



# Optimistic Thinking

## Gratitude Jar

### Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

Many of us were taught at such a young age to say please and thank you and we are so conditioned to say those words that we do so without even thinking about them. However, when was the last time we sat and thought about something that we were truly thankful for? This could be the fact that we have a way to get to school or work every day. Or warm shoes on our feet during the winter. Or even that a friend held the door for us for a couple extra seconds when we were carrying a heavy backpack.

Research shows that expressing our gratitude for others, whether it's big or small, has real social and emotional benefits such as:

1. It increases our long-term happiness.
2. It enhances our positive emotions.
3. It increases our self-esteem.
4. It improves our relationships with loved ones.
5. It makes us more optimistic.

### Key Takeaways:

- Students will understand and increase their gratitude.
- Students will boost their confidence.
- Students will increase their engagement.
- Students will show appreciation for others.

### Duration + Materials:

- 10 Minutes
- Jar
- Strips of paper
- Writing utensils

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Gratitude-** The quality of being thankful.
- **Conditioned-** Train or accustom someone or something to behave in a certain way or to accept certain circumstances.
- **Enhances-** Intensify, increase, or further improve the quality, value, or extent of.
- **Optimistic-** Hopeful and confident about the future.



## Activity:

1. Introduce the lesson using the pre-teaching language.
2. Show students the jar and where it will live in your classroom.
3. Demonstrate writing something you are grateful for on the paper and place it in the jar to start it off.
  - a. Explain to students that they can write or draw what they are grateful for.
4. Allow students some time of your choosing to read gratitude items if and when they feel like they need them.
  - a. This can be 5 minutes one day a week, a minute before the bell rings a few times a week, or whatever you feel works best for your class.

## Reinforcement Activities:

1. Model gracious behavior in your day-to-day teaching.
  - a. Thank students for things you might otherwise just expect them to do.
  - b. Take time to write positive feedback on papers or assignments.