

Gratefulness

I WILL:

- show my parents and teachers that I appreciate them
- write "thank you" notes
- take care of my things
- be content with what I have
- count my benefits rather than my burdens

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Vs. Unthankfulness

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life

Gratefulness goes way beyond a simple Thank You. It is a way of life, a paradigm, an attitude. It is the active choice to be grateful for what you have and let go of what you don't.

Gratefulness is being grateful for the giver, not just gift. It is recognizing that the greatest blessings in our lives are the people and then showing

genuine appreciation for them in your life. It is understanding that the best way to say "thank you" is to give back and that it may not be directly to the person who gave to you.

The opposite of Gratefulness is listed as Unthankfulness. A stronger opposite would be Entitlement, a focus on what is still to come. True gratitude focuses

on what is already received.



This month, practice Gratefulness by expressing appreciation to the givers in your life.



Gratitud vs. Ingratitud
 Comunicar a otros con mis palabras y acciones, las formas en que han beneficiado mi vida



Go to the Root

Gratefulness has its roots in the latin words *gratus* meaning "pleasing" and the verb *facere* which means "to make or do" to create the word *gratificus* - "doing a kindness". Can you see how being grateful is the kind way to be?

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"People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first." -David H. Comins

"When you drink from the stream, remember the spring."
Chinese Proverb

"Swift gratitude is the sweetest; if it delays, all gratitude is empty and unworthy of the name." Greek Proverb

"Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy."
Jacques Maritain

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others."
Cicero

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

John F. Kennedy

"Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts."

David O. McKay

"In daily life we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy."

Brother David Steindl-Rast

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

Character Quotables

William Arthur Ward

"Be thankful for what you have and you will end up having more. But if you concentrate on what you don't have, you'll never, ever have enough."

Oprah Winfrey

"The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings."

Eric Hoffer

"A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even in paradise."

Baha'u'llah

"Give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way."

Native American prayer

"Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step forward is a step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation."

Brian Tracy

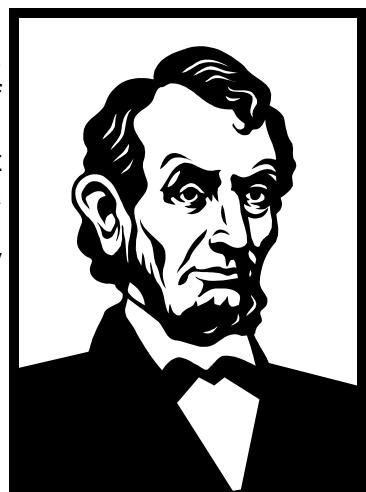
"You simply will not be the same person two months from now after consciously giving thanks each day for the abundance that exists in your life. And you will have set in motion an ancient spiritual law: the more you have and are grateful for, the more will be given you."

Sarah Breathnach

Curriculum Connection History

In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln ordered that Government offices be closed for a local day of Thanksgiving. In 1863, he issued a proclamation which set the precedent for succeeding presidents to issue a Thanksgiving Day address and moved the holiday to be observed by the nation on the same day. Visit the link below for a copy of the address.

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/thanks.htm>



Andrew Carnegie Model of Gratefulness

Andrew Carnegie's gratefulness for a gift of books as a child led him to make significant contributions in order to establish more than 2800 public libraries throughout the world.

When Carnegie was a teenager he worked as a messenger boy for the Pittsburgh Telegraph office. He was grateful for his job but he was also grateful to Colonel James Anderson, who opened his little library of 400 volumes to the boys every Saturday afternoon. He resolved then if he ever became wealthy he would use it to establish free

libraries so that other poor boys could receive the same opportunities that he had been given.

Carnegie's life was marked with a pattern of gratitude. He was a generous man who was motivated by his gratefulness to those who benefited his life. The day he retired, he gave away \$11.2 million.

He has been quoted as saying that "The man who dies rich dies disgraced." By the end of his life, he had given away everything that he had earned, with his will dispersing the last \$30

million.

Gratitude is a personal quality and Carnegie embodied this concept by giving back to those groups of people who had helped him achieve.



Team-Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

Platforms and Promises

Set the stage for an election in your classroom. You can choose or create a position that all of the students will run for such as "Principal" or "School Activities Director". You may also allow each student to run for whatever office they choose encouraging creativity in selecting or making up a fictitious office. You can limit it to the school realm or open it up as wide as you want. Each student will create a flyer on a sheet of paper, identifying the office they seek and why they would make a good candidate. Talk about platforms and promises so they understand the boundaries of what they can do in the office they seek. When they are finished, have each share their flyer. You may also want to give them an additional 20-30 seconds for a campaign speech. Be sure to advise them that they are only to address their qualifications and not another candidates unworthiness! If time and setting allows, you may want to end with an election to see who would win. (Even if they all run for a different office, the students could choose who had the most convincing arguments.) If not, have each of them pretend that they just won. Now what? Talk about the responsibilities of the position(s) they now hold. Review the qualifications that they spoke of while campaigning. Can you find common themes among the qualities they listed? Can you find some unique qualifications among your candidates?



Links of Gratitude

Every day for a week or the whole month, have each student write one person for which they are grateful on a strip of paper and why they are grateful, and make a chain in your classroom. Use colors appropriate for the season. Have each student share their gratitude as they place their link on the chain. See how long the chain is at the end of the week/month. For non-writers, you can have them draw a picture of the people for whom they are grateful and make a quilt of gratitude. After you have done this for a few days, ask the students if anyone of them shared their gratefulness with the actual person they named on a link. If so, ask them how the person reacted and how they felt expressing gratitude. Was it easy? Did it get easier the more you did it? If they haven't expressed their gratefulness, encourage them to do so.



Going Without

Begin a discussion in class about a time when storms knocked out power for an extended period of time. Ask them what they missed most about not having electricity. Ask about if there has been someone in their life who has taken a long trip or was ill a long time. How did it feel to go without seeing that person? Did they appreciate them that much more when they returned? Have any of them ever broken a bone or sprained a joint that required a cast or a brace that prevented you from using the injured body part? What accommodations did they have to make to not use the injured part? Did it put a strain on other working parts? How did they feel when the use of it returned? Ask if anyone has lost a toy or another treasured belonging? How did it feel to know that something important was lost? What did it feel like when you found it again? Did you treat it any differently? Has anyone been lost or separated from their parents in a public place? How did it feel to not know anyone and not be able to locate the person you were with? Did you actively look for them or stand still and hope they found you? What did the reunion with them feel like? Did you hold onto them even tighter?

All of these examples help us to see people and things that we take for granted. Instead of waiting for a time when something or someone is gone, encourage them to speak to individuals and express their gratefulness.



Gratefulness in Poetry

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who won't survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 20 million people around the world.

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.

You are so blessed in ways you may never even know.

by Stephen Eardley
"Reconnections & New Directions" 2003 Conference
Lester B. Pearson College

*"You cannot be grateful and bitter.
You cannot be grateful and unhappy.
You cannot be grateful and without hope.
You cannot be grateful and unloving.
So just be grateful."*

– Author Unknown

Be Thankful

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire,
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something
For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times.
During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations
Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge
Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes
They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary
Because it means you've made a difference.

It is easy to be thankful for the good things.
A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.

GRATITUDE can turn a negative into a positive.
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles and they can become your blessings.

Author Unknown

Share these with your students and then encourage them to write their own tribute to Gratitude. You can do an Acrostic of the word Grateful, Gratitude, Thankfulness or Thanksgiving or any other appropriate word. Other poem styles can be used or let them write an essay on the topic. Post the results around the room.

Yuck Presents

This exercise is intended to give students practice at gracefully accepting gifts they view as less than desirable. Find some pictures of items that would make "yuck" gifts to your students such as ugly sweaters, kitchen appliances, or toys that are intended for a much younger child. Place each picture in an envelope and draw a gift bow on the outside. Have the students pick an envelope and open the gift. Their challenge is to accept it gracefully and gratefully. Model this with an envelope containing a gift that you don't really want and show how it's done. You may also choose to bring in some gifts from your own "gift dungeon" to further demonstrate (as long as they aren't from someone in the school community.) If there isn't time to make an envelope for each student, make enough for about 1/3 of the class. When all of those gift envelopes have been used have the students return the gifts to the envelopes and mix them up and re-use them. Make sure to instruct the students that they must be truthful and kind in what they say to the giver. Appreciation for a gift should be framed as gratefulness to the individual and not the value of the gift. Some examples are below:

For a plain sweater: "Thank you, Aunt Betty, for the warm sweater. It will certainly keep me toasty this winter. I appreciate your thoughtfulness."



For toy that is for a younger child: "Thank you, Uncle Roger, for the cool toy truck. Now when play with my little brother I can have my own truck. I'll think of you when we play with it."

For utilitarian socks: "Thanks, Grandma for the socks. You never forget my birthday. I love you!"



If they give a good response but their tone or inflection doesn't match, ask them if their attitude said the same thing as their words and give them a chance to re-state the Thank You. It is important to stress sincerity in their gratefulness.



For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Gratefulness**: Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life.

To practice Gratefulness I will:

- show my parents and teachers that I appreciate them
- write “thank you” notes
- take care of my things
- be content with what I have
- count my benefits rather than my burdens



Family Activity:

Gratefulness Race

Gather the family and explain what it means to be grateful. Give each member a sheet of paper. Set a timer for 3 - 5 minutes depending on the age of the children. Each person should write down things for which they are grateful. Make sure this doesn't become a list of possessions by limiting “things” to a maximum of 5. Encourage them to write down people, activities, skills, relationships, etc. For each item, they must identify why they are grateful for that item. Younger members can be paired with a parent. Identify the activity as a challenge that comes with a prize to the person with the longest list. When the time is up, have each person read their list. The prize goes to the person with the longest list. If you feel that items on the list are silly, allow the rest of the family to challenge any item on the list. Now compare all of the lists. Instruct everyone to circle items that are unique to their list. You can optionally give a prize to the person with the most unique items. Now look at the lists together and ask how many of these items generated a thank you note to someone. Pick out several items on each person's list and have them write thank you notes. The notes do not have to be long, nor should they include that it was generated as part of a game. Help each child to write the note and encourage honesty and sincerity. This exercise can be performed frequently to get the family focused on creating an attitude of gratitude.

Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the “I wills” and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php



Croskey's Corner

Recently, one of my friends ran into another friend of mine. They had not known each other prior to being introduced. Later, one of them told me about the meeting. Somehow, they quickly figured out that they had at least one mutual friend, me. To this day, I don't know how they figured out that they both knew me. Or why. I guess I at least understand the point of Facebook's Mutual Friends section now.

It is bewildering yet truly gratifying to me to know that people actually think about me when I am not there. I subscribe to the theory that if I am out of sight, I am out of mind. I used to wish that I had a red light bulb somewhere close by (it could be green; or orange; no matter). Anytime someone thought about me, the light bulb would flash. (You know, like the old saying that if someone is being talked about out of their presence, their ears will burn or turn red.) I told a friend about that. She said, with all sincerity, "You do have that light. Every time people are thinking of you - and its more often than you think – the light bulb glows. You just don't know it!"

This all sounds pretty self-absorbed, huh? If I had perfect confidence, complete maturity, was fully poised, I would probably not need to know whether I was in the thoughts of others. Well, those goals are on my "To Do" List – and they're not checked off. In the meantime, I am the typical educator; pretty intrinsically motivated; less tied to monetary rewards as a way of measuring professional growth, but needing some appreciation. Schools have built in "Teacher Appreciation Day" (May), National School Counselor Week (February), Secretary and Administrative Assistant's Day (April), School Custodian's Appreciation Day (January), and even School Psychologist Awareness Week (November). Interestingly, during that week, school psychologists are supposed to do MORE for their staffs to promote awareness. Funny, I thought we were supposed to serve our staffs every day! I have no idea who set these dates. Hallmark? FTD? Hershey Candy Company? Anyway, it is clear that someone thinks that educators need formal occasions where those whom they serve can express their Gratefulness.

Do educators feel that they are appreciated? Are parents (or Students!?) Grateful? Battelle for Kids Human Capital Director Emily Douglas does speaking engagements with teachers' groups. She conducts an experiment. Her proposal to her audience: "I need a research paper on any topic you choose that is 20 pages long, with 1-inch margins, double-spaced, in 11-point Arial font, and uses at least five primary sources from 2010 to present. But, I need it in 168 hours or 1 week, exactly. No late papers accepted. Any questions?" Pretty much nobody offers to do it. Then she says she'll pay someone \$500. A few offer. She increases the offer to \$1000, then \$5000, then \$10,000. Each time, more people respond until everyone has agreed to the price by the last offer. Ms. Douglas claims that her "experiment" shows that most of us have a "price" whether it is in money or non-monetary rewards. (There is an old joke which has the same "punchline" as this story but it is probably not appropriate for a Character newsletter!)

But, is this how teachers work? A great deal has been written and said about merit pay, teacher evaluations tied to test scores, and recent research suggesting that teachers be paid for high test scores up front and then have to pay the amount back if kids don't score well. I am not sure that is the total picture for how to "appreciate" teachers. Nancy Flanigan, who writes the *Teacher in a Strange Land* blog for [Education Week](#) thinks there is more to the picture. She feels that using big money (e.g., \$150,000) to motivate "good" teachers is a plan designed to motivate already good teachers with competition ("I am three times as good as you and I have the salary to prove it") and rewards of cash.

But, Ms. Flanigan quotes Daniel Pink and his book, *Drive: the Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. In that book, he tries to show that, once a task moves beyond rote behavior, people (teachers ARE people aren't they?) are motivated more by autonomy, mastery, and purpose. (For a clever video of Pink's thoughts, do an internet search for RSA Animate – Drive.) Teachers want some opportunity to control what happens to them, what they teach, how they teach, how they do their job. Teachers want students to master the skills and information they offer so that the finished learner looks like the teacher's idea of what a person who mastered the big ideas of that course would look like. Teachers do not want to be the one who turns on the power switch so that computer-based learning can take place. They do not want to be the one who reads a script and follow a same-day/same-lesson lockstep approach. Teachers want to serve a purpose.

So, how can principals, parents, school boards, and the general public show their Gratefulness to teachers? Grant them some measure of autonomy, mastery and purpose. Do we still have to pay them? Of

Bill Croskey is a retired school psychologist from the Loveland City Schools. course, but it probably will not take \$150K to get them motivated. They already are – intrinsically. Give them the environment to use the tools they already have and they will continue to turn out grateful students.



Robin's Reading List

Grades Pre. – 3:

Belonging by Jeannie Baker

This is a big book account of the reclamation of an urban landscape told wordlessly through fascinating, detailed collage artwork. Observed through the window of a house, a city street gradually becomes a place to call home as the inhabitants begin to rescue their street by planting grass and trees in the empty spaces. Year by year, everything begins to blossom...Told wordlessly and with stunning collage illustrations, "Belonging" explores the re-greening of the city and the role of community, the empowerment of people and the significance of children, family and neighborhood in changing the urban environment for the better.

The Kingdom of Mine by Gary Edwards

In this timeless and delightfully illustrated tale, a young king--thinking he owns everything in his kingdom, including the wild animals, birds, and clouds--means well but acts impulsively, nearly destroying the land he loves.

The story

Robin Castetter is a Retired Elementary Teacher Loveland City Schools

imparts lessons ranging from the importance of sharing to the dangers of the uncontrolled exercise of power, portraying how a king's plans to accomplish his short-term goals cause damage he never anticipated.

Little Critter: Just So Thankful by Mercer Mayer

There's a new kid in town who has everything Little Critter wants...a Super Streak scooter, his own cell phone, and even a limousine! But Little Critter soon realizes that he has something money cannot buy...a family who loves and adores him.

The Thankful Smurf by Peyo

The Wandering Smurf is eager to leave Smurf Village—he's not satisfied with village life and wants to explore the world! Papa Smurf lets him go, but gives him a magic whistle that will instantly transport him home in an emergency.

The Wandering Smurf heads off on his adventure and is quickly captured by Gargamel, who uses the magic whistle to travel to Smurf Village so he can capture all of the Smurfs! Thanks to some quick thinking from Papa Smurf, the Smurfs are safe—and the Wandering Smurf no longer takes his home and

friends for granted!

Grades 4 – 8:

Almost Home by Joan Bauer

When twelve-year-old Sugar Mae Cole's grandfather dies and her no-good gambling father leaves again, Sugar and her mom Reba lose their house in Missouri. Homeless, they head for Chicago, where Reba thinks she can find work and make a fresh start. Unfortunately, Reba suffers a breakdown, and Sugar and her beloved little rescue dog Shush suddenly find themselves thrust into the foster care system. Reba has always taught Sugar to be gracious and grateful though, and Sugar is doing her best to find the good in her situation, even when she is frightened and confused. With the help of her dog, a giving foster family, a former teacher who urges her to continue to write the poetry she so loves, and Sugar's own grace and fortitude, she eventually learns that while she can't control what happens to her, she can control how she responds to her circumstances.

Replay by Sharon Creech

Twelve-year-old Leo is one of many children in his noisy home, but he longs to step out from behind the

Robin's Reading List



shadow of his boisterous Italian family and shine on a real Broadway stage. While preparing for a role in the school play, he stumbles upon a journal his father kept when he was thirteen. Leo learns a lot about the man he hardly knows, and that they have more in common than Leo originally thought. Through the parallel dramas of the play and his chaotic home life, Leo begins to understand the importance of stories and our need to share them, whether they are treasured memories or future dreams.

Faith, Hope and Ivy June by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Twelve-year-old Leo is one of many children in his noisy home, but he longs to step out from behind the shadow of his boisterous Italian family and shine on a real Broadway stage. While preparing for a role in the school play, he stumbles upon a journal his father kept when he was

thirteen. Leo learns a lot about the man he hardly knows, and that they have more in common than Leo originally thought. Despite the challenges, this is a warm and tender story of learning to care about the needs of the "other" while being grateful for your own values and strengths.

Frindle by Andrew Clements

This clever and compulsively readable book is about a creative fifth grader named Nick who makes up the word "frindle" in an effort to annoy his dictionary-loving teacher. While the prank starts out as fun, Nick is soon in over his head as his word gains popularity across the country. As the story develops and Nick goes from being a 5th grader to an adult, he finally understands the lessons Mrs. Granger was trying to teach him. In the end, his burden becomes a benefit and is able to truly appreciate his 5th grade teacher.

The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake

Maleeka is teased at her rough middle school about everything from the color of her black skin, to her homemade clothes, and her zany single mother. When a new teacher arrives at her school,

whose face is blotched with a white patch, Maleeka knows this teacher is in for a rough ride. But, Miss Saunders is different than anyone at school could have suspected. She loves the skin she is in. With the help of Miss Saunders and some reflection of her own Maleeka begins the journey in seeing her strengths, not her burdens and being content with who she is/

Grades 9 – 12: The Secret Gratitude Book by Rhonda Byrne

The Secret Gratitude Book is one of the most powerful tools you can ever use to transform your life into total joy. When you use this book every day and write about all the things in your life you are grateful for, you will be amazed at the never-ending list of thoughts that come back to you of more things to be grateful for. You can use The Secret Gratitude Book to powerfully attract specific things that you want into your life in absolute abundance.

The book is full of affirmations and insights written by Rhonda Byrnes which allows you to bring joy and harmony to every aspect of your life. Inspired by Rhonda's writings,

Robin's Reading List

every day you will write a list of things you are grateful for now in your life, followed by a list of Gratitude Intentions all the things you want to come into your life.

A Simple Act of Gratitude: How Learning to Say Thank You Changed My Life by John Kralik

One recent December, at age 53, John Kralik found his life at a terrible, frightening low: his small law firm was failing; he was struggling through a painful second divorce; he had grown distant from his two older children and was afraid he might lose contact with his young daughter; he was living in a tiny apartment where he froze in the winter and baked in the summer; he was 40 pounds overweight; his girlfriend had just broken up with him; and overall, his dearest life dreams--including hopes of upholding idealistic legal principles and of becoming a judge--seemed to have slipped beyond his reach.

Then, during a desperate walk in the hills on New Year's Day, John was struck by the belief that

his life might become at least tolerable if, instead of focusing on what he didn't have, he could find some way to be grateful for what he had.

Inspired by a beautiful, simple note his ex-girlfriend had sent to thank him for his Christmas gift, John imagined that he might find a way to feel grateful by writing thank-you notes. To keep himself going, he set himself a goal--come what may--of writing 365 thank-you notes in the coming year.

Poems of Gratitude by Marleen Rita Duckhorn

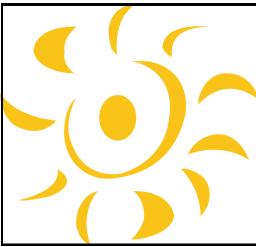
Rhyming is part of her style, which she incorporates into her personality, wit and thought process used to convey her gems. She uses this writing mechanism for siphoning what the unbounded pours out her way on any topic she muses. Duckhorn thinks from that current of poetry and swims in it daily.

The Power of Gratitude

by Mike Morley
Gratitude is absolutely fundamental to you in

achieving your goals! This revelation may come as a complete surprise to you but it is by cultivating an attitude of gratitude that you develop the mindset you need in order to attain success.





www.charactercincinnati.org

The Character Council of Greater Cincinnati and
Northern Kentucky

P.O. Box 33144
Cincinnati, Ohio 45233

Mary Andres Russell, Executive Director

Phone: 513.467.0170
E-mail: mrussell@charactercincinnati.org

Written by Jill Tomey

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Character...It Starts With Me!

Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.

- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and keeping a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.