

# TIPS FOR FOCUSING ON GRATITUDE



As Thanksgiving approaches, let's help our students get in the mindset of gratitude. To aid you in this process, especially on those final days before the long weekend, here are some simple ways you can encourage a spirit of thankfulness with your students.

Note: Every prompt can be done individually, in a partnership, or as a whole class.

## **Top 10 Reasons to Smile:**

Encourage your students to make a list of the simple and big things in their life that bring a smile to their face. It can be someone smiling at them in the hall, or smiling because a family member got home early from work. Whatever makes them happy can go on the list.

## **Appreciation Share:**

Lead your students into a time of valuing the people in their life, and sharing what they appreciate about each person.

## **School Thank You:**

Have your students write thank you notes (or make pictures for younger students) to the people in the school building who make the school day possible. You might start by having students brainstorm all the different people who work in the school from the principal to the person who serves them lunch, to the people who help keep the building clean, and to those who drive the school buses. Thank you notes to each of these people will be appreciated.

## **Honor a Service Member or Veteran:**

Another level of gratitude comes when students reflect on those who serve them in the community (police, firefighters, paramedics, etc.) and those who protect our country (armed forces and veterans). Students can write notes or letters of thanks that can be mailed or delivered in person.

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## Thankful Jar:

Bring in a large clear jar and set it in a prominent location in your class. Then encourage your students to jot down what they are thankful for and place it in the jar. You can run this activity for multiple days leading up to Thanksgiving break so students can watch the amount of gratitude grow in the jar.

## Community Service:

Brainstorm ways you students and their families can serve in the community over the long weekend.

## Poems and Stories:

Gather your students and read them an inspiring poem or story to help them reflect on gratitude. A classic story on gratitude is *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. Even older students enjoying remembering this story from their childhood readings. For poetry, consider using Nikki Grimes' work, *Thanks a Million*, to talk about gratitude. Through 16 varied poems, the book is sure to get students thinking about what makes them thankful.

## Gratitude Pictures:

Take photographs of each of your students holding a sign they made expressing who or what they are thankful for. They can then paste the photograph onto construction paper to make a card or gift they can share with a family member or friend over the Thanksgiving holiday.



Photo courtesy of Tracy Craemer