

Grow a Gratitude Tree - Gratitude

EXPLANATION:

Thankfulness is a socio-emotional habit that young children explore from an early age. Creating a gratitude tree helps students express appreciation for the people and events that influence their lives. By understanding thankfulness, students can develop sensitivity toward the feelings of others and cultivate empathy and other life skills.

GRADE LEVELS: Preschool–Kindergarten

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion and individual creations to add to the gratitude tree

ACTIVITY LENGTH: Group time discussion and time for individual creations

CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *SOCIAL AWARENESS*

- Understanding and expressing gratitude
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

SCOPE OF TASK:

1. Explain to the class that we all have reasons to be thankful, and that for these we should say “thank you.” We may be thankful for our families—for feeding us, reading us stories, taking us to the park. We may also be thankful for what we have in our environment—the sunny day, the weather, the trees that give us shade. There are many things that we have gratitude for!
2. Ask the students to share the reasons that they say “thank you.”
3. Discuss with them different words that are similar in meaning to “thankful.”
4. Discuss the feelings associated with gratitude and appreciation.
5. Show examples of gratitude trees made by other students—you can find a range of examples by doing an Internet search.
6. Tell the students that they are going to make and “grow” a class gratitude tree.

Options (dependent upon the developmental stage of the class) for the tree include:

- The students determine how the tree will look and the materials needed.
 - Materials are sourced and ready for students to build their class tree.
 - A bare tree is already assembled.
7. Once the tree structure is determined, the students can make the leaves. A template for a leaf is located at the end of this activity; alternately, students can make their own leaf shapes and cut them out.
 8. Each student should put something they are grateful for on their leaf; depending on students’ abilities, either write for them or model the writing for the students to copy. Attach a string to each leaf, so students can tie their leaves onto the tree.

The gratitude tree can be a feature in the classroom and be added to when someone feels thankful. The gratitude tree can also be shared with parents/guardians and other visitors to the room.

Questions that could prompt conversations include:

- How do people feel when we say thank you?
- How do you feel when you share your gratitude?



Alternative: Have magazines available for students to find and cut out pictures that represent gratitude. It is important for them to be able to explain why they wish to use a particular image.

RESOURCES:

- Leaf template
- Paper
- String to hang leaves
- Hole puncher
- Internet to share pictures of gratitude trees

Recycled materials for tree:

- Tree branches
- Rocks to add stability to the tree base
- Old vase or bucket to hold the branches

