

Gratitude Chains

This lesson focuses on caring through gratitude. Your class is a giant team that must work together every day to learn and grow. Highlighting each other in positive ways boosts morale and inspires each member of the team towards greatness! Creating chains of gratitude will do just that.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Gratitude, Helpfulness, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- Multiple colors of construction paper, cut into long strips 2-3 inches wide
- Glue sticks

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.
See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Highlight grateful actions and words among their peers.
- Demonstrate gratitude through verbal and written expression.
- Acknowledge helpfulness among peers by thanking them for their contributions.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Helpfulness: the word alone can bring both positive and negative images to mind. Are you the type to help with everything? Or are you one that avoids helping because you can't seem to find the time? Finding a balance when it comes to helpfulness is vital for self preservation in this profession.

Establishing and maintaining clear boundaries with your team, your school, and yes, even your own family, will help you better organize your time, thus allowing you to either pair down on the help you are providing or find time to actually pitch in on more occasions. Helpfulness is a terrific character trait, but can often be over-expected with teachers. Speak up when you are taxed. No one likes a grumpy helper! Need ideas on HOW to say no?

Check out this resource:

<http://teacherhabits.com/effective-way-teachers-say-no/>

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Have non-verbal or limited speaking students draw pictures on their gratitude chains.
- Act out each gratitude link as it is read out loud to help with comprehension



Share

3-5 minutes

Have everyone bring their “My Happy Place” boards to your community/meeting area. Use the following to guide a conversation:

- Raise your hand if you have a picture of an animal on your board.
- Stand up if you have at least one picture of a special place on your board.
- Squat down if you have a picture of any type of food on your board.
- What is the happiest picture on your board? Why?
- If you could add one extra picture to your board what would it be? Why?
- Are there any pictures on your board that show people helping? Tell me about it!
- If you could add a picture of someone who helps you, who would it be and why?



Inspire

What is Gratitude?

5-7 minutes

We have been talking about how we care for others, but what about when others care for us? The feeling we have when they care for us is called Gratitude. We are grateful for their kind words, caring actions, and generous offers of help. They have helped make our day a little easier or happier and we are thankful for all they do. What is one thing you are grateful for here at school? What is one thing you are grateful for at home? Did you show gratitude for these things by telling your family how happy they made you feel?

How do we show Gratitude in our classroom?

7-10 minutes

Using your classroom job chart, review ways we could show gratitude for people when they demonstrate helpfulness by completing their class jobs.

- We can use kind words to thank them.
- We can use respectful actions to show our gratitude.
- We can tell others how helpful they are (like the teacher!).

We can also show gratitude when someone shows kindness and caring unexpectedly. Think back to a time during our school year when one of your classmates has provided unexpected help through kind words or caring actions. How did you show gratitude for this?



Empower

20 minutes

Explain that each day this week will end with a gratitude round-up. This will help our class to highlight all of the wonderful ways people are caring for us and demonstrating helpfulness throughout the day. Using construction paper

strips, each child will write and/or draw something they are grateful for that day.

- After each strip is completed, have students share their gratitude aloud.
- Combine all of the links together to create a gratitude chain.
- Hang our chain at the top of the ceiling, starting in one corner of your room.
- Continue this activity each day (and even throughout your entire year if desired) with the main goal of trying to have your entire classroom encircled by your gratitude chain.
- Decide on a prize for completing your entire gratitude chain. One option could be inviting families to a pizza party to show them how grateful you are for them!



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Ask the following questions to your class & discuss answers.

- What Gratitude did you receive during this game?
- How did that make you feel?
- How have you felt when you received gratitude after helping someone else?

The act of expressing gratitude is a terrific habit to start at this young age. Introducing vocabulary and actions that connect this concept early helps to create a heart of thankfulness and caring early on, leading to a lifelong habit of gratitude.



Extension Ideas

- Use the gratitude chain to practice patterns, skip counting, and base ten addition. Use different colors for every 2, 5, or 10 chains to aid in practicing basic math concepts. After adding chains on at the end of each day, count the total chains using different patterns to illustrate addition and low level multiplication.
- Focus your gratitude on the students of the day/week. Shower them with gratitude each day to build them up!
- At Home Extension: Start a Gratitude Chain for each child's family during this week as well! Focusing on the positive at home is a terrific tool to inspire caring and helpfulness among children as well.
- Continue this gratitude chain beyond this month by color coding the chains every month. This will help you see how grateful your class is and when it might be time to kick the attitude of gratitude into high gear!



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>