

Counting Blessings

Another way to increase your students' optimistic outlook is by having them "count their blessings." This gratitude based activity has students list 5 things they are grateful for, on a daily or weekly basis. This simple activity only takes a few minutes and can be flexibly fit into a daily schedule. Having students reflect on things they are grateful for will help them combat negative emotions with positive ones and have greater enjoyment at school (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Grade Level: All

Materials: Paper, writing utensil

Duration: 3-5 minutes daily or weekly. Repeat as needed.

Implementation: 1. Decide what time of day you will set aside for the activity each day. If you decide to do the activity at the beginning of the day, consider having students reflect on the previous day.
2. Introduce students to the idea of counting blessings, or things they are grateful for and instruct them to write up to 5 each day.
3. Provide students a few minutes to write down and reflect upon blessings.
4. Repeat activity as needed, though it is recommended to continue the activity for at least 2 weeks.

Does it work?

One study of 221 early-adolescents performed the counting blessings activity each day for 2 weeks with a 3 week follow-up. Students were asked to list up to 5 things they were grateful for each day. Students who participated in the counting blessings intervention reported greater satisfaction with school, increased optimism, and decreased emotional distress (Froh, Sefick & Emmons, 2008). In a similar study, 201 undergraduate students (147 women, 54 men) were asked to list 5 blessings they were grateful for from the past week. After 9 weeks, the gratitude group “felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic regarding their expectations for the upcoming week” (Emmons & McCullough, 2003, p. 381). The researchers repeated this study two more times, with slight variations, and concluded that “people led to focus on their blessings were also more likely to report having helped someone with a personal problem or offered emotional support to another,” and reported that the activity resulted in increased positive emotions, a more optimistic life perspective, and decreased negative emotions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003, p. 386).

References:

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ADDRESSING
WELLBEING
IN SCHOOLS

*An Educator's Practical Guide to Improving
Wellbeing*

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