

Signs of Gratitude



Design Thinking



Caden T., Grade 2, Westlake, TX



Melanie W., Grade 1, Memphis, TN

Introduction

Gratitude means more than simply saying *thanks*. Gratitude is about recognizing the many positive things in our lives and appreciating the actions, attitudes, and efforts of others that enable us to enjoy material items and experiences. In this project, children will design ways to express gratitude and share *signs of gratitude* for others around them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- list items and experiences they are grateful for and recognize people whose actions, attitudes, and efforts they appreciate;
- design ways to show their appreciation and gratitude; and
- collect and dispense *signs of gratitude*.

Vocabulary appreciation experiences dispense perspective
gratitude value system motivate
items express display

Essential Questions

- What sparks gratitude and appreciation? In what ways are these indicators of what we value?
- How can we show gratitude for the actions, attitudes, and efforts of others who have made our lives better in a variety of ways (safer, happier, more secure, and better informed)?
- Why does looking at situations from other people's perspectives help foster gratitude and appreciation?
- Why does making gratitude a daily practice lift up one's attitude and outlook?

Supplies

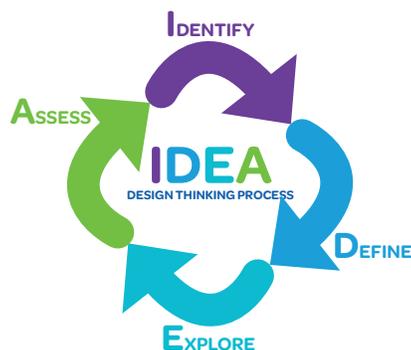
- Paper
- Crayola® Markers
- Crayola® Colored Pencils
- Optional (depending on if two-dimensional signs, three-dimensional appreciation boxes, or sidewalk messages will be created)
- Poster Board
- Plain Greeting Cards and Postage
- Recycled Boxes (small ones such as empty jewelry, tissue, or individual cereal boxes)
- Tape
- Crayola® Sidewalk Chalk

Prepare

Designate a space for art making and help children find appropriate places they might display or share their *signs of gratitude*. For example, they might want to hang a poster in the window for passersby to see.

Guiding Questions

- When someone does something nice or helpful for you, how does it make you feel?
- What are some examples of people helping the community, your family, or you personally?
- What can you say or do to show appreciation for another person?
- How could you design *signs of gratitude* and a system to collect and distribute them?



Applying the Design Thinking Process to this Project

- **IDENTIFY** what you appreciate and how, when, where, and to whom you will show gratitude.
- **DEFINE** possible designs for a system to share *signs of gratitude*.
- **EXPLORE** ideas and sketch possible delivery systems and different *signs of gratitude* you will provide to others.
- **ASSESS** how the *signs of gratitude* and delivery systems can be improved or expanded.



- Have children think about what makes them feel safe, taken care of, and thankful. Ask, “Who was involved in providing the community, our family, or you personally with those items or experiences? What did those people do and how could you let them know how much you appreciate them?”
- Gratitude is often more heartfelt when children consider how people have extended themselves to help others. Ask them to think of other people’s actions, attitudes, and efforts. Ask, “Why do people do things for others? Why might they have gone to such an effort to teach, serve, protect, or care for others?”
- Discuss different ways we can express appreciation for others and gratitude for what others do for us and for the community. Some *signs of gratitude* might include words we write and illustrate, signs we post, cards we send, art we give, or advocacy actions we champion.
- Ask children to think about how others might receive or become aware of our *signs of gratitude*. Especially during times when it is difficult to deliver anything in person, what kinds of signs, sidewalk art, or customized containers could they design to make sure others can receive their heartfelt thanks?



Karina F.

- As children explore the IDEA process, ask them to sketch possibilities, create prototypes, and plan their appreciation-sharing process.



- Have children ask others for feedback on the sketches and prototypes before they implement the system. Perhaps they could share these with family members or friends who might also use this system or one like it to share their *signs of gratitude*.
- As children demonstrate how the system works, encourage them to ask for feedback. Ask many questions to improve the *signs of gratitude* and the delivery system.

- Have children implement their plans by creating the *signs of gratitude* and presenting them. If the sharing will be continued, plan a schedule for delivering a series of *signs of gratitude*. For example, if children are sending handcrafted cards establish a mailing schedule, and if they are hanging posters in the front window or drawing messages on the sidewalk, plan who will receive the next message of thanks and when.



- Show your gratitude by using words to express thanks to those who helped you work on this project.
- Discuss how others have responded to your project.



John D., Grade 1, Kapolei, HI

- What else could children do to notice the little things that others do that make them happy, healthy, and well cared for?



- Help children connect their feelings of gratitude with the responses from those who they have thanked.
- Discuss the many things that others do for their community and family that are often overlooked until people pause to show their appreciation.
- Why is finding ways to be grateful especially important during times of stress or fear? How can thinking about what others have done help make inconveniences and disappointments seem less significant?



For Younger Children

- As young children create visuals have an adult or older sibling write the words to accompany the art and convey the youngsters’ message.
- Collaboratively create decorated acrostics for the words *THANKS*, *GRATITUDE*, and *APPRECIATE* that express each word’s meaning or a personally relevant message that fits each letter.



For Older Children

- Research says that spending 15 minutes a day writing or sketching in a *gratitude journal* helps to relieve stress. Encourage children to create a daily *gratitude journal* to share or keep private.
- Older children can read more about studies that show how gratitude improves people’s mindsets and attitudes.



Kiri E., Grade 6, St. Mary's, PA

Child Reflections

- What did you discover about your own and other people's values when you discussed gratitude?
- What motivates people to help others?
- How did sharing ideas for creating *signs of gratitude* systems help you learn from others?

Adult Reflections

- What did you learn about your own expressions of gratitude?
- How did you help your children find ways to express their appreciation?
- Why is being grateful important for families, especially during frustrating or disappointing circumstances?
- How did having children design the sharing system help them become innovative decision makers?

STANDARDS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Educational standards outline what children should know and be able to do in many learning areas. Modify the project to address standards from your children's curriculum or by responding to your children's interests and needs. This project aligns the following educational standards:

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Ask questions to check understanding of information presented and link comments to the remarks of others.
- Explain ideas and understanding during and after a discussion.
- Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details.
- Develop an increasing command of language conventions and vocabulary and use these accurately to communicate ideas and feelings.

MATHEMATICS

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Describe, compare, and classify objects by their attributes.

SCIENCE

- Develop and use models.
- Plan and carry out investigations.
- Construct explanations and design solutions.
- Ask questions, observe, and gather information about a situation people want to change. Define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.
- Recognize what is relevant and how changes in scale, proportion, or quantity affect a system's structure or performance.

VISUAL ARTS

- Imagine and create art to convey meaning.
- Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.
- Use personal experiences to make and talk about art.
- Use observation and investigation to prepare for making a work of art.
- Repurpose objects to make something new.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

- **Self-awareness**—relating thoughts and feelings to behaviors that build optimism.
- **Self-management**—being able to regulate one's emotions and manage stress.
- **Social Awareness**—considering situations from the perspective of others and recognizing the support that comes from family, school, and community.
- **Relationship Skills**—communicating ideas and feelings clearly.