Gratefulness
INTRODUCE GRATEFULNESS

This curriculum offers approximately 3 hours of instruction, divided into 3 sections. Each section can be broken into smaller pieces if you prefer short lessons. For additional resources, visit www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

3 WAYS TO BUILD GRATEFULNESS:

Educate
Focus on gratefulness for a period of time. Use the lessons in this curriculum to talk about gratitude and why it matters. Look for ways to emphasize gratefulness during other subjects, such as math, reading, language, history, social studies, science, music, health, and athletics.

Evaluate
Think about daily decisions in the light of good character. Ask yourself and your students, “Is this the right thing to do?” Use the “I Wills” on page 4 as behavioral objectives, and refer to these standards when correcting negative attitudes and behavior.

Celebrate
Catch people doing good and point out the character qualities they demonstrated. Children thrive on sincere encouragement, so don’t overlook the little opportunities to praise each day!

DEFINE GRATEFULNESS
(Discussion, 15 minutes)

Point out and discuss key words in the definition. Review and commit the definition to memory.

Definition: Showing appreciation for what I have

The word gratefulness means “full of gratitude,” which is based on the Latin word gratus, meaning “thankful” or “pleasing.” Grateful people appreciate what they have and express thanks for the benefits they receive. This attitude makes someone pleasant to be with—especially compared to an ungrateful person who is discontented, displeased, and takes everything for granted.

Gratefulness is not based on your circumstances, because you can always find something to be negative or sad about. Instead, gratefulness is choosing to find something you appreciate, even in difficult times.

Children can develop gratefulness by saying “thank you” for their food, clothing, shelter, and the many “extra” things they enjoy such as toys, books, a bicycle, games, music lessons, and the ability to live in a free country.

Related concepts: Thankful, appreciative, mindful, conscientious, positive, content

Discussion:
- What are some things your parents and teachers did for you this week? How can you show appreciation?
- What is the opposite of gratefulness? (Being selfish, unthankful, grumpy, presuming, negative, or taking others for granted.)
- Why is it more fun to be around a grateful person than a selfish person?

“Gratitude is the memory of the heart.”
—Jean Baptiste Massieu
WRITE IT!
(Exploration, 15 minutes)

Bring some thank you cards or sheets of paper for students to practice expressing their appreciation to others. For added effect, show them a card or letter you received and kept because it was special.

Have you ever received an encouraging note or special letter from someone? Maybe a birthday card or thank you note? A written note is special because someone took a little extra time and effort to write their thoughts and send it to you.

If you were going to write three thank you notes today, who would you send them to? What would you thank them for?

Provide students with a variety of cards they can use to write notes to friends or family members. Young students can draw pictures instead of writing words.

GRACIAS!
(Exploration, 15 minutes)

Teach students how to say “thank you” in different languages. Practice one expression each day or each week.

How to Say “Thank You”:
- English = Thank You (THANK-yoo)
- Spanish = Gracias (GRAH-see-as)
- Hawaiian = Mahalo (mah-HAH-lo)
- French = Merci (mare-SEE)
- Italian = Grazie (GRAHT-see)
- Romanian = Mulțumesc (MUL-tsu-mesk)
- Chinese = Xie Xie (SHYEH-shyeh)
- Japanese = Arigato (ah-ree-GAH-to)
- Swahili = Asante (ah-SAHN-teh)
- Sign Language = Hand in front of mouth, then extend hand forward and open toward the person you’re thanking

Additional resources at www.CharacterFirstEd.com

Showing appreciation for what I have

Gratefulness
Redirecting Praise

A grateful person recognizes how others contribute to his or her success, and one way to do that is by redirecting praise. Here's how it works:

Whenever you receive a compliment, thank the person for his or her encouragement and then try to pass the praise on to someone else—someone who taught you, helped you, or was a good example to you.

This habit shows a certain amount of modesty, humility, and gratefulness, which are endearing qualities in anyone. Teach this skill to your students by practicing how they might respond if someone were to compliment them after a musical recital or school play:

- "Thank you for your encouragement. I'm grateful for my teacher who helped me learn this."
- "Thank you. My parents sacrificed a lot for me to have lessons."
- "I appreciate my friend. She's been a good example to me."
- "Thanks. It would be ________, I don't think I could have done this."

I WILL...
(Discussion, 25 minutes)

1. **Appreciate the people in my life.**
   Think through your day and count how many people did something that benefited you directly (like driving you to school) or indirectly (like building the roads or sidewalks to school).
   - Can you name at least 5 people who did something good for you today?
   - What do you think it means to "take people for granted"?

2. **Say "please" and "thank you."**
   A grateful person shows good manners and common courtesy. Remember to say "please" when you want something and "thank you" when you receive it.
   - Facial expressions and tone of voice make a big difference. Practice asking for a snack in a grateful way instead of a demanding way.

3. **Enjoy what I have instead of complaining about what I don't have.**
   Be grateful for what you have and make the most of it. If you want to have more, then work toward it—but don't expect it to make you happier than you are right now. If you aren't content with what you have today, you probably won't be content with what you get tomorrow.
   - How can you be grateful, even when you don't have much?
   - What do you think it means to "look at the glass half full"?

4. **Take care of my belongings.**
   If you appreciate what someone gives you, then you'll take good care of it instead of trashing or wasting it.
   - How can you take care of clothes, toys, a bicycle, and other belongings?
   - If you borrow something, why should you return it in good condition?

5. **Write thank you notes.**
   Taking time to write a thank-you note shows you really appreciate what you received. Add a special touch by drawing a picture or sending a photo.
   - When would it be appropriate to write a thank you note? Give 3 examples.
   - Why do you think people enjoy receiving thank you notes?
GRATEFULNESS GLASSES
(Project, 25 minutes)

Make colorful glasses that remind students to look on the bright side of life.

Cut a pair of glasses out of heavy paper. (Download a template at www.CharacterFirstEd.com.) Decorate the frames of your glasses. Cut circles of iridescent cellophane or kitchen plastic wrap, and tape them as “ lenses” to the inside of your glasses.

Supplies: heavy paper, scissors, markers, iridescent cellophane, clear tape

Points to Ponder:
- How you look at life affects your ability to be grateful. Do you see what is good or what is bad? Do you focus on what you have or what you do not have? Do you recognize what your parents and teachers have done for you, or do you take them for granted?
- When you face difficult times, ask yourself, “What can I be grateful for in this situation?” Practice by discussing real-life examples such as someone getting sick, the car breaking down, the power going out, or parents not letting you do what you want.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE
(Project, 25 minutes)

Use this project to show special appreciation to someone at your school.

Have children trace one hand on a piece of construction paper or visit www.CharacterFirstEd.com to download a template. Cut out the hands and write notes of gratefulness on them. (Do not write on the thumb or pinky finger, or the message might get covered when the hands are stapled together.)

Collect all the hands and place them in a circle. Staple the thumb of one hand to the little finger of the next. As a class, present the “Round of Applause” to show your appreciation for that person.

Supplies: several colors of construction paper, pens or pencils, scissors, stapler

GRATEFULNESS POEM
(Literacy Connection, 15 minutes)

Teach this poem as a way to memorize the five “I Wills.” Watch the video at www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

I will thank the people in my life for what they do for me.
I will write them notes of gratefulness and act respectfully.
I will care for my belongings and when I go to the store,
I'll be glad for what I have instead of always wanting more.
My character is what will make a leader out of me
So next time through, let's say it more ENTHUSIASTICALLY!

Additional resources at www.CharacterFirstEd.com
Abraham Lincoln

When Abraham Lincoln was seven years old, his family moved from Kentucky to Indiana. Abe's family lived in a three-sided shelter while Abe and his father built a log cabin.

They kept a fire in the shelter, and at night, the fire kept away bears and wolves. But when winter came, even a big fire could not keep Abe warm. The Lincolns made use of what they had until Abe and his father finished the cabin and everyone moved inside.

When Abe was ten years old, his mother became ill and died. When Abe's father remarried, Abe got two new sisters and a brother.

This was a lot to get used to all at once! Abe knew he would never forget his real mother, but he was thankful for his new family and did what he could to welcome them to their new home.

Life isn't easy for the porcupine, but this critter of the woodland still finds a reason to "sing with all its heart."

THE PORCUPINE
(Story, 15 minutes)

One crisp, winter morning, a man strolled through the forest. As he walked, he noticed something move out of the corner of his eye. He stopped to see what it was. Something dark and round waddled from one tree to another, sniffing the breeze as if tracking a scent. To the man's surprise, the little creature was tracking him! It got closer and closer, and without any warning it leaned forward and took a bite out of the man's boot! What a crazy thing to do!

Now porcupines aren't crazy—they just can't see very well. A porcupine can only see a few feet ahead of itself, but it's so smart that it finds its way through the forest using its sense of smell. It leaves scent posts wherever it goes and constantly sniffs the breeze to tell where it is. Occasionally, it even follows the scent of people as they walk through the woods.

A few nights later, this man lay in his warm bed and had just fallen asleep when he heard a loud gnawing sound. RAWR-RAWR-RAWR. He tried to go back to sleep, but the noise wouldn't stop. So he put on a coat, opened the door, and there he saw another porcupine chewing on the wooden steps of his house! RAWR-RAWR-RAWR! It looked rather silly chewing on steps, and it made a very loud noise.

Now porcupines aren't silly—they just crave salt and will eat almost anything that has salt on it, such as hiking boots with salty perspiration, porch steps with salt to melt snow, ax handles, shovels, and even hand railings.

Still half asleep, the man, not thinking, lifted his foot and kicked the porcupine down off the steps. YEEE-OOOOO! The man looked at his foot, and his toes were covered with sharp quills. "Get out of here, you mean old porcupine!" he said.

Visit www.CharacterFirstEd.com to read more about Abraham Lincoln's early life and how he showed gratefulness in the midst of difficult situations.
However, porcupines aren't mean—they're just extremely dangerous. Porcupines have about 30,000 razor sharp quills covering their bodies. That's a lot of quills! Porcupines are too slow to run, so they rely on their quills for protection.

One day, a bear growled at a porcupine to scare it away. Immediately, the porcupine waddled up to the nearest tree and hid its head against the base of the trunk. It looked kind of scared hiding next to the tree!

But porcupines aren't scared—they just have soft heads.

One knock between the eyes can kill a porcupine. So when a porcupine feels threatened, it hides its head and sticks out its tail full of quills. The bear looked at those quills and decided to leave the porcupine alone!

Life for a porcupine can be difficult, lonely, and often misunderstood. But even though porcupines have soft heads, sharp quills, and strange cravings; even though they are small, slow, and can't see well; even though people think they are crazy, silly, mean, and scared...they still find something to sing about!

If you're walking through the forest and you hear this sound, YUM, OOOOOO, EEEEEEEE, UUUMMMM, you can be pretty sure that it is a porcupine. When looking for a mate, porcupines stand on their hind legs and sway from side to side while they sing: YUMM, OOOOOOO, EEEEEEEE, UUUMMMM! Can you sing like a porcupine? Let's try it!

Like the porcupine, we need to look past our problems and find reasons to be grateful. Even when things go wrong, you can still choose to be thankful and "sing with all your heart."

PORCUPINE CUP
(Project, 25 minutes)

Make a porcupine as a reminder to be grateful, even in difficult situations.

Cut pipe cleaners into two-inch pieces and give each child 20 "quills" and 4 "legs" to stick into a foam cup. Draw a face on the end of the cup. Review some of the challenges the porcupine faces and how it still demonstrates a cheerful attitude.

Supplies: foam cups, pipe cleaners, scissors, markers
OVERVIEW: Gratefulness starts by recognizing what others have done for you and then showing your appreciation. This kind of positive and grateful attitude makes someone pleasant to be with—especially compared to an ungrateful person who takes things for granted. No matter what your circumstance, you can always find something to be grateful for if you look for it!

Gratefulness
Definition: Showing appreciation for what I have

I WILL...
- Appreciate the people in my life.
- Say “please” and “thank you.”
- Enjoy what I have instead of complaining about what I don’t have.
- Take care of my belongings.
- Write thank you notes.

Porcupines face many challenges, but they still find a reason to “sing.”

CHARACTER QUIZ:
1. How would you describe a grateful person? ____________________________________________

2. A grateful person:  a. shows good manners.  b. leaves dishes for someone else to clean up  c. always wants something more

3. A grateful person only says “thank you” for really special things: TRUE? or FALSE?

4. Name 3 things you are grateful for:  ☐ __________________________  ☐ __________________________  ☐ __________________________

5. Why is it nice to be with someone who has a positive outlook on life? ____________________________________________

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