



IDEAS to go...

Learning Appreciation

The holiday season is a great time to teach appreciation. Something I've done with students is to have them think of "gifts" they received over the past year. I use "gifts" in quotation marks because it is important for the students to realize that gifts are not just material things. They can be acts of kindness, true friendship, or visits with someone special. Depending on their age level, they can write a note of thanks or draw a picture to illustrate their gratitude. This activity helps students think about others and shows them how to express their feelings of appreciation. Something else that helps students express appreciation is to have them shake hands with someone and say "it is nice to meet you" or "thanks so much for . . ." You can watch the attitude of the class change as they become more sensitive to the qualities of others.

Contributed by Blossom Nissman, Massachusetts educator and Past President of KDP

Memory Tree

One year I had several students who had experienced the death of immediate family members. So, for the holidays, we made memory trees to honor their loved ones. I bought miniature trees at the craft store, and the students covered them with symbols representing their family members. I purchased small wooden pieces, such as flags, teddy bears, musical instruments, and athletic symbols, which students used to decorate their trees or make ornaments. On a 2x2-inch card, the students wrote about their trees and in whose memory each was made. The trees were then displayed in the school's showcase. These trees could just as easily be "Trees of Honor" dedicated to family members who are serving in the military and may not be able to come home during the holidays.

Contributed by Barbara Kott

Empowering the Positive

Demonstrate to students how to practice thankfulness in concrete ways: Be a role model; express gratefulness in thought or prayer; write thank you letters to relatives, teachers, and others. Start a gratitude journal with your classes. Display a list for students to write genuine sentiments of appreciation or have them create a journal for a personal list. Set aside a moment to write a sentence or two.

Studies show that people who weekly acknowledged what they appreciate and why were more likely to feel good about their lives and look optimistically to upcoming weeks. They also were apt to exercise regularly and have fewer ailments.

*Based on research by Robert Emmons and Michael E. McCullough,
<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/labs/emmons>*

Gifts of Gratitude

How do you reach all students, differentiate instruction, or manage paperwork? Share your tips and ideas with your KDP colleagues! Send them to NewsEditor@kdp.org.