


THE SCIENCE OF

Gratitude

GRATITUDE PROMPT 1

Name _____

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



What is something that made you smile today, and why?

Something that made me smile today was when my friend Emma told a really funny joke at lunch. It made me laugh so hard because it was silly, and she always knows how to make me feel better when I'm having a boring day.

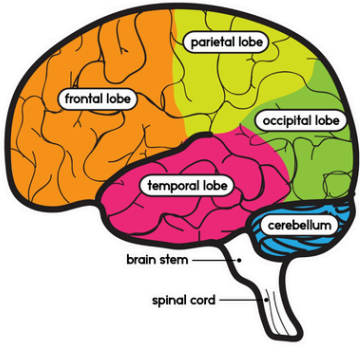
THREE GOOD THINGS

- 1 My mom made my favorite breakfast this morning.
- 2 I sat by my friend Corinne on the bus ride to school.
- 3 Recess is outdoors today because it's not raining anymore!

Sketch what made you smile



HOW DOES GRATITUDE AFFECT OUR BRAIN?



The **hypothalamus**, which is located deep in the **temporal lobe**, is where this happens.

THINGS





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**MIKEY D
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Introduction

Gratitude is more than just saying “thank you”—it’s an important part of social-emotional learning (SEL) that helps students build stronger connections, develop emotional resilience, and maintain a positive mindset. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively 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, and make responsible decisions.” This lesson plan aims to introduce your students to the science of gratitude, blending engaging activities with evidence-based research to help them understand and practice gratitude in their everyday lives.

This resource includes a comprehensive slide deck and accompanying gratitude journal prompts designed to guide students through what gratitude is, how it affects their brain and body, and why it’s essential for overall well-being. Through thoughtful discussions, fun activities like “Three Good Things,” and collaborative sharing exercises like the “Gratitude Circle,” students will have opportunities to practice gratitude, reflect on their experiences, and learn how to express appreciation in meaningful ways.

By integrating these activities into your curriculum, you’ll create a learning environment where students feel safe, valued, and ready to build positive relationships. The science behind gratitude not only enhances individual well-being but also strengthens classroom communities, setting the stage for improved emotional regulation and academic success. This lesson plan is designed to be used throughout the school year, allowing students to revisit and build on their understanding of gratitude as they grow.

With this guide, you’ll empower your students to recognize the good around them, develop emotional intelligence, and carry the practice of gratitude into their homes and communities, enriching their social lives and nurturing their emotional health.

Rationale

The concepts introduced in this resource are concepts that are research-based. They have been proven to increase the social-emotional health of children and adults.

By teaching SEL skills in an explicit way, teachers have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the students that they serve in their classroom.

Once skills have been taught explicitly, students are able to begin to incorporate these social-emotional skills into their daily practice. The skills also become transferable. Students will begin to use these skills in other classes, with friends, with clubs and sports teams, and at home.

LESSON PLAN

Part 1: Introduction to Gratitude (Slide Deck Presentation)

Set the Stage: Begin by telling students that today's lesson is all about gratitude—what it is and why it's important.

Go Through the Slides: Present the slide deck, taking time to explain each slide in detail. Engage students with questions such as, "What does gratitude mean to you?" and "Can you think of a time when you felt thankful?"

Pause for Reflection: After explaining how gratitude affects the brain and body, ask students to share a time when they felt genuinely happy or thankful. Encourage participation to create a sense of community.

Use Visuals and Examples: Highlight the images and examples on the slides. Relate them to everyday experiences that students can easily understand.

Part 2: Interactive Activity – “Three Good Things”

Explain the Activity: Tell students that they will write down three things they are grateful for today and why those things are important to them.

Model It: Give an example from your own life, such as, "I'm grateful for my morning walk because it helps me feel refreshed and ready for the day."

Give Time to Reflect and Write: Allow students 5-10 minutes to quietly think and write in their gratitude journals or on a sheet of paper.

Optional Share Time: Invite students to share one of their "Three Good Things" with the class or a partner if they feel comfortable.

Part 3: Group Discussion – How Gratitude Affects Us

Review Key Points: Summarize the science behind gratitude from the slide deck, focusing on how it can improve mood, relationships, and overall well-being.

Discussion Prompts: Pose questions such as:

- "Why do you think gratitude can make us feel happier?"
- "How does it feel when someone shows gratitude toward you?"

Encourage Open Sharing: Let students share their thoughts and listen to each other's experiences, emphasizing respectful listening and responses.

LESSON PLAN

Part 4: The Gratitude Circle

Set Up the Circle: Arrange the class in a circle so everyone can see and hear each other.

Explain the Rules: Let students know that everyone will have a chance to share something they're grateful for. They can pass if they're not ready or prefer to listen.

Model Gratitude: Start by sharing something you're grateful for, setting a positive and open tone.

Guide the Sharing: Go around the circle, encouraging students to speak up if they feel comfortable. Remind them to listen respectfully and show appreciation for what others share.

Wrap Up: End with a reflection question like, "How did it feel to share and listen to everyone's gratitude?"

Part 5: Daily Gratitude Journaling

Introduce the Journal: Explain that students will use their gratitude journals daily or a few times a week to write down things they are grateful for.

Prompt Ideas: Share prompts such as "What's something at school that you're thankful for?" or "What's a moment today that made you smile?"

Set the Routine: Decide on a specific time for gratitude journaling, such as at the beginning or end of the school day.

Encourage Personal Growth: Remind students that their journals are for their reflections and don't have to be shared unless they want to.

Part 6: Reflection and Follow-Up

Reflect as a Class: After a week or two, have a class discussion or group activity to talk about how practicing gratitude has made them feel.

Revisit the Lesson: Use slides or examples from the original presentation to refresh their memory and reinforce learning.

Adjust as Needed: Gather feedback on the activities and adjust the frequency or types of prompts based on student engagement and response.

Canva Slide Deck Access



Click the computer for the digital version of this resource.

Please remember, this link is for one teacher. Please do not share this link with others.

THREE GOOD THINGS

Directions for This Activity

- 1) Get one of the Three Good Things half-sheets and make sure you have a pencil or pen.
- 2) Think about your day. What were three good things that happened today? They can be big or small. Anything that made you feel happy or grateful works!
- 3) Write down each good thing. Next to each one, write a short sentence explaining why it was good or why it made you feel happy.
- 4) Reflect on how it made you feel. Think about why you're thankful for these three things and how they made your day better.
- 5) Share if you'd like. If you feel comfortable, share one of your good things with a friend or the class.
 - Examples:
 - I got a good grade on my math quiz because I studied hard.
 - My mom made my favorite dinner, spaghetti, and it tasted so good.
 - I played soccer at recess, and my team won. It was so much fun!

Remember: Writing down three good things every day can help you feel happier and more grateful!



THREE GOOD THINGS

1

2

3

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THREE GOOD THINGS

1

2

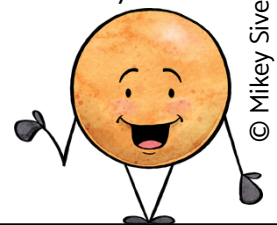
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GRATITUDE CONVERSATION STARTERS

Directions for This Activity

- What is one thing at school that you are grateful for, and why?
- Who is someone at home that makes your life better, and how do they do it?
- Think about your friends. What is something a friend has done for you that you're thankful for?
- What is an activity or club you participate in that makes you feel happy? Why are you thankful for it?
- What's a skill or talent you have that you're grateful for? How does it help you?
- Can you think of a time when a teacher or coach helped you? Why are you thankful for that moment?
- What is a family tradition that you love, and why are you grateful for it?
- Is there a place in your community that you enjoy visiting? Why do you appreciate it?
- What is one thing about nature (e.g., trees, rain, sunshine) that makes you feel thankful?
- What is something about your school day that you look forward to and feel grateful for?
- What is one thing about your classroom that makes it a better place to learn?
- Who is someone you look up to, and what do they do that makes you feel grateful?
- What is something you learned recently that you're thankful to know?
- What is a game or sport you enjoy playing, and why are you grateful for it?
- Is there a book or story that you love? What do you appreciate about it?
- What is a challenge you overcame? Why are you thankful for that experience?
- Think about a time when someone surprised you with kindness. How did it make you feel?
- What is something you have that you sometimes take for granted but are thankful for when you think about it?
- Who is a classmate that has helped you or made your day better? What did they do?
- What is one thing you're grateful for about today, even if it was a regular day?
- If you could tell someone "thank you" right now, who would it be, and why?
- What is something you did for someone else that made you feel good? Why are you grateful for that moment?
- What is your favorite way to show gratitude to others?
- What do you appreciate about being part of a team or group?
- What is one way you can show gratitude at school this week?



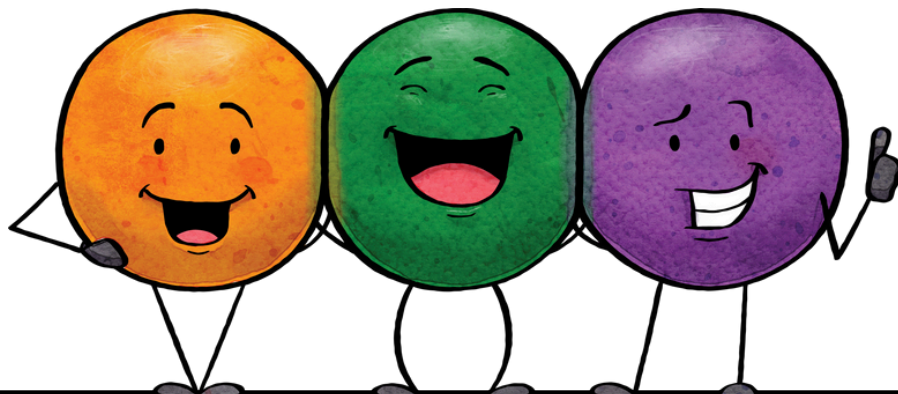
THE GRATITUDE CIRCLE

Directions for This Activity

- 1) Sit in a circle with your classmates so everyone can see each other.
- 2) Take a moment to think about something you are grateful for today. It could be something someone did for you, something you enjoyed, or even a nice feeling you had.
- 3) Wait for your turn to share. When it's your turn, say, "I am grateful for..." and share what you thought of.
- 4) Listen carefully when others are sharing. Show respect by being quiet and paying attention while they speak.
- 5) Feel free to pass if you're not ready to share. You can listen and come up with something to share next time.
- 6) End the circle with a smile and remember that practicing gratitude helps everyone feel good and connected!

Example: "I am grateful for my friend Javier because he helped me understand my homework."

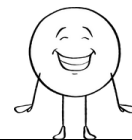
Remember: The Gratitude Circle is a safe space to share what makes you happy and thankful. It's a great way to spread kindness and positivity!



Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 1

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

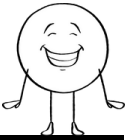


What is something that made you smile today, and why?

Sketch what made you smile today.

Name _____

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



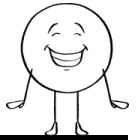
Write about a time when someone helped you. How did it make you feel?

Sketch how that person helped you.

Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 3

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



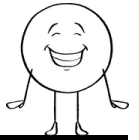
Describe a place that makes you feel happy or safe. Why are you grateful for that place?

Sketch your happy or safe place.

Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 4

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

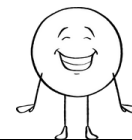


Who is someone you are thankful to have in your life, and what do they do that makes you appreciate them?

Sketch the person you appreciate.

Name _____

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



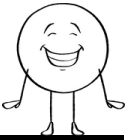
What is something about school that you are grateful for?

Sketch what you like about your school.

Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 6

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



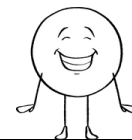
Think about your favorite activity or hobby. Why are you thankful for it?

Sketch what you like about your activity or hobby.

Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 7

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

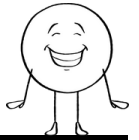


What is one thing you are looking forward to, and why are you excited about it?

Sketch what you are looking forward to.

Name _____

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL

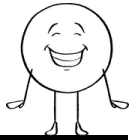


What is one thing you're grateful for about nature (e.g., rain, trees, animals)?

Sketch what you're grateful for in nature.

Name _____

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



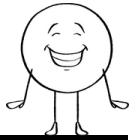
Who is a friend that makes you laugh or feel special? What do they do that you appreciate?

Sketch your friend doing something that makes you smile.

Name _____

GRATITUDE PROMPT 10

MY GRATITUDE JOURNAL



Describe a time when you helped someone else. How did it make you feel, and why are you thankful for that moment?

Sketch you helping someone else.

LET'S CONNECT



CREDITS

Thank you to these fabulous clipart and font designers!

