



Schenectady City School District

## Week 4: Growing Gratitude

Dear Colleagues,

Feeling gratitude helps people experience more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes), and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

This week's Growing Gratitude resources and activities (referenced within) provide opportunities for each of us to feel the effects of gratitude practices on ourselves and our students.

We can make a difference in promoting mental health!



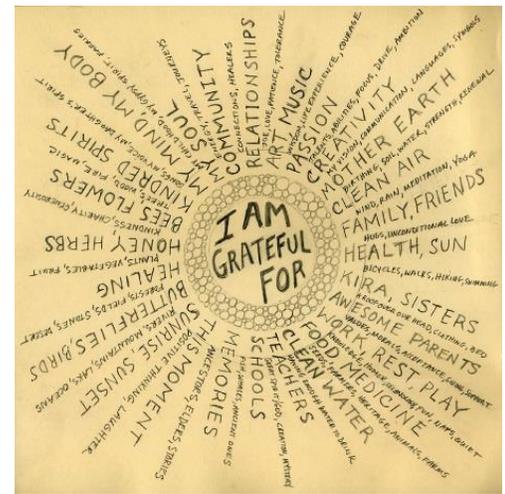
### Tip of the Week

Write down and share a few things that you are grateful for. People who keep track of their gratitude are more upbeat and have fewer physical aches and pains than others.



## Information & Self-Care for Adults

- VIDEO - Robert Emmons – The Power of Gratitude (8:11)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLjVOvZufNM>
- A Practical Guide to Gratitude – 9 Ways to Cultivate It\*  
<http://www.unstuck.com/gratitude.html>
- Create and Monitor a Gratitude Journaling Goal:  
[http://www.lifespace.com/Create\\_a\\_Gratitude\\_Journal\\_%28Basic%29\\_Goal\\_Template](http://www.lifespace.com/Create_a_Gratitude_Journal_%28Basic%29_Goal_Template)
- The Importance of Practicing Gratitude\*  
ACTIVITY IDEA: Notebook Kudos to Staff – Pass it On!  
Use a notebook (provided in toolkit\*\*) to acknowledge staff for positive accomplishments, provide encouragement, and share compliments with one another. Notes can be anonymous from the giver (or not). If you receive the notebook, your job is to choose another staff member to recognize, write them a note in the notebook and place the notebook in their mailbox. Staff members can rip out the note that was written to them and keep it or keep it in the notebook so that staff members can read what was written and also know who has already been recognized to ensure they choose someone who hasn't been chosen yet. This is a simple way to recognize the wonderful things colleagues are doing and increase overall staff morale.



### Sample PA Announcements:

#### Elementary

“Do you think you're smart, funny or kind? Do you congratulate yourself when you did a good job? Sometimes when we are stressed, we can be negative and take it out on ourselves. Be kind to yourself, try to be positive and ask for help. For more information on where you can go for help, speak to a parent, a teacher, your nurse, school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist.”

#### Secondary

“Do you know when it is okay to say “no”? Are you able to set reasonable goals for yourself? Setting goals that are unrealistic sets you up for failure. Keep your short and long term priorities in mind and remember to set goals that perhaps could be difficult yet reachable. For more information on where you can go for help, speak to a parent, a teacher, your nurse, school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist.”



## Promoting Students' Mental Health

### Activity Ideas for Students:

- Random Notes of Kindness (Post-It Activity)

On sticky notes, have staff write down brief, feel-good messages that can be generalized to any student, focused on increasing positive self-esteem and the overall school morale. Don't write names; notes should be anonymous. This should be manageable with a few volunteers writing 25-50 post-its each – the pay-off is huge!

- Examples: You are capable! You are kind! You matter! You rock! Have a great day! You are cared for!
- Post notes on lockers of students, on bathroom mirrors, etc.

- Thank You Cards from Students

Have students choose one staff member to write a "Thank you/Appreciation" card to. Help students to think of those staff members who are not recognized often but play an important role in the school community, specifically adults outside of their classrooms (custodian, lunch staff, Nurse, Social Worker, School Psychologist, School Counselor, etc.). Brainstorm with the student reasons why that adult is someone they appreciate if needed.

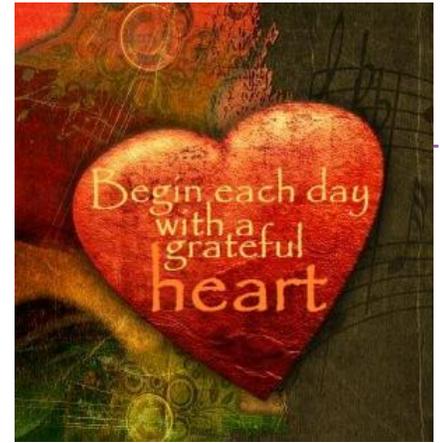
### Other Teaching Resources

- Fishful Thinking: Cultivating Gratitude in Youth (PDF)\*\*

Karen Reivich, creator of a parent outreach program designed to promote optimism and resilience in children, summarizes the benefits of gratitude on well-being and offers suggestions for developing and teaching gratitude practices to youth. The article includes descriptions of specific intervention suggestions including gratitude journaling, writing and delivering a gratitude letter, and creating a personal gratitude list.

- Gratitude Works NASP Teacher Implementation Guidelines (PDF)\*\*

In efforts to promote students' resilience, optimism, and academic success, by helping them see the possibilities in themselves and others, the National Association of School Psychologists offers guidelines for implementing Gratitude Works – an activity in which students write letters or notes of gratitude to individuals who have made a difference in their lives or the lives of others. Research shows that fostering gratitude can lead to, among other benefits, students' greater satisfaction with school and life, optimism, pro-social behavior, positive affect, and a higher GPA.



Click here to check out the [SCSD Behavior Matters Website](#) for additional resources for educators and parents.

**\*Click below for Additional Resources on the T-Share Drive:**

[Mental Health Awareness Month 2016](#)

[Cultivating Gratitude in Youth](#)

[9 Ways To Cultivate Gratitude](#)

**\*\*Check with your principal for access to the Mental Health Week Toolkit distributed last May! Contact the Behavior Specialist assigned to your school to request additional materials.**