earth
You're the sun
You're the grass
You are love
You're my hands
You're a bug
You're my eyes
You're a hug
You're the light
In the dark
You're the spark
You are fun
You're my mom
You are water
You're the stars
You're my daughter
You're my friend
Till the end
You're my dreams
You're my father
You're the ants on the ground
The miracles that surround
I'm feelin' it all around
The hemisphere and the clouds
You're my pain you're my sorrow
You're my hope for tomorrow
You're the strength when I'm hollow
You're the path that I follow
You're the blessings that exist
The small things that are bliss
The gift to realize that
Everything is a gift

Chorus:

All that I am
All that I see
All that I've been and all that I'll ever be
Is a blessing
It's so amazing
And I'm grateful for it all, for it all

Verse 2:

You're the blessings
Every time I try to count,
You're the lessons
That I learn
Every time I turn around,
You're the water when I'm burned
Every time I think I've found
Everything I'm looking for,
You're the sign sayin'
Stop to take a bow
And keep moving forward
And start looking towards your heart,
it'll open all the doors
And only then you'll start
To hear the world sing in chorus
With your mind and heart
Aligned in purpose
Everything will feel gorgeous

Chorus:

All that I am
All that I see
All that I've been and all that I'll ever be
Is a blessing
It's so amazing
And I'm grateful for it all, for it all

"Grateful: A Love Song to the World"

(continued)

Breakdown 1:

Everyday I sit and pray
Cuz what I have is
More than I deserve
Or could ever imagine
How do I give back
To all of this magic
And spread the love
So everybody can have it
Doesn't matter if I'm rich or poor
If I gotta family or if I'm all alone
Bad things happen I can just complain and
moan
But there's a million things that I can be
grateful for

Breakdown 2:

So I lift up my hands now
And I open my heart
And my gratitude goes out
To everything near and far

Final Chorus:

Everything I am
And everything I see
Everything I hope
And everything I dream
Everything I feel
And everything I be
I Look deep down
And feel all the blessings
I'm grateful for it all
It's amazing
All that I am
All that I see
All that I've been and all that I'll ever be
Is a blessing
Its so amazing
And I'm grateful for it all, for it all

You're the blessings that exist
The small things that are bliss
The gift to realize that
Everything is a gift

Lyrics by and courtesy of Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmod
Empty Hands Music
www.emptyhandsmusic.org

Activity 6

What If We Didn't Have This?

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.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

There are many small things in our daily lives that we sometimes take for granted. When we notice and appreciate those things, we increase the amount of positive emotions we experience in a day. One way to become more aware of and grateful for those small daily "benefits" we receive is to imagine our lives without them.

SEL COMPETENCY

Self-awareness

MATERIALS

- A copy of "What If We Didn't Have This?" (p. 50-51) cut into separate cards
- Bowl, box or bag to put cards in
- Writing materials

ACTIVITY

- 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 aloud what they chose. 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, each student 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 our 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.

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. Cards can also 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.

Adapted from *Sunny Days in Second Grade*.¹

What If We Didn't Have This?

Paper towels



Windows



Cafeteria



Water fountains



Desks



Pencil sharpeners



Lights



Gym



Erasers



Buses



Playground



Tables



Activity 7

Gratitude Nature Walk

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will develop awareness of aspects of the natural environment that inspire gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

Experiencing gratitude may require slowing down and noticing details we may overlook or take for granted.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Sticky notes
- Pencils
- Writing materials
- Drawing materials or paints
- Large sheets of paper

ACTIVITY

- Explain to the class that they are going to go on a “Gratitude Nature Walk” outside (depending on your school’s location, this may be on the school grounds, in the neighborhood of the school, or in a local park). Their job will be to notice things in the natural environment that they feel grateful for. This means that they will have to bring awareness and attention to what they observe. To help the class feel settled and ready to focus, have them spend a minute or two in mindful silence, focusing their attention on their breath. (For students who have little experience with mindfulness, invite them to close their eyes, if they are comfortable doing so, and take 3-5 deep slow breaths.)
- Give each student a few sticky notes and a pencil; ask them to try to find at least three things they feel grateful for on the walk, and to write them on the sticky notes. (Bring some extra sticky notes for those who might need them.) To help them keep focused on what they are noticing, instruct the class to:
 - Walk in silence.
 - Use your senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch as you observe.
- Lead the class on the “Gratitude Nature Walk” – once outside, walk at a somewhat slower pace than you normally would, allowing the class time to notice things they are grateful for and write them down. At some point, stop and instruct the class to:

- Stop for a minute, stand still and close your eyes
 - Listen to the sounds around you.
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you feel?
 - Notice what you hear, smell, and any sensations such as warmth, coolness, wind blowing, etc.
 - Now choose something in nature to touch for a minute, maybe a flower or a tree.
 - What does it feel like? Take a full minute to feel it.
 - What does it smell like? Take a full minute to smell it.
 - Think to yourself, or write down how you would describe it to someone who has never seen, touched or smelled this before.
- When you return to the classroom, ask students to look at the notes they wrote, choose one thing that they are most grateful for, and share with the class why they chose that thing. Point out that some students may have chosen something they could see or touch, while some students may have chosen a sound, a smell, or a sensation like the warmth of the sun or the coolness of a breeze.
 - Divide the class into small groups, and give each group drawing materials or paints and large paper. Ask them to create a collaborative drawing or painting about things in the natural environment that they are grateful for. (For some students, it may be easier to do this individually first, and then to arrange drawings or paintings on the large paper; others may prefer to work directly on the large paper.) When their collaborative art work is complete, ask the groups to write a paragraph describing their work.
 - Ask students to express gratitude to other members of their group. Have each student share something about the contributions of the student to their right.

EXTENSIONS

- Often natural areas – school grounds, parks – are looked after by people whose job it is to keep these areas free from trash, safe and attractive. If applicable, find out who maintains the natural area where the class walked (there may be multiple people, or an agency such as a local Parks Department). Discuss with the class how to express gratitude to those who ensure that natural areas can be enjoyed by all – for example, by writing letters of thanks, making a gift, visiting and singing a song, giving a piece of original artwork, baking a treat, etc.
- “Gratitude Walks” can be done within the school, or in the community near the school. Expressions of gratitude can be shared with school personnel, and with local businesses or shop owners.

Activity 8

Giving is Receiving

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will notice that acts of kindness that benefit others require intention and effort on the part of the person who does them. They will reflect on why possessions don't always guarantee happiness, and how it feels when others express their gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Those who do acts of kindness for others not only do so intentionally; they also often know that it will require them to do things that may have a "cost" to them in terms of time and effort; "costs" may be financial or material. While acts of kindness benefit others, the gratitude that is returned often has an emotional benefit for the giver.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- *The Quiltmaker's Gift* by Jeff Brumbeau
- Writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK:

This lavishly illustrated book tells the story of a woman who makes beautiful quilts. She refuses to sell these quilts, instead, she gives them to people in the village who she finds sleeping on the streets. The people who receive the quilts are very grateful, and the woman finds great joy in giving. The country is ruled by a wealthy king who demands multitudes of presents from his subjects. Yet despite his wealth, he is not happy. One day, he hears about the beautiful quilts the woman makes, and decides he must have one, thinking it is the one thing that might make him happy. But the woman refuses to make a quilt for him until he agrees to give away everything he owns. Furious, the king devises punishments for the woman, but each time she makes something – a pillow for a hungry bear, coats for sparrows – the grateful animals rescue her from harm. Finally, the king grudgingly agrees to start giving away his treasures. Slowly, he begins to experience happiness because of the joy his gifts bring to others. He saves one last gift – his throne—which he gives to the quiltmaker so that she has a place to rest after her long days of sewing. She in turn gives him the quilt she promised him. From then on, the king takes her quilts to town to give away to those in need.

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - What is a quilt?
 - How are quilts made?
- Explain to the class that you are going to read them a story about a woman who made many, many beautiful quilts. Ask:
 - Why do you think she might make lots of quilts?
 - What do you think she does with them all?
- Take a few ideas, and then ask the class to listen for the answers to these questions as you read. Begin reading the book aloud. Allow time for students to look at the rich and detailed illustrations. Pause to ask questions as you read. For example, ask:
 - Early in the story, it is revealed that the woman makes quilts to give away to those who sleep outside in the cold. Why do you think she refuses to sell the quilts?
 - Why do you think the king is unhappy, despite all the beautiful things he owns?
 - When the woman is chained in the cave with the bear, how does her act of kindness benefit the bear? How does this change the bear's feelings toward her? How does the bear show its gratitude?
 - When the woman is left on the tiny island to drown, how does her act of kindness benefit the sparrow? How does the sparrow show its gratitude?
 - Why do you think the woman insists that the king give away his treasures? Have you ever known of someone who had beautiful things, but still wasn't happy?
 - When the king gave away his first possession, a marble, the boy who received it smiled. Then the king went back to get more things to give away. Why do you think he did that?
 - What happens to the king as he keeps giving things away?
 - Once the king has given everything away, why does he say "I'm the richest man I know"?
 - How does the quiltmaker show her gratitude to the king?
 - How does the king show his gratitude to the quiltmaker?
- After finishing the story, ask students to:
 - Spend a few moments in quiet reflection about what you learned from the story.
 - When you are ready, write down the ideas you have come up with.
 - Share some of your ideas.
- Remind students that before reading the story, you asked them to imagine why the woman made so many quilts. Ask:

- Now, having heard the story, what do you think now about why she did this? What was her intention in making the quilts?
- How did she benefit from being kind to others?
- Encourage students to think beyond the tangible benefits – not being eaten by a bear, getting saved by the sparrows, getting a chair from the king – to the emotional benefits such as the happiness she got from bringing joy to others.
- Explain that an act of kindness may require a lot of the person who does it.
Ask:
 - What were some of the things the quiltmaker had to do in order to make others happy?
- Point out that a person who is kind and caring to others often does so on purpose, and is willing to give time, effort or material things in order to benefit someone else.

EXTENSIONS

- Reflect on and write about a time you received gratitude from another person.
Answer these questions:
 - Think about a time you acted kindly, or helped someone else. What did you do? Describe it in as much detail as you can recall.
 - Did the other person express gratitude to you? How?
 - What emotions did you feel when you received their gratitude?
- Make a gratitude quilt:²
 - Students can use squares of colored construction paper, illustrate them with a picture and caption of something they are grateful for, and attach the squares together to form a quilt.
 - Alternatively, students can also focus the quilt on people in the school that they are grateful to. Bring a list of school employees to class, ask each student to choose someone they are grateful to, and have them make a quilt square that honors this person. This can be hung in a prominent place in the school.
 - Students could also make a “gratitude quilt” out of fabric with the help of a parent who can sew, or an art teacher who can collaborate on the project.
- The story may raise discussion about those who are in need in the community. Discuss ways that the class could give to others. These might include:
 - Collecting used clothing to donate to a local community organization.
 - Collecting personal care items such as soap, toothbrushes, or toothpaste to donate to a homeless shelter.
 - Collecting non-perishable food items to donate to a food pantry.

Activity 9

What Really Matters

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will identify things that get in the way of expressing gratitude, as well as challenges that may be involved in doing acts of kindness for others. They will become aware that the emotional connection that arises through acts of kindness and gratitude can be more important than material possessions.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Being aware of our emotional states may allow us to overcome obstacles to expressing gratitude. Doing acts of kindness may require one to give of their time, money, effort, skill or material things; being aware of these “costs” to another person may deepen our feelings of gratitude toward them.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts
- Writing materials

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jeremy longs for a pair of new, black high-top shoes. It seems like all the other boys in his class have them. But Jeremy’s grandmother says they can’t afford them and reminds him that what he really needs are new winter boots. One day, while playing kickball at recess, one of Jeremy’s shoes fall apart. The guidance counselor, Mr. Alfrey, gives him a pair of sneakers with a cartoon animal on them. All the children in Jeremy’s class laugh at him when he walks in wearing the “Mr. Alfrey shoes,” except for Antonio. The next weekend, Jeremy’s grandmother takes him shopping for new shoes, and once again tells him that they cannot afford the black high-tops. She buys him the winter boots he needs. Jeremy finds a used pair of the black high-tops he wants in a thrift store. He buys them with his own money, even though they are painfully small. He finally has to give up wearing them to school, and wears the “Mr. Alfrey shoes” instead. One day at school, he notices that Antonio’s shoes are taped together – and that his feet look smaller than Jeremy’s. This causes Jeremy to struggle internally. Finally, he decides what to do – he leaves his black high-tops at Antonio’s door. When Antonio comes to school in his “new” shoes, he thanks Jeremy. Together, they go out to play in the snow at recess – and Jeremy wears his new boots.

ACTIVITY

- Show the class the cover of the book *Those Shoes*. Ask students to guess what they think the story might be about. Before reading the book, ask students to try to notice if there are times in the story when one of the characters could have expressed gratitude, but didn’t.

- Read the story up to the page that describes all the children in Jeremy's class who are getting black high-top shoes. Ask:
 - Has there ever been a time that you wanted something that others had?
 - Does that feeling have a name? Some students may know the word "jealous."
- Pause again at the part of the story where Grandma says it was kind of Mr. Alfrey to give Jeremy the shoes. Ask:
 - Did Jeremy feel that what Mr. Alfrey did was kind?
 - Why not?
- Continue reading. When Jeremy leaves his shoes at Antonio's door, ask:
 - Why did Jeremy leave the shoes without talking to Antonio?
 - What do you think Antonio felt when he saw the shoes?
- When Jeremy returns to school, he says, "I feel happy when I look at his (Antonio's) face and mad when I look at my Mr. Alfrey shoes." Ask:
 - Why did Jeremy feel both mad and happy at the same time?
- After finishing the book, ask:
 - How do you think Jeremy felt at the end of the story?
 - Why?
- Ask the students to discuss with a partner:
 - What were times in the book where Jeremy could have expressed gratitude, but didn't? (For example, Jeremy could have expressed gratitude to Mr. Alfrey for the shoes; Jeremy could have expressed gratitude to Grandma for the new boots.)
 - What got in the way of Jeremy expressing gratitude?
- Ask the partners to choose one of these situations to role-play. One person should play the role of Jeremy, and the other the role of either Mr. Alfrey or Grandma. Allow them a few minutes to come up with a short role-play about how Jeremy might have expressed gratitude. Encourage them to do this in a way that shows they realize the effort Mr. Alfrey had to make to find Jeremy a pair of shoes, or the effort Grandma had to make to buy Jeremy a new pair of winter boots.
- Ask for a few pairs to volunteer to perform the role-play for the class. Ask:
 - The children playing the role of Jeremy: Share what it felt like to express gratitude. Did you have more than one feeling about doing it?
 - The children playing Mr. Alfrey and Grandma: Share what it felt like to hear Jeremy express gratitude.

- Remind the class that when Antonio saw Jeremy's black high-top shoes, he asked Jeremy why he didn't wear them, and Jeremy just shrugged. That night, Jeremy was "awake for a long time thinking about Antonio." Ask:
 - What do you think was going through Jeremy's mind that night?
 - Jeremy went from wanting those shoes so badly, to being able to give them away. How do you think he figured out what really mattered to him?
 - What do you think Jeremy learned from his act of kindness?
- At the end of the story, Antonio says "Thanks" to Jeremy. Now imagine that Antonio had been able to express his gratitude in a way that showed he understood why Jeremy gave him the shoes, why that may have been a difficult thing for Jeremy to do, and how Jeremy's kindness made him feel. Write a short paragraph about what Antonio could have said, and how Jeremy might have responded.

EXTENSIONS

- Rewrite other scenes from the book to demonstrate how gratitude could have been expressed.
- Write about a time that you acted in a kind way toward someone else that was perhaps challenging or difficult for you. What made this difficult? How were you able to deal with the difficulty and still act kindly?
- Involve the class in acting the entire story as a play; perform it for another class.
- Are there times when students in your school (or even you) sometimes think having certain clothes or shoes are really important? Why is that? What do you think could be done to change these ideas? If it does not come up in the conversation, suggest practicing gratitude to help shift our focus away from things we do not have and instead appreciate the things we do have.

Activity 10

Food Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate awareness that behind tangible things that they may feel grateful for, there are many people whose efforts have helped to create those things.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

Our lives are interconnected with those of many people we have never met, who provide us with the goods and services we rely on daily. Our gratitude can extend to these people, as well as those we know.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Social awareness

MATERIALS

- Large sheets of flip chart paper
- Drawing/writing materials
- Fruit for each student (sensitive to any food allergies)

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class 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 travelled 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 plants in the soil on a farm...Imagine the sun shining on the small plants as they grown...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 on to a truck...the person who drove the truck to your store...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 the 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.
- 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 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!

EXTENSIONS

- Bring the drawings to a local store and share them with the employees.
- This activity can be repeated with other foods. Understanding what goes into producing something with a lot of ingredients, such as pizza or ice cream is more complex than understanding what goes into producing a piece of fruit!
- The activity can also be done focusing on things other than food. For example, students might consider whose efforts went into creating a favorite toy, a favorite piece of clothing, etc.

Activities: Grades 6-8

Activity 1

What is Gratitude?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will define gratitude, and show awareness of the many forms that gratitude can take. Students will identify the intentions of someone who had acted in a caring way toward them, and how they benefit.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

“Gratitude” is a sense of thankfulness or appreciation for the good in our lives. We can feel grateful for the ways in which we benefit from the things others give us, aspects of our environment, the actions of others that show care, and/or the qualities of ourselves or another person. Behind acts of kindness and caring is the intention to benefit others.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

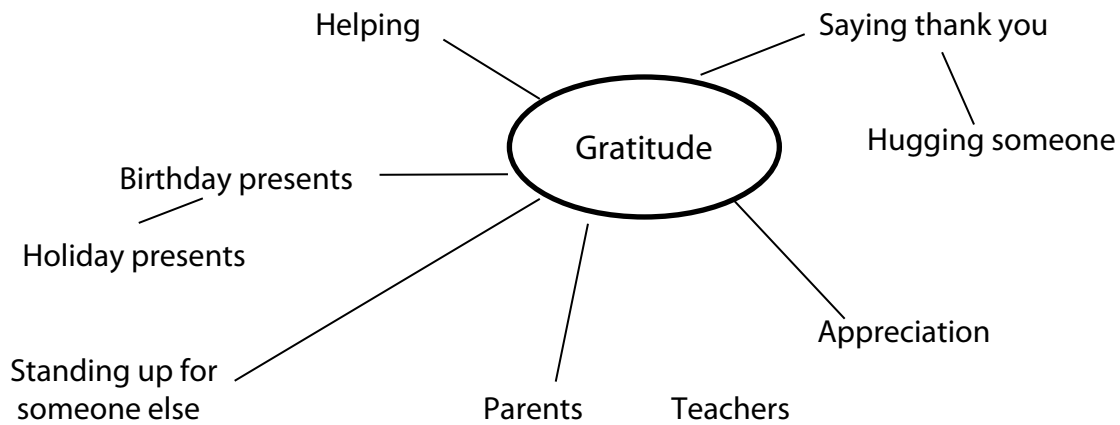
- Whiteboard and marker
- Colored markers, in at least three different colors
- Sticky notes
- Writing materials
- Large sheets of flip chart paper
- Copies of “Intentions and Benefits” chart

ACTIVITY

This activity has two parts, which may be done on two different days.

Part 1:

- Write the word “Gratitude” on the board. Have students close their eyes and reflect for a minute about what comes to mind when they hear that word. Then ask for some volunteers to share what they thought of. Record all ideas in a web form:



- Ask the class if they can see words on this web that go together. Point out that there may be, for example, words on the web that describe emotions related to gratitude, actions that are taken when we feel and express gratitude, things that students are grateful for, holidays or observances that relate to gratitude, or other types of words. Underline these “clusters” of words in different colors – for example, use red for emotions, blue for things we do when we feel grateful, green for specific things we feel grateful for, etc.
- Ask:
 - Who can give a definition of what gratitude is?
- A simple definition that can be shared with the class is that “gratitude” is the feeling of appreciation we have when we recognize all that is good in our lives. While we all face problems in our lives, making the choice to also notice what is positive in our lives can help us deal with difficult times.
- Have students form small groups (4-6 students per group). Give each group a stack of sticky notes. Ask them to:
 - Write several examples of what is good in your lives.
 - Write anything that you are grateful for, with only one idea per sticky note.

Note: If this is a difficult idea for students, you may want to give some examples from your own life. If so, be sure that they show a range of different forms gratitude might take; for example:

- “I’m grateful that I have shoes so I don’t have to go barefoot.”
- “I’m grateful to my best friend for listening to me when I have a problem.”
- “I’m grateful for the warmth of the sun.”
- “I’m grateful to my mother for listening to me.”
- “I’m grateful to be alive and healthy.”

- When each student has written several ideas, distribute one sheet of flip chart paper to each group. Working in groups, ask students to:
 - Look at all of the sticky notes, and form groups or clusters of sticky notes that are similar in some way. For example, you might put all sticky notes together into one cluster that describe things that you own and those that describe something kind someone did for you into another cluster.
 - Allow time for students to read and discuss how they would group the notes on their flip chart paper. As they complete their groupings, ask them to draw a circle around each cluster and give it a label.
 - Be aware that there may be some clusters that are difficult to label. It is ok to leave those unlabeled or call them "Other" to preserve time. The class can address the difficult clusters together later.
 - See sample below:



- When students have finished clustering their sticky notes, give groups time to circulate around the room and see each other's charts. Alternatively, they can exchange charts with one other group and discuss them. Ask:

- What were the labels you gave to each cluster?
 - Were there any clusters that were difficult to label?
 - Who could volunteer to read the sticky notes from that challenging cluster?
 - Does anyone have a suggestion for a label?
 - Which clusters had the most sticky notes? Why do you think that is?
 - Which had the fewest sticky notes? Why do you think that is?
 - Now that you have looked at other groups' charts, are there sticky notes that you would want to add to your chart? Are there new clusters that you would add?
- Give the class time to make any changes or additions to their charts. Encourage them to add ideas to clusters that have the fewest sticky notes.

Part 2:

- Most groups probably identified actions taken by other people as one of the things they are grateful for. Explain that you are going to focus on this cluster for the next part of the activity.
- Ask and discuss:
 - When people do things that are kind, caring or helpful, those are usually done intentionally. The person who did those things usually did them on purpose.
 - Let's look again at the kind and caring actions of other people that you identified.
 - Choose one that you identified, or think of a new one.
 - Describe the action in more detail, noting both how you benefitted, and what you think the other person's intentions were.
 - The chart below can be written on the board or described to the students to graphically organize these ideas on their paper.

Name of the person I feel grateful to	What this person did	What this person's intention was	How I benefitted
Grandmother	She made my favorite meal when I got home from school after a big math test.	She wanted to let me know she understood that I had a hard day, and that she cared about me.	She made me forget about how worried I was. She made me feel good that I tried to do my best.

- Have students share what they wrote with another person. Ask for a few volunteers to share what they came up with in the “Intentions” column.
- Then ask:
 - What similarities do you notice about the intentions of people you feel grateful to?

EXTENSIONS

- Students can develop their chart on intentions and benefits into a short essay.
- Alternatively, they can develop these charts into a thank you note to the person they are grateful to!

Activity 2

Making a Difference

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will notice that when people intentionally act in kind and caring ways, it takes time and effort. Students will practice acknowledging this when they express gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

When we benefit from an act of kindness from another person, our gratitude is deepened if we become aware of the “cost” – in terms of time, effort, and/or resources – to that person. Acts of kindness and caring can positively change the course of a person’s life.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Internet access and TV/projector
- Download or stream video [“Thank You, Mr. Falker”](#)
- Writing materials
- For Extension: *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco

ABOUT THE VIDEO

This video is based on the book *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco, a recollection of her early life in school. In the video, as the story is read aloud, scenes from the book are displayed.

In the opening scene, a five-year-old girl named Trisha shares a family ritual that takes place when a child is ready to begin school. The ritual conveys the joy of learning, and Trisha is eager to learn to read. However, by the time she is in first grade, other children are learning to read, while Trisha struggles to make sense of letters and numbers. Despite her gift for drawing, she begins to think she is not as smart as the other children. Her grandmother reassures her that she is indeed intelligent, and that everyone is different and unique in their own way. Not long after this, her grandmother dies. By third grade, Trisha is still struggling to learn the basics of reading, and suffers from the teasing of other children. By the fifth grade, she finds herself in the classroom of a new and popular teacher, Mr. Falker. He defends Trisha from the children’s teasing, and stops the bullying behavior that torments her. He praises her skill at drawing. And he discovers that even in the fifth grade, she is struggling to make sense of letters and words (some students may recognize that she has a learning disability). He begins to work with Trisha on reading every day after school. After 3-4 months, one day she manages to read a whole sentence, then another, and finally a whole paragraph. She

returns home with tears of joy in her eyes – and doesn't notice that Mr. Falker also had tears in his eyes.

The story ends with the narrator revealing that she is Trisha. She describes a day, 30 years later, when she saw Mr. Falker at a wedding. At first he doesn't remember her, until she reminds him of how he helped her. Mr. Falker asks her what she does for a living, and she tells him that she makes books for children (Patricia Polacco is a well-known author and illustrator of children's books). Then she says, "Thank you, Mr. Falker."

ACTIVITY

- Introduce the activity by telling the class that they are going to watch a video that has been made out of a children's book called *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. Explain that rather than being a live action video, it shows the pictures from the book as the narrator reads the story. It tells the story of a girl from the time she enters kindergarten until the 5th grade, and then ends with a scene from her life 30 years later.
- Ask the class to watch for and notice the actions of characters in the story that show kindness and caring to the main character, a girl named Trisha.
 - Notice how you are feeling towards Trisha.
- Show the video (length: 18 minutes).
- After viewing the video, ask:
 - How did the story make you feel?
 - Who were people in the story who showed kindness and caring to Trisha?
 - How did Trisha benefit from their actions?
 - How did she show her gratitude?
- Explain that when we feel grateful toward someone who has shown us kindness, that person usually intended to do something kind and caring, even though it may have taken time and energy. Ask:
 - What do you think Mr. Falker's intention was in helping Trisha?
 - What did he have to give or do in order to help her? (Students may mention that he left his lunch to come and stop Eric from bullying Trisha; he noticed her drawing and praised her; he spent time every afternoon after school helping her learn to read for 3-4 months.)
 - What might Trisha's life have been like if Mr. Falker had not stopped Eric from teasing and bullying her?
 - What might Trisha's life had been like if he had not helped her every day after school?

- How do you think Mr. Falker's actions made a difference in Trisha's life as an adult?
 - What do you think it was like for Mr. Falker to see Trisha again after 30 years, and to hear her say, "Thank you"?
 - How do you think Trisha felt?
- The video says only that Trisha said, "Thank you, Mr. Falker" when she saw him at the wedding. Ask the class to write out what else Trisha might have said. In their writing, encourage them to include what Trisha might have said to let Mr. Falker know that:
 - She understood his intention in helping her;
 - She understood all the different efforts he made to help her;
 - She benefitted from his actions in important ways.
 - When students have finished their writing, ask:
 - Who would like to read their work out loud?

EXTENSIONS

- Students can role-play what the scene with Mr. Falker and Trisha might have been like at the wedding, using their writing as a basis for the role-play.
- Patricia Polacco's story shows that it is never too late to express gratitude to another person! Ask students to think about someone who made a difference in their lives, someone that they would like to express gratitude to. It may be a former teacher, a grandparent, a coach, a babysitter, or anyone else they can remember from their earlier life. Encourage them to write a letter to that person. Be specific about the details and mention the intention, efforts, and the impact those actions had. Students can attempt to send or deliver the letters, and report on the reactions of the receiver.

Activity 3

A Song of Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will identify the many ways that exist to express gratitude. They will also identify things in the environment that they are grateful for.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Gratitude requires the capacity to notice things and people in one's environment that benefit us or bring us joy, and to express our appreciation. In young adolescents, gratitude has been found to be associated with greater happiness, and more optimism and satisfaction with life.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness and social awareness

MATERIALS

- Internet access and TV/projector
- Download or stream video: [Grateful: A Love Song to the World](#)
- Handout with the chorus to "Grateful: A Love Song to the World" (p. 74)
- Whiteboard and markers
- Writing/drawing materials
- For Extension: Download or stream video: ["ASL Sign Language Dictionary: Grateful"](#)

ACTIVITY

- Explain to the class, that we often think of gratitude in connection to people who have done kind and caring things for us. But many people also feel grateful for things that simply exist in nature, things that are beautiful, cause us to feel awe, or make us feel inspired. Ask:
 - Can you think of examples of things like this from your own life?
- Tell the class that you are going to show a video called *Grateful: A Love Song to the World*. Ask them to notice things in the video that make them feel happiness and gratitude.
- Show the video *Grateful: A Love Song to the World* (length: 5 minutes).
- Handout the lyrics from the chorus and quotes from the video (last page of this activity or p. 74 for complete lyrics, if preferred).

- Ask:
 - What do these words mean to you?
 - What are some of the “small things” that are gifts that they saw in the video?
 - What are other “small things” that are gifts that they can recall from their own experience?
- Next, ask students how they typically express gratitude. Then, tell the class that you are going to show the video a second time, and that this time they should watch for all the different ways they can find in which people are expressing gratitude.
- After the students have seen the video a second time, ask:
 - What are some of the ways of expressing gratitude that you observed?
 - Can you think of other ways to express gratitude that you have seen or experienced?
 - Why do you think expressing gratitude is important?

EXTENSIONS

- Have students write or draw about “small things” that are gifts in their own lives.
- Students can also make collages about these “small things”—either individually or as a group— using pictures from magazines.
- Students may realize that some of the gestures of gratitude in the video are American Sign language. Show the video *ASL Sign Language Dictionary: Grateful*, a two second video showing the American Sign Language gestures for the words “thankful” and “grateful.” Alternatively, you may learn the sign using the video and teach the sign to the class.
- Ask students to review the lyrics again, focusing on quote #2. Then think of a time when something bad happened in their lives, but there were still things they could be grateful for. Ask if thinking about things that you are grateful for during difficult times can be helpful? Ask them to explain or write about their thoughts.

Grateful: A Love Song to the World

Chorus:

All that I am,
All that I see,
All that I've been and all that I'll ever be
Is a blessing,
It's so amazing,
And I'm grateful for it all, for it all.

Quote #1:

"You're the blessings that exist,
The small things that are bliss,
The gift to realize that everything is a gift."

Quote #2:

"Bad things happen, I can just complain and moan,
But there's a million things that I can be grateful for."

Lyrics by and courtesy of Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmod
Empty Hands Music
www.emptyhandsmusic.org

Activity 4

Obstacles to Expressing Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will notice that sometimes there can be obstacles to expressing gratitude and will explore ways of overcoming them.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

The habit of expressing gratitude is one that can be learned and enjoyed, rather than being treated as an obligation. Being able to notice our thoughts and emotions can enable us to more easily express our gratitude.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

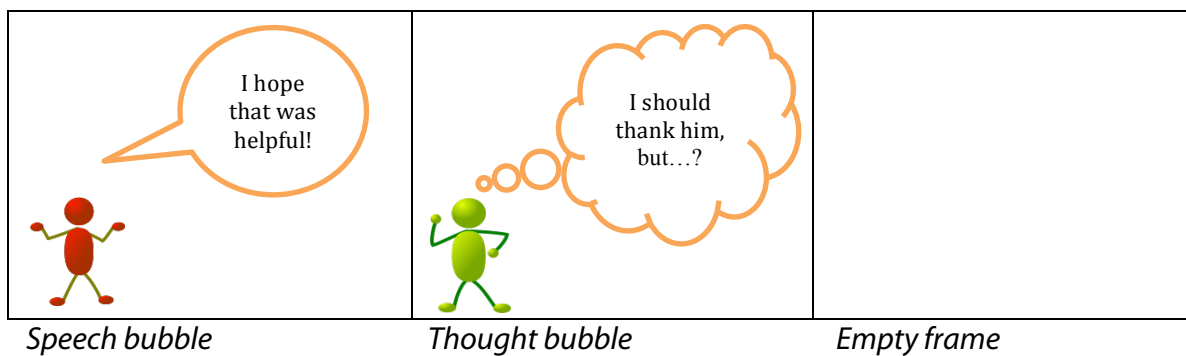
- Whiteboard and marker
- A comic strip template (a sample is on page 77, adapt it to have more frames, if necessary)
- Writing/drawing materials

ACTIVITY

- Ask:
 - Can you think of a time when someone did something kind or caring for you, and it was difficult for you to express gratitude?
 - Why was it difficult?
- Tell the class that they are going to take a few minutes to think more deeply about this. Ask them to close their eyes and take several deep, slow breaths. As their breathing settles into a rhythm, remind them that they will be asked to think of a time when someone did something kind or caring but it was difficult for them to express gratitude. You can use these ideas to guide you, pausing to give students time to visualize each aspect of the incident:

“Recall the person who did something kind or caring for you... it might be a family member, a friend, someone at school, someone in your neighborhood... See if you can picture in your mind exactly where you are... What does that person do? What do you feel when they do this?... Now think about expressing gratitude to this person... What feelings come up for you?... What gets in the way of expressing your feelings?... What do you want that person to know about your feelings?”
- Ask the class to take a few more deep slow breaths, and return their attention to the classroom. Ask them to think for a minute about what they might have done differently in this situation.

- Explain to the class that they are going to illustrate what they just visualized using a series of frames, like a comic strip or graphic novel. Point out that in comics or graphic novels, dialogue is shown in speech bubbles; characters' thoughts may be shown in thought bubbles. Draw simple illustrations on the board as examples, if necessary:



- Have students plan their story before they begin drawing. Read aloud or write the following questions on the board to provide guidelines for what the story and drawings should include.
 - What did someone say or do that you felt grateful for?
 - Why did that person do this?
 - How did you benefit from this?
 - What got in the way of expressing gratitude?
 - How did you overcome that obstacle and express your gratitude?
 - Or, what could you have done to overcome that obstacle? What could you have said or done to express your gratitude?
- When students have completed their stories, ask them to share with a partner, discussing what the obstacles were, how they overcame them, or how they might have overcome them.

EXTENSIONS

- Students can create role-plays about the scenarios they wrote and drew about.
- Students who did not express gratitude during the incident they visualized may want to write a note, or find some other way of expressing gratitude, to the other person involved.

Guiding Questions for Creating Your Comic Strip:

- What did someone say or do that you felt grateful for
- Why did that person do this?
- How did you benefit from this?
- What got in the way of expressing gratitude?
- How did you overcome that obstacle and express your gratitude?
- OR, how could you have overcome that obstacle? What could you have said or done to express your gratitude?

Grades 6 - 8

Activity 5

Gratitude Quotes

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate their understanding of quotes about gratitude by interpreting them through a role-play.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

Throughout the centuries, ideas about gratitude have been expressed in proverbs, and in the works of writers, philosophers, educators and artists. Its importance in human relationships is universally recognized.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Handouts of "Gratitude Quotes" (p. 80)
 - One additional copy, cut into individual quotes
-

ACTIVITY

- Explain to the class that this activity will demonstrate that throughout history, and across cultures, people have recognized that feeling and expressing gratitude is important to our relationships.
- Divide the class into groups of four. Give each group one of the "Gratitude Quotes" (p.90). Explain:
 - Please read your quote silently then close your eyes and spend a minute or two in silence, reflecting on what this quote means to you.
 - Discuss your thoughts on the quote within your group.
 - Now come up with a short, 1-2 minute, role-play that demonstrates the meaning of the quote.
 - Spend a few minutes rehearsing the role-play.
- Bring the class together, and distribute a page of the "Gratitude Quotes" to each student. Then, ask groups one at a time to perform their short role-play – without identifying the quote that it relates to. The students who are watching must try to guess which quote the role-play demonstrates.
- After all the role-plays are done, ask:
 - What were similarities and differences between these quotes?
 - Why do you think so many people have written these thoughts on gratitude?

EXTENSIONS

- Ask students to choose one quote to write about, or illustrate graphically.
- Students can research the authors of the quote they have been working on, and share their findings with the class.

Gratitude Quotes

"If everything was perfect, we would never learn and we would never grow." – Beyoncé	"We are all more blind to what we have than to what we have not." — Audre Lorde
"Find the good and praise it." – Alex Haley	"Give thanks for a little and you will find a lot." – the Hausa of Nigeria
"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things." – Robert Brault	"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." – William Arthur Ward
"No gesture is too small when done with gratitude." – Oprah Winfrey	"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." — Albert Schweitzer
"The only people with whom you should try to get even are those who have helped you." — John E. Southard	"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." — Mother Teresa

Activity 6

The Cycle of Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate their understanding of how the positive emotions created by gratitude can form an ongoing cycle by creating a visual representation.

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

When we experience gratitude, and express it through words or actions to the person who has benefitted us, that person usually experiences positive emotions. They may in turn express those positive emotions to us, setting up an ongoing cycle.

SEL COMPETENCIES

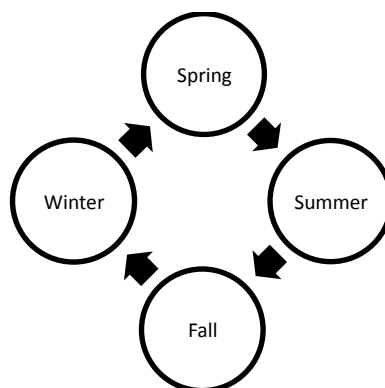
Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and marker
- Drawing materials

ACTIVITY

- Ask:
 - Can anyone tell us what a “cycle” is? (Dictionary.com defines a cycle as “any complete round or series of occurrences that repeats or is repeated.”)
 - Can someone give an example of a cycle?
- Draw at least one of these on the board so that students see what a visual representation of a cycle looks like (some examples: cycle of seasons, or the water cycle of evaporation, condensation and precipitation):



- Explain:
 - Some people say that the emotions that we feel when we are grateful for an act of kindness can also form a cycle. What do you think? Let’s imagine how this might happen.

- Follow the prompts below, pausing to give students time to bring each aspect of the situation to mind:

"Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths.

Think of a time when you did something kind or caring for another person.

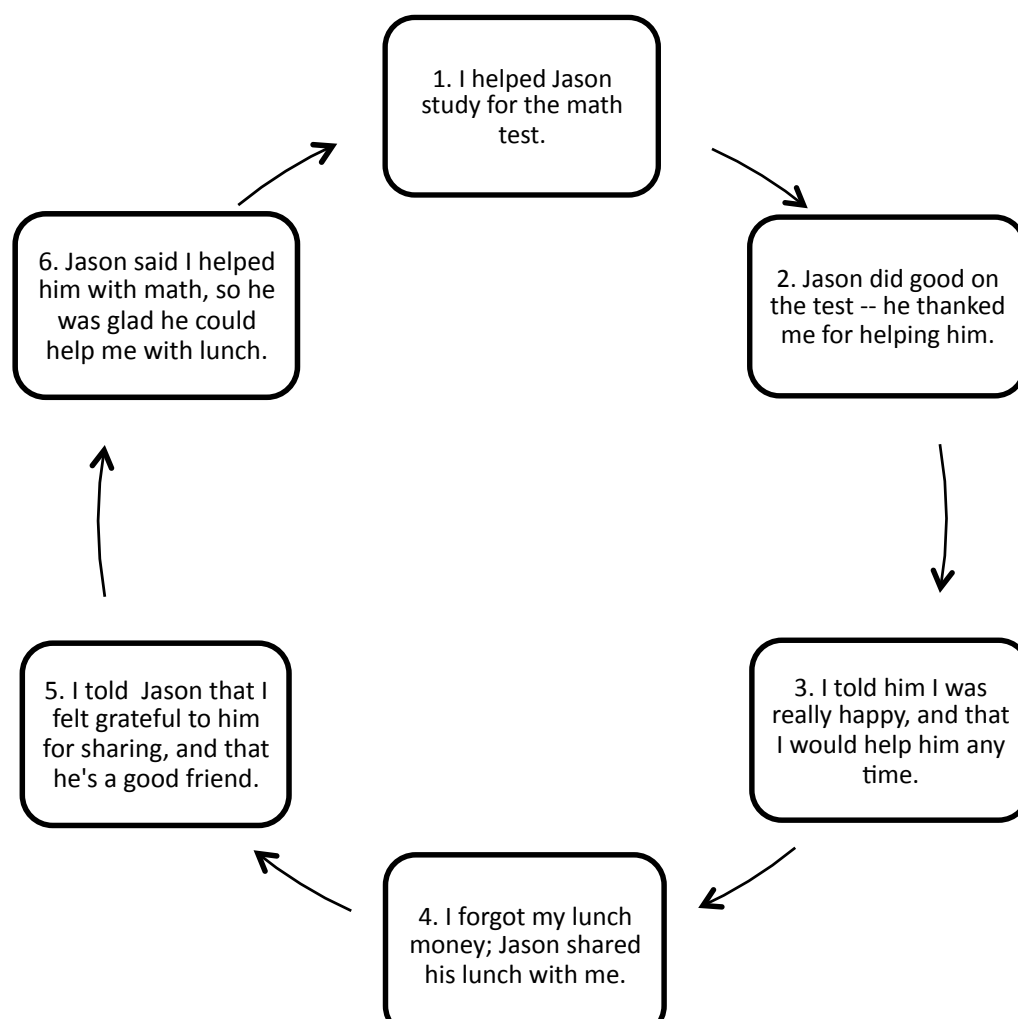
What feelings did that bring up for you? How did the other person respond? Did they say or do something to show they were grateful? What else might they have been feeling?

What did it feel like when you received this person's gratitude? Did you say or do something kind or caring in return? Did you think of other ways to show kindness and caring? Did you do any of those things?

What was the other person's response to this? Imagine these positive feelings forming a cycle that goes on and on.

Slowly open your eyes and bring your attention back to the classroom."

- Ask:
 - Would anyone like to share their recollection?
 - Can someone explain how they think the emotions connected to gratitude can form a cycle that repeats?
- Distribute drawing materials and ask students to create a diagram illustrating the "Gratitude Cycle" that they visualized. A sample diagram follows on the next page. Students can add as many actions to the cycle as they want.



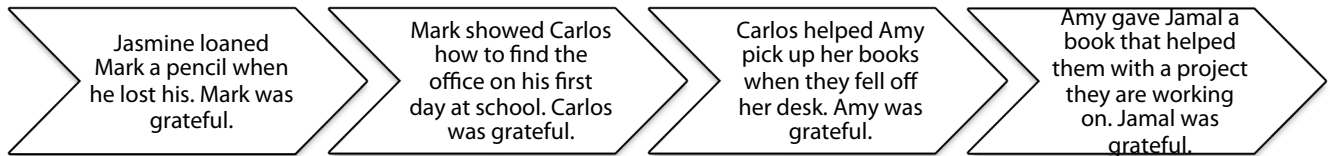
SAMPLE GRATITUDE CYCLE

- Students may realize that a cycle diagram may not allow them to illustrate all the possible impacts of an act of caring. If this comes up, invite them to choose another way to represent continuation of these positive emotions, such as a spiral, or a series of concentric circles (like the ripples that form in a pond when a stone is thrown into it).
- Ask students to share their diagrams. Encourage them to notice similarities and differences. Ask:
 - Why is the cycle of gratitude important?
 - How does it affect the people involved?

EXTENSIONS

- A variation on the "Gratitude Cycle" is to create a "Gratitude: Pay It Forward" timeline in the classroom.

- Find or create an object on which you can write "Gratitude: Pay It Forward." This could be a small stone, a small laminated paper heart, etc. Show it to the class and explain that when someone in the class expresses gratitude to you, you will hand them the object and say, "Gratitude: Pay It Forward. Someone did something kind for me. I expressed my gratitude and wanted to pay it forward. I hope you will too." That person must hold onto the object, while looking for someone else (Person #2) to do an act of kindness for. When Person #2 expresses gratitude, Person #1 will hand them the object and say "Gratitude: Pay It Forward." This can continue throughout the week (or month, or year). As each person hands the object to another, they should record what they did on a "Gratitude: Pay It Forward" timeline posted on the wall of the classroom.



Activity 7

Gratitude Interview

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

By interviewing an older person about gratitude, students will gain perspective on their own experience of gratitude.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

While each experience of gratitude is unique, there are also similarities. We feel grateful when someone does something that benefits us; those actions are usually done intentionally; and those actions involve another's time, energy and effort.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and marker
- Writing materials
- Optional: A handout with "Gratitude Interview Questions" (sample questions are at the end of the activity, or original questions can be developed with students).

ACTIVITY

- Ask:
 - What is an interview?
 - What are some of the things a good interviewer does?
- Write responses on the board—these may include things like listening, not interrupting, asking questions, paying attention, etc.
- Tell students that they are each going to interview an adult about someone that the adult is grateful to and why. Interviewing a family member can be done as homework; interviewing school employees could be done during class time, depending on schedules. Ask:
 - Think about adults in your lives that you might be able to interview. Possibilities include parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, and teachers or other school staff.
- As a class, brainstorm possible interview questions. Alternatively, the "Gratitude Interview Questions" on page 87 can be used.
- Have the students practice doing mock interviews with each other using their list of questions, before doing the actual interview. Discuss how to make the process of taking notes during an interview go smoothly (for example, by noting some key words during an interview, and writing up more detailed notes immediately after the interview). Some students may prefer to record it. Make it clear that students should only record if the interviewee agrees to this.

- After students carry out their interview, ask them to report on:
 - What did you learn about the person you interviewed?
 - How was their story different from your own experience of gratitude?
 - How was it similar?
 - What did you learn about gratitude from the interview?

EXTENSIONS

- Have students write an essay summarizing the interview, and what they learned from it.
- Interviews can be carried out in pairs if done in school.
- Be sure to have students write a note to the person they interviewed, expressing gratitude for what they learned from the process.

Gratitude Interview Questions

My class is doing interviews about gratitude. Can you think of someone in your life that you are grateful to?

Who is that person?

Can you tell me a story of what this person did that you were grateful for?

Why do you think this person did this?

Can you describe how the person's words or actions affected you?

Did you have the chance to express your gratitude to this person?
If so, what did you say or do to show your gratitude?

If you could talk to that person right now, what would you say?

Activity 8

Flipping Complaints Into Gratitude

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will practice turning complaints into gratitude statements, and understand that in some situations, they have a choice to replace negative thoughts with more positive and optimistic ones.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

Gratitude can help us to reframe negative experiences as ones that may hold hidden opportunities for growth or learning. While not every negative experience can be reframed, bringing awareness to the habit of complaining, and looking for the positive side of a negative experience, can develop our capacity to choose our attitudes towards it.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills

MATERIALS

- Index cards
 - Blank paper
 - Writing materials
-

ACTIVITY

- Ask the class:
 - What is a “complaint”?
 - Close your eyes and think back: Have you complained about anything today? This week?
- Hand out a blank sheet of paper and ask students to list all the complaints they can recall making in the last week. If they have difficulty, they can list complaints they used to make or have heard. Ask:
 - What are some examples of complaints you thought of?
 - Why do you think people complain about things?
 - Are there ever benefits to complaining?
 - What are some drawbacks of complaining?
- Point out that complaining can be a way to get attention, to avoid taking responsibility for one’s actions, or even to form connections with others who share our complaints.
- Complaining can sometimes result in a needed change being made in our environment or our relationships, or allow us to release feelings of frustration. However, complaining can also create negative habits of mind by focusing our

attention on things that are unsatisfactory, rather than on what is good in any situation. Unless we turn our frustration into positive action, “venting” our negative emotions may not make them go away; in fact, it may cause them to increase.

- Explain:
 - We are going to practice “flipping” complaints into gratitude statements.
 - Some examples of what this might sound like:

Complaint: “I hate having to study for the math test!”

Gratitude statement: “I’m grateful that I’ll be able to show how much I’ve learned this year.”

Complaint: “I can’t believe we’re having that disgusting pasta for lunch again!”

Gratitude statement: “I’m grateful that I’ll have enough to eat so that I won’t feel hungry during the afternoon!”
- Give each student two index cards, and ask them to write two of the complaints that they listed earlier, one complaint per card. Tell the students to form pairs and exchange one of their complaint cards.
- Explain or write the following instructions:
 - The person who receives the complaint card must flip it over, and write on the back of the card a gratitude statement, one that turns the negative view of the situation into a positive view.
 - When each person has written a gratitude statement, read it out loud to your partner.
- Ask students to review the gratitude statements, then ask:
 - Do they make sense?
 - Is there really something you could choose to be grateful for in this situation?
 - Can you come up with another gratitude statement for this situation?
- Ask students to return the cards to their original owner and then to:
 - Look at your own second complaint card.
 - Write a gratitude statement on the back of that card.
 - Read the original complaint and the new gratitude statement to your partner.
- Bring the class together and ask for a few volunteers to share their complaints and reframed gratitude statements.

- Ask:
 - Was “flipping” the complaints into gratitude statements easy or difficult to do? Why?
 - What might be some reasons to try to “flip” complaints?
 - For some people, complaining can become a habit. What do we have to do to change a habit?

EXTENSION

- One way to break a habit is to create a physical reminder of the behavior you are trying to change. An example would be to wear an elastic band on your right wrist. When you notice that you are complaining, you must take the band off and move it to your left wrist. The next time you notice you are about to complain and do something else instead (either not expressing the complaint, or expressing gratitude instead), you can move the band back to your right wrist. The goal is to keep the band on your right wrist for an entire day. Then try to extend that to an entire week. Write about the activity and your observations at the end of the week.

Adapted from *Gratitude: A Way of Teaching* by Owen M. Griffith¹

Activity 9

People Who Made a Difference

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will develop an understanding that they can feel gratitude toward people whose actions benefited society as a whole, and that these benefits may be felt years or even centuries later.

GRATITUDE CONCEPTS

When we notice the intention behind and cost of actions that benefit others, we can be grateful to people we have never met.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Social awareness and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- Library or internet access for research
- Writing materials

ACTIVITY

- Ask students to identify a historical figure who did something they feel grateful for. Have them research the person they chose. This may be done over multiple days.
- When students have completed their research, bring the class together for a short guided visualization:

"Close your eyes, and take five deep, slow breaths, in and out. Bring to mind an image of the person you have researched. Hold that image while breathing deeply...try to feel what it would actually be like to be in the presence of that person. Focus on the feeling of gratitude you have for this person while you take five more deep breaths, in and out. Now, slowly open your eyes and bring your focus back into the room."
- Following the visualization, have the class write an essay that covers these questions:
 - What did this person do that makes you feel grateful?
 - Why did this person do these things? What was the intention behind this person's actions?
 - What was the cost of these actions for the person you researched?

- Explain to students that one way to think about “cost” is to understand what this person might have given, sacrificed, or lost in order to do the things she or he did. Think of costs not only in terms of money, but also in terms of time spent, physical health or strength required, safety that might have been risked, opportunities that might have been lost, impacts on relationships with family or others, etc. Ask:
 - How have you benefited from this person’s actions? How has society as a whole benefited?
- Have students make a brief presentation to the class about the historical figure that they researched.

EXTENSIONS:

- This activity could be used in conjunction with a Social Studies unit, as a way of recalling the actions of key figures in a particular period of history. It can be used in conjunction with special observances such as Black or Women’s History Month etc. Or, it can be used at the end of the year as a culminating activity in Social Studies, allowing students to think back on what they have learned and how it has impacted them.
- The essay format can be adapted as follows:
 - Have students write a thank-you note to this person, incorporating what they learned about the intention, costs and benefits of their actions.
 - Have students develop questions they would like to be able to ask this person before doing research. They can then write a mock interview, exploring particularly the intentions behind the person’s actions, and the costs to them.
 - In pairs or small groups, students can develop a short skit about the historical figure, and the actions they feel gratitude for. The skit should portray the person’s intentions and costs of their actions. Skits can be performed for the class, for other classes, or in an assembly.

Activity 10

Being the Change

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will understand the impact that acts of kindness have, not only on those who receive, but on those who give. Students will identify ways that they can carry out “random acts of kindness.”

GRATITUDE CONCEPT

Carrying out acts of kindness does not only benefit the person who receives them; there are emotional benefits to the person who does them as well.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making

MATERIALS

- Internet access and TV/projector
- Download or stream video: [“Pitt River Middle School - Random Acts of Kindness AKA ‘The Breakfast Club’”](#)

ABOUT THE VIDEO:

The video describes a project to teach social responsibility that was carried out with a group of 8th grade students at Pitt River Middle School in British Columbia, Canada. The idea for the project came from a teacher who was concerned about behavior problems among some of the students. With the help of the teacher, a group of 8th graders, who called themselves “The Breakfast Club,” decided to perform random acts of kindness in the school. Their first act was to distribute free coffee to the teachers. Ideas for other random acts of kindness grew and eventually touched everyone in the school.

Students decided to remain anonymous as they performed these acts, but pressure to reveal their identities grew. The Breakfast Club members finally agreed that if the school could raise 1,300 items for a local food bank, they would reveal who they were. The items were quickly donated by students and the video ends with the school honoring the Breakfast Club in an assembly.

Note: There are sections of the video in which a psychologist, Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, discusses this project in light of research on adolescent development. One segment, from 0:50 to 2:22 is geared toward adult viewers; it also contains a reference to the Dalai Lama, which may be considered inappropriate for some schools. This segment can be skipped without detracting from the video’s message.

ACTIVITY

- Introduce the video by explaining to the class that *"The Breakfast Club"* is about a group of 8th graders who decided to perform intentional acts of kindness in their school.
- Show the video (length: 8:12). As students watch the video, ask them to notice how the project grew, and the impact it had on the school community, and the Club members themselves.
- After viewing the video, discuss the following questions with the class:
 - What was the intention of the Breakfast Club members in starting this idea?
 - What did the Breakfast Club members have to give, in terms of their own time, energy, and effort, to make their ideas a reality?
 - Why do you think the project grew from the small act of providing coffee to teachers, to a much larger project?
 - Why do you think the Breakfast Club members chose to do acts of kindness anonymously ("heroes with the spotlight")?
 - One of the speakers says that the project changed how 8th graders were seen in their community. Are there stereotypes about middle school students in this school or community? How can these be changed?
 - Breakfast Club members reported having better relationships with others, including their parents. Why do you think this is?
 - What other impacts do you think this project had on the members?
- Ask the class if they would be interested in performing "random acts of kindness," like the Breakfast Club did. Have students form small groups to brainstorm what a project like this might look like. Remind them that the Breakfast Club started small and gradually expanded their project:
 - They may, for example, want to start by randomly choosing the name of a classmate and committing to doing one anonymous act of kindness for that person each day for a week. Identities of the kindness partners can be revealed at the end of the week.
 - Or they could choose to focus on one group in the school, such as teachers or non-teaching staff, as the Breakfast Club did.
 - They could choose another class in the school, learn about them, and come up with acts of kindness that would be meaningful for them.
- After small groups have had the chance to brainstorm, share some ideas. Discuss with the class what would be a manageable first "acts of kindness" project to try.
- Then do it! Document the results, and any ways that the project expands!

EXTENSION

- The video ends with the following quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world." Have students research the life of Gandhi, and write about what this quote means to them. How does it connect to the idea of gratitude?

Endnotes

Introduction

- (1) Froh, J. J. & Bono, G. (2014). *Making Grateful Kids: The Science of Building Character*, West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press; p. 4.
- (2) Emmons, R. (2010). "Why Gratitude is Good." *Greater Good Science Center*, retrieved from: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good
- (3) Froh, J. J. & Bono, G. (2014). *Making Grateful Kids: The Science of Building Character*, West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press; p. 4.
- (4) Griffith, O. M. (2016). *Gratitude: A Way of Teaching*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- (5) For summaries of research on the impacts of gratitude practices on adults:
Emmons R. "Why Gratitude is Good," *Greater Good Science Center*, retrieved from: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good;
"Why practice gratitude?," *Greater Good Science Center*, retrieved from: <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>; and
"Can gratitude reduce costly impatience?," *Northeastern University*, retrieved from: <http://www.northeastern.edu/cos/2014/03/can-gratitude-reduce-costly-impatience/>
- (6) Summaries of gratitude research on children:
"Why practice gratitude?," *Greater Good Science Center*, <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>;
"How to foster gratitude in schools," *Greater Good Science Center*, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_foster_gratitude_in_schools;
"Seven Ways to Foster Gratitude in Kids," *Greater Good Science Center*, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_foster_gratitude_in_kids; and Froh, J. J. & Bono, G. (2014). *Making Grateful Kids: The Science of Building Character*, p. 7 and p. 18.
- (7) "Growing Up Grateful Gives Teens Multiple Health Benefits, New Research Shows," *American Psychological Association*: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2012/08/health-benefits.aspx>
- (8) Froh, J.J., Emmons, R.A., Card, N.A. Bono, G. & Wilson, J. (2011). "Gratitude and the reduced costs of materialism in adolescents." *Journal of Happiness Studies*, v. 12, p. 289-302. Retrieved at: [http://people.hofstra.edu/Jeffrey_J_Froh/spring%202010%20web/10.1007_s10902-010-9195-9\[1\].pdf](http://people.hofstra.edu/Jeffrey_J_Froh/spring%202010%20web/10.1007_s10902-010-9195-9[1].pdf)
- (9) Froh, J.J., Sefick, W.J., & Emmons, R.A. (2008). "Counting Blessings in Early Adolescents: An Experimental Study of Gratitude and Subjective Well-being." *Journal of School Psychology*, v 46 (2), 213-233. Retrieved at:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/application_uploads/Froh-CountingBlessingsinAdolescents.pdf

- (10) Froh, J. J., Emmons, R. A., Card, N. A., Bono, G., & Wilson, J. (2011). "Gratitude and the reduced costs of materialism in adolescents." *Journal of Happiness Studies*, v. 12 (2) 289-302. Retrieved at:
[http://people.hofstra.edu/Jeffrey_J_Froh/spring%202010%20web/10.1007_s10902-010-9195-9\[1\].pdf](http://people.hofstra.edu/Jeffrey_J_Froh/spring%202010%20web/10.1007_s10902-010-9195-9[1].pdf)
- (11) Froh, J. J., Bono, G., & Emmons, R. A. (2010). "Being grateful is beyond good manners: Gratitude and motivation to contribute to society among early adolescents." *Motivation and Emotion*, v. 34 (2), 144-157. Retrieved at:
http://people.hofstra.edu/Jeffrey_J_Froh/spring%202010%20web/MOEM%20Paper%20Published%20version.pdf
- (12) A useful discussion on gratitude and complacency: "What Barbara Ehrenreich Gets Wrong About Gratitude," *Greater Good Science Center*. Retrieved at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_barbara_ehrenreich_gets_wrong_about_gratitude
- (13) For more information on Froh and Bono's ideas about intention, costs and benefits in gratitude, see "How to Foster Gratitude in Schools," *Greater Good Science Center*. Retrieved at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_foster_gratitude_in_schools
- (14) For more information on CASEL, and Social and Emotional Learning, visit:
<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/>
- (15) Including books on gratitude as part of your read-alouds on a regular basis keeps this concept in students' minds. Some good book lists can be retrieved at:
 - "Books that Inspire Gratitude," *PBS Parents*:
<http://www.pbs.org/parents/adventures-in-learning/2013/11/books-inspire-gratitude/>
 - "The Best Children's Books," *Investing in Children*:
<http://investinginchildren.on.ca/blog/2015/1/14/19-childrens-books-about-gratitude>

Grades K-2

- (1) A source of children's books on the human body can be retrieved at:
<http://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/human-body-for-kids.html>
- (2) Activities that emphasize gratitude for the natural world, such as Activity 9, "Dear World," can be done in conjunction with Earth Day, which is observed on April 22. Additional Earth Day information and resources can be found at: www.earthday.org.

Grades 3-5

- (1) *Sunny Days in Second Grade* is a website offering free classroom activities. While most of these are not focused on gratitude, Activity 6, "What If We Didn't Have This?," is adapted from an activity and can be retrieved at:
<http://sunnydaysinsecondgrade.blogspot.com/2011/11/thankful-things.html>
- (2) A short description of the idea of making a "gratitude quilt" can be found on the *Greater Good Science Center* website at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/gratitude_activities_for_the_classroom

Grades 6-8

- (1) Griffith, O. M. (2016). *Gratitude: A Way of Teaching*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. This book contains a wealth of guidance for teachers on introducing gratitude practices in classrooms. A discussion of what he refers to as the "culture of complaining" can be found on pp. 12-18.

Resources for Teachers

Video List

Gratitude. Retrieved at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj2ofrX7jAk>
This video by Louie Schwartzberg features Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk whose powerful message about opening our eyes to the goodness around us is paired with beautiful images of people and the natural environment (6:09 min).

The Benefits of Gratitude. Retrieved at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/science_meaningful_life_videos/speaker/robert_emmons/the_benefits_of_gratitude/
Robert Emmons describes some of his research on gratitude (10:35 min.).

Grateful: A Love Song to the World. Retrieved at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzig8>. This upbeat song, written and created by Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmod, of Empty Hands Music www.emptyhandsmusic.com, is about gratitude combined with an inspiring video that is a great source of positive emotions (it is also used in the activities for grades 3-5 and grades 6-8) (4:57min).

Pitt River Middle School - Random Acts of Kindness AKA "The Breakfast Club." Retrieved at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLj5pWWA_MY. This video tells the story of a "random acts of kindness" project carried out in a middle school in Canada, and its impact on students, teachers and the larger community (it is also used in the activities for grades 6-8). (8:12 min.).

What Good is Gratitude? Retrieved at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/gg_live/science_meaningful_life_videos/speaker/robert_emmons/what_good_is_gratitude/. Another video by Robert Emmons on the power of gratitude and how to develop it (4:10 min.).

Reading List

"Featured Gratitude Stories," *Greater Good Science Center*, retrieved at:
<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude>. This resource has links to articles on many aspects of gratitude.

Griffith, O. M. (2016). *Gratitude: A Way of Teaching*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Griffith offers a view of gratitude as a way of seeing the world, along with suggestions for classroom activities and practices that can be easily implemented. Chapters on gratitude and materialism, the "culture of complaining," technology, and ways of working with families, offer unique additions to the literature on gratitude.

"Gratitude Activities for the Classroom," *Greater Good Science Center*, retrieved at:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/gratitude_activities_for_the_classroom. This site has many ideas for activities to do with students.

Arrien, A. (2013) *Living in Gratitude*, Boulder, CO: Sounds True. A guide to contemplative activities for deepening gratitude. Rooted in wisdom traditions from around the world, the book features a different theme and focus for each month of the year.

Froh, J. J. & Bono, G. (2014). *Making Grateful Kids: The Science of Building Character*, West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press. This book, while written for parents, contains a wealth of wisdom for teachers as well.

Children's Books

Grades K-2:

Activity 1: Chapman J. and Wilson, K. (2012). *Bear Says Thanks*, New York, NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Activity 3: Moore Gray L. (1998). *Miss Tizzy*, New York, NY: Alladin Picture Books.

Activity 6: Scotton, R. (2012). *Splat Says Thank You*, New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Activity 9: Noda T. (2005). *Dear World*, New York, NY, Puffin Books.

Activity 10: Weiss, G.D. and Thiele B. (1995). *What a Wonderful World*, New York, NY, Jean Karl Books.

Grades 3-5:

Activity 4: Grimes N. (2006). *Thanks a Million*, New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Activity 8: Brumbeau J. (2001). *The Quiltmaker's Gift*, New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

Activity 9: Boelts M. (2009). *Those Shoes* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

Grades 6-8:

Activity 2 (Optional): Polacco, P. (2012). *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, New York, NY: Philomel Books.

Children's Videos

Grades K-2: Videos for Students

Activity 10: *Louis Armstrong: What a Wonderful World*: This is the original version of the song, sung by Louis Armstrong, along with beautiful images that relate to the words. Length: 2:24. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5TwT69i1IU>

Activity 10: *"What a Wonderful World: Playing for Change"*: This is an upbeat version of the Louis Armstrong song, sung by children from choirs in Uganda, France and the United States. Length: 3:40.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddLd0QRf7Vg>

Grades 3-5: Videos for Students

Activity 5: *Grateful: A Love Song to the World*: This inspiring video captures the beauty of the original song of the same title, performed by children and adults from around the world. It conveys a powerful message of gratitude. Length: 5 minutes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

Grades 6-8: Videos for Students

Activity 2: *Thank You, Mr. Falker*: This video is based on the book of the same name by Patricia Polacco, a true recollection of her early life in school. In the video, as the story is read aloud, scenes from the book are displayed. Length: 18 minutes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjRsg9M7fw4>

Activity 3: *Grateful: A Love Song to the World*: See Videos for Grades 3-5

Activity 3: *ASL Sign Language Dictionary: Grateful*: These two very short videos -- two seconds!—introduce students to the American Sign Language gestures for the words "thankful" and "grateful:"
<http://www.signasl.org/sign/grateful>

Activity 10: *Pitt River Middle School - Random Acts of Kindness AKA "The Breakfast Club."* The video is about a group of 8th graders who decided to perform intentional acts of kindness in their school. Length: 8:12.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lj5pWWA_MY