

Lesson Three – Gratitude Practice

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – COLLAGE

Lesson Intention:

This lesson helps students learn the important connection between gratitude and feelings of well-being. Gratitude is a way of seeing the world through a lens of appreciation. In his research, David DeSteno found that people who approach life with a feeling of gratitude are more adept at navigating difficult circumstances and have more positive relationships in their lives. **In this lesson, students explore a specific gratitude practice to help them strengthen their ability to notice the good things in their lives.** They will create a collage to reflect the people and things in their lives that they appreciate.

Learning Goals:

- Recognize the connection between gratitude and increased feelings of well-being.
- Learn how to use visual art to view life through a lens of appreciation.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Lesson Plan PDF](#)

Prior to Teaching this Lesson:

1. *Prepare your own collage to share with your students of the people, places and things in your life that you are grateful for.*
2. *Have construction paper, magazines, markers, and tape or glue available for students.*
3. *If you would like students to print out or bring in photos, have them do this ahead of time.*

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 3 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

- As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself, meaningful for your students, and tailored to your students' age group.

Launching the Lesson:

**Slide 2*

- Explain that today's lesson is a chance to think about the way gratitude can increase well-being.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Today, we are going to talk about gratitude. Gratitude means noticing the things and people in your life that you appreciate. We all can choose to notice the people and things in our life that make us feel good. Maybe you recently enjoyed playing with a friend or family member at the park? Maybe you looked at a favorite book, played with a toy you love, or ate your favorite food? In each of these moments you have the power to pause, notice, and be grateful for what you're doing or who you are doing it with.

We are going to do a creative activity that will help you think about the people and things in your life that you are thankful for, but first I want to share that when scientists study gratitude, they have found something really exciting in their research. Scientists found that when you take time to feel grateful for the people and things in your life each day, it can actually make you a happier and healthier person."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing the Creative Activity:

- Share your example collage.
- Review the materials that students can use for this project

Example of What You Could Say:

"I made a collage to help me express the things and people who I feel grateful for in my life. It was actually really nice to stop and think about who and what I appreciate the most. I also added in some photos of things that make me happy (*give specific examples from your collage*). Now, you are going to make your own gratitude collage. Here are the materials that we are going to use for this creative activity (*review materials with students*)."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

*Slide 3

- Students create a collage of the people, places and things that they appreciate in their lives. They can cut out words and images from magazines or draw their own pictures and words to express themselves. Students may also use different colored construction paper or bring in photos.
- Students work on their collage independently for approximately 15 minutes. Circulate the room and support students as they are making their collage. Play music if you feel it's appropriate.

Example of What You Could Say:

"We are going to take fifteen minutes now and make our collages that represent who and what we are grateful for in our lives. I am going to play some quiet music and will walk around and help you if you need anything."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Lesson Closure:

- Invite students to share their collages with the class. Encourage them to reflect on the way it felt to make the collage. Remind them that this is just one of the many tools they can use to incorporate gratitude into their daily lives – making collages, writing in a journal, or creating a gratitude list.

Example of What You Could Say:

“I am excited to see your collages! I wonder if anyone wants to share your collage with the class and describe a few of the people or things you included? I am also curious about how it felt to create the collage. Did anyone notice a part of your life that you don’t usually think about that you are now feeling grateful for? Is this something you think you would do again as a gratitude practice? What other things could we do to feel grateful?”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Additional Activities for All Elementary Grades:

1. Another activity that can inspire students to feel gratitude is a **GRATITUDE TREE**. The teacher can draw a large tree and have each student cut out a paper leaf and write down something they feel grateful for, then paste this onto the tree's branches. Or you can invite students to write down what they are grateful for on a small index or note card, and hang the cards on a real tree outside. This is also a wonderful community art project that you could work on in collaboration with another organization like an assisted living facility or a hospital. [Here is a link to a video that illustrates a gratitude tree](#) that the Kevin Love Fund Co-Director of Education, Dr. Ellie Foster, made with her family.
2. **GRATITUDE NOTEBOOKS** support students in thinking about and recording what they are grateful for as a part of a daily routine. You can include this practice in your morning or closing activities each day. You can have students keep their own notebook, or make a class notebook by collecting students' pages and binding the paper together. You can also encourage students to draw on the cover of or draw inside of their gratitude notebooks.
3. Create a **CLASSROOM GRATITUDE JAR**. Invite students to write down something they are grateful for and add it to the classroom jar throughout the year. At the end of the year, you can compile all of the slips of paper into a classroom art project or read them aloud before winter or summer break to celebrate and reflect upon the people and things your students are grateful for.
4. Invite students to write **THANK YOU NOTES**, or draw a picture to express appreciation for someone important in their life. If possible, encourage students to give the letter to the intended recipient.