



Note Project Lesson Plan: The Importance of Appreciation

“The Importance of Appreciation” is a three-part lesson plan that can be completed in 30-60 minutes, depending on the size of the class and the amount of discussion. The goal is to help students understand the “why, who and how” of appreciation, and for each student to complete the lesson with a note of appreciation that they can send to someone.

As an additional assignment (which could be for extra credit), students can participate in the Note Project at <http://noteproject.com>. There is no cost to participate. Participants simply pledge to send at least one note of appreciation to someone – a pledge that students can fulfill simply by sending the note they write as part of this lesson!

Extra credit for YOU: After you complete the lesson with your class, tell us about it! You can post your story on the “Your Notes” section of the Note Project website, or send it to us at info@noteproject.com. We’ll share it with others and inspire even more people to share appreciation – all thanks to you!

Part 1: The “Why” of Appreciation (10-20 minutes)

Introduction

Begin the lesson with a series of discussion questions:

1. What is appreciation?
2. Why is it important? (Is it important?)
3. Why don’t people share appreciation? [Typical answers: Don’t have time, don’t know what to say, the other person already knows they are appreciated, nobody ever appreciates me or tells me “thanks,” it’s old-fashioned.]
4. Why should people share appreciation?
5. Has anybody been thanked for something by someone else recently? [Examples could be as simple as someone thanking them for holding a door open.]
6. How does it feel to be appreciated?

Quote to share: “Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity. It must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all.” – William Faulkner

Activity

1. Ask for a volunteer who wants to share appreciation of someone else in the room. [Alternative: Select a student who recently did something you appreciated. Tell that student what they did and thank them for it.]
2. Ask the recipient of the appreciation how it made him/her feel to be appreciated. [Typical answers: “good” or “embarrassed.” This could lead to a discussion of why it makes someone feel “good” or “embarrassed” to be appreciated.]



3. Note: It's typically also an uplifting experience to share appreciation, so be sure to ask the volunteer how it made him/her feel to share appreciation (or to talk about how it made you feel to share appreciation).
4. Ask rest of class how it felt to witness someone being appreciated.

Conclusion

Why show appreciation? It's not just because you're "supposed" to. It's because appreciation has a positive effect on everybody involved.

Sharing appreciation can be regarded as an act of kindness.

Quote to share: "Research has shown that a simple act of kindness directed toward another human being improves the functioning of the immune system and stimulates the production of serotonin in both the recipient of the kindness and the person extending the kindness. Even more amazing is that persons observing the act of kindness have similar beneficial results. Kindness extended, received or observed beneficially impacts the physical health and feelings of everyone involved." – Dr. Wayne Dyer

Part 2: The "Who" of Appreciation (10-20 minutes)

This can be a fun and easy lesson that helps convey the underlying message that we have people and things all around us to appreciate.

Give students some time to make a list of people in their lives whom they appreciate.

Afterwards, have the students share some of their answers, and brainstorm with them about other possibilities.

[Optional: Have one or two students write the answers on a blackboard. The goal could be to fill up the blackboard with people who deserve our appreciation.]

Quote to share: "At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." – Albert Schweitzer

Part 3: The "How" of Appreciation (10-20 minutes)

The goal of this part of the lesson plan is for each student to finish with a note of appreciation they can send to someone that day.

Activity

Instructions to students:

1. Pick a person you appreciate. [Possibilities include friends, family members, neighbors, coaches, classmates, teachers, mentors, a boss or coworkers (if the students are old enough to have part-time jobs), or other people they like or admire.]



The person they select could be a person who was identified in “Part 2: The Who of Appreciation.”]

2. Describe the person you picked. [“Describe” can be a physical description, but in this exercise, it will be more helpful to describe the person in terms of personality traits and things the student likes about the person. The possibilities are endless: smart, funny, helpful, caring, optimistic, energetic, etc.]
3. Write down one or two of your favorite memories of the person you picked. [Maybe it was a small thing that they did. Maybe it was something big. Maybe it was as simple as the time they said “hello” and cheered you up on a day when you were feeling down. Maybe it’s something they do routinely or even every day. Also note how those experiences made you feel. Did they cheer you up when you were sad? Make you feel special when you were questioning your worth? Make you feel capable when you doubted your ability? Make you feel loved and appreciated when you were feeling alone and taken for granted?]
4. Put it all together using this model: “Dear [insert name of person]. You are one of the most [insert one or more of the words you used to describe the person] I know. One of my favorite memories is of the time we [insert one of your memories of that person]. Thank you.”

Note: The “model” sounds formulaic, but the intent is to demonstrate how easy it is to write a thoughtful note of appreciation.

Examples

1. (to a friend): Dear Dave, You are one of the most energetic and fun people I know. I have lots of great memories from our long friendship, including our most recent get together for dinner when you were in town last week. I always laugh and have a good time when you’re around. Thank you for your friendship. –Mike
2. (to my childhood neighbor): Dear Miss Litoni, I often think of the times you asked me to stop and chat with you before I went out to play after dinner. I probably seemed anxious to go play with my friends, and I was! But looking back, I am glad we spent the time together. You are one of the most thoughtful and caring people I know. Thank you. –Mike
3. (to my cousin about his late mother): Dear Bob, It has been many years since Aunt Nina died, but I want to let you know that I think of her often. My family didn’t have much money when I was a kid, and Aunt Nina used to let us stay at your orange grove in Florida for our vacation. I have many fond memories from those vacations. One time Aunt Nina helped me catch a chameleon, and I used to laugh when she talked about her plans to catch an alligator from the pond by your house. She was a special person, and I will always remember her. –Mike

Conclusion

Quote to share: “Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.” – John Milton