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Teaching the Attitude of Gratitude: [Comment on section](#)

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

— Cicero



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- Gratitude and Education

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Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend, more hideous when thou show'st thee in a child than the sea-monster!

— Shakespeare's King Lear

Summary

This review examines what we consider to be the new hottest topic in Positive Psychology – Gratitude in Education. Key points to consider are:

- *Historically* – gratitude in education has an extensive history in the form of religious prayer in schools, and in the past few years there has been a dramatic increase in interest in the power of gratitude within education which has finally been recognised by institutions.
- *Key papers* – Chan (2010) and Flinchbaugh et al., (2012) demonstrate the positive effect that Gratitude Interventions can have on both teachers and pupils health and well-being.
- *Pupils* – Practising gratitude has a significant effect on pupils as it changes students **thinking, attitudes** and **enthusiasm** to learn.
- *Gap between theory and results* – there are limitations to various studies in terms of low predictability and whether feeling gratitude does actually improve well-being and grades. There are also various wild claims in this area.
- *Clinical Applications* - such as teaching motivation and resilience, increases in educational attainment, reducing depression and **importantly** aspects of positive psychology such as gratitude can be seen in the new Curriculum for Excellence.
- *Practical Exercises* - including writing three good things, using strengths, gratitude steams and drills, surveys.

It can be seen that Gratitude within Education is a key area of interest in Positive Psychology. Evidence suggests that we should be encouraged by the positive impact simple interventions can have on both pupils and teachers and thus schools should include them!

Introduction

This review shall examine one of the newest topics in Positive Psychology: the important role Positive Psychology plays in Education, specifically focusing on Gratitude as a significant learning strategy.

Due to the recent development in literature emphasising how educators can influence and enhance students ability to improve their well-being and flourish rather than just survive (Roberts, 2006), this was considered to be the newest hot topic in Positive Psychology. Furthermore as papers specifically targeting gratitude as a key intervention strategy have recently emerged, this was seen to be the most significant area to focus on.

Education

The attributes of interest to positive psychologists such as optimism, creativity, self-efficacy, gratitude and subjective well-being are likely to begin in childhood. Thus it would seem that childhood and educational organisations may play key roles in the development of individuals and their subsequent happiness and well-being (Gilman et al., 2009).



Traditionally schools teach the tools of accomplishment – success and achievement – but what about happiness, confidence and satisfaction? Seligman et al (2009) suggests you can teach the skills of well-being and the skills of accomplishment without compromise. This is **Positive Education**. Positive Education is important for a few reasons -

1. Evidence suggests that individuals benefit from receiving Positive Education from a very early age:

The prevailing perspective on early intervention programmes for young children focuses mainly on how to prevent or contain problems, for example how to deal with an aggressive child, rather than on how to promote positive development – building good, happy and healthy lives for all children that go beyond the mere absence of disease or ill-health (Park and Peterson 2003). Positive Psychology in fact provides a broad perspective for understanding how early childhood programmes might promote optimal development (Park 2003).

2. Evidence demonstrates the prevalence of depression among young people worldwide is shockingly high:

Nearly 20% of youth experience an episode of clinical depression by the end of high school (Lewinsohn et al., 1993). Positive Education could serve as a potential antidote to depression in schools.

3. Lastly: increases in well-being are likely to produce increases in learning, which is the ultimate traditional goal of education (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

Gratitude

Initially pairing gratitude and education may seem like an unusual combination. Where the role of gratitude has been discussed in the context of religious education, and in traditions such as Montessori and Steiner education, until recently this discussion has barely made a mark in mainstream education.

McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson (2001) theorized that gratitude is a moral affect—that is, one with moral precursors and consequences. They hypothesized that by experiencing gratitude, a person is motivated to carry out pro-social behaviour, energized to sustain moral behaviours, and is inhibited from committing destructive interpersonal behaviours.

Emmons and Shelton (2002) similarly claim gratitude has a positive relationship to happiness, hope, pride, optimism, positive mood, self-actualization, smooth interpersonal relationships, and a sense of community. Evidence suggests a rigorous investigation of this positive emotion is vital if optimal psychological growth among early/late adolescents is to be fully understood for a few reasons:

1. Flinchbaugh (2012) found that early adolescents who took part in gratitude journaling and ‘counting your blessings’ were associated with enhanced self-reported gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, and decreased negative affect.

2. Crucially, gratitude may also be key in terms of perceived social support from teachers, on the basis of an actual behaviour and attribution interaction, such that when gratitude is expressed to a benefactor then they are **more likely to provide support** in the future (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2005).

This suggests that students should be grateful for their education and teachers should show gratitude and value their students. A true dynamic can be restored where education encompasses a healthy flow of giving and receiving amongst all parties.

Thus, both teachers and pupils could benefit from Positive Education, particularly in the form of gratitude interventions.

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An Old Cultural Connection

Although the promotion of gratitude in education is a modern movement, a more traditional practice of gratitude in schools – specifically in the form of **religious prayer**, has an extensive history. From feudal Europe to colonial America, education was established by religious institutions (Cowen & Kazamias, 2009). Today the place of **‘god in the classroom’** is passionately debated. As a result, public schools in many countries including America avoid explicit religious practices such as prayer (Marshall, 1999).



Considering the role religion once played in education, some might argue that **positive psychology is bringing gratitude back to the classroom**. Positive psychology can be seen to provide a new platform for practicing gratitude, free from the tension and controversy attached to religious practices in education. Similarly to practicing gratitude in education, children who identify as spiritual are more likely to experience higher levels of well-being.

Further reading:

- This website provides both for and against arguments regarding religious practices in public education in America:

http://dbp.idebate.org/en/index.php/Debate:_Prohibition_of_school_prayer

- This paper argues that spirituality in children is predictive of levels of happiness:

Holder, M. D., Coleman, B., & Wallace, J. M. (2010). Spirituality, religiousness, and happiness in children aged 8–12 years. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11(2), 131-150.

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History

The concept of gratitude promoting wellbeing and academic success in education has only emerged in recent history. This new field came about through a series of developments including: a renewed interest in gratitude, the rise of positive psychology, and the development of positive psychology interventions within educational settings.

This section provides an overview of the history of gratitude in relation to the **foundation of religious movements and moral philosophy**, the impact gratitude had in **positive psychology**, how **positive psychology became related to educational practices**, and finally the **brief history of gratitude in education**.

A Brief History of Gratitude

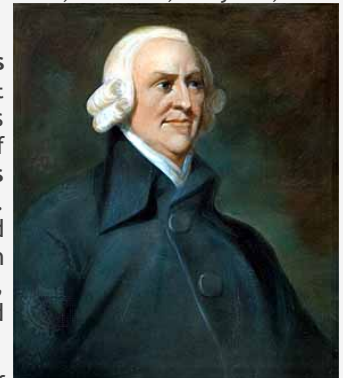
"The duties of gratitude are perhaps the most sacred of all those which the beneficent virtues prescribe to us."

- Adam Smith

The concept of gratitude can be recognised throughout our history and across cultures (Dumas, Johnson, & Lynch, 2002).



Gratitude can be seen as central in the **formation of numerous religions** including Judaism, Islam and Christianity (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). In Christianity for instance, gratitude to god is the focus of virtually all biblical psalms. However, the history of gratitude is not only tied to religion, **moral philosophers** emphasised the positive impact gratitude could have on society. Great thinkers including Kant, Einstein and Adam Smith, viewed gratitude as a powerful force that could transform both individuals and society (Howells, 2012). Others such as Aristotle, were suspicious of the concept; he warned that gratitude implied debt and thus endangered the 'greatness' of man (Cohen, 2006).



From a 'sacred virtue' to an 'an implication of debt ', we can see that the concept of gratitude has been considered from **varying perspectives** over the course of our history (Emmons, McCullough, Tsang, 2003) . However, in one form or another, it **has remained firmly embedded in our culture**. Modern social practices of gratitude can be seen in prayers and religious services as well as national holidays such as thanksgiving.

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Here is one of the more recent trends in social practices of gratitude:



(Martin Seligman)

History of Gratitude in Psychology

Looking back over our philosophical and religious traditions, we can see that the debate over the theoretical and social implications of gratitude is not a modern one. However, the concept of gratitude only **sparked the interest of psychologists just over a decade ago** (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). With the rise of positive psychology, positive aspects of life such as gratitude were propelled into the public and academic psyche. Positive psychologists have defined gratitude as: *‘both a moral and actively pro-social, emotive, concept, the expression of which has potential implications for life satisfaction and wellbeing.’* (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Since then, numerous studies and interventions have demonstrated the **positive impact** gratitude can have on wellbeing (see Howells, 2012).

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History of Positive Psychology in Education:

Since the birth of positive psychology, the idea of implementing positive psychology in educational practice has enjoyed a **great deal of popularity**. Carol Dweck can be seen as a major proponent of this movement with her pioneering research into how motivation affects learning (1986) and how praise of intelligence may negatively affect pupils' motivation and performance (1998). Following in Dweck's footsteps, numerous studies have delivered **empirical evidence** for the academic social and personal benefits that positive psychology can bring to education (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009).

Further reading:

For an overview of recent studies demonstrating the effectiveness of positive psychology in education see:

- <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/loaled/dweck.html>

The (very) Brief History of Gratitude in Education:



Having gained access to educational settings, many positive psychology practitioners found that promoting gratitude among teachers as well as pupils led to **astounding improvements** in wellbeing and academic engagement. In the past few years, the theme of gratitude within education has received a **great deal of interest and popularity**. Dr Kerry Howells - who has conducted extensive research into the effect of gratitude in education, recently commented that the **power of gratitude in the classroom has finally been recognised by educational institutions** (Howells 2012).

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(Kerry Howells)

Primary Papers

Gratitude, gratitude intervention and subjective well-being among Chinese school teachers in Hong Kong - Chan (2010)

“Before we can expect students to practise gratitude, teachers need to be practising” (Howells, 2012, p. 3).

In this study dispositional gratitude was assessed in relation to happiness and burnout among 96 Chinese school teachers. Dispositional gratitude was measured through the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and measured individuals' general level of gratitude. Gratitude levels were found to be positively correlated with subjective well-being outcomes such as a meaningful life orientation to happiness and with personal accomplishment, and negatively correlated with aspects of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

The authors also implemented an eight-week intervention aimed at increasing gratitude through a weekly log of three good things that had happened, and by recording them using a count-your-blessing form. This intervention was found to be effective at increasing gratitude and thereby life satisfaction, but the increase was largely due to the participants who initially had low gratitude scores.

This study illustrates how gratitude can act as a protective factor against burnout in the teacher profession where burnout can be a common occurrence (Farber, 1991). Furthermore, it proves gratitude interventions can increase gratitude, but primarily among teachers who initially score low on gratitude.

However, it should be noted that although the correlations between gratitude and happiness or gratitude and burnout were statistically significant the magnitudes were generally low. This suggests that there may exist other, possibly stronger predictors than gratitude, even though gratitude is part of the explanation.

Student Well-Being Interventions: The Effects of Stress Management Techniques and Gratitude Journaling in the Management Education Classroom - Flinchbaugh et al. 2012

Higher education can be a stressful and emotionally draining experience. This study examined the impact of gratitude journals, stress reduction techniques, or a combination of the two on classroom stress levels, the experience of meaning and engagement in the classroom and life satisfaction.

The gratitude intervention consisted of a weekly gratitude journal over the 12 week long semester. Each week each student listed five things they were grateful for in their lives. The stress management group was taught a new stress reduction technique every three weeks that they engaged in at the beginning of every class (e.g. deep breathing or positive self-talk). The combined group received both interventions while a control group received neither.

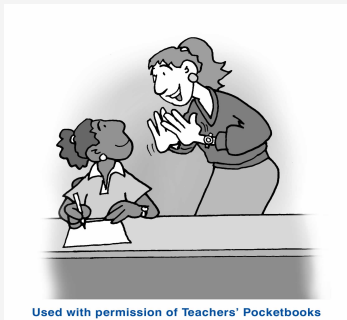
Two of the dependent variables showed significant treatment effects, namely class meaningfulness and class engagement. The gratitude intervention was better than the stress reduction techniques, but the greatest pre-post-test improvement was found in the combined gratitude intervention and stress technique group.

Surprisingly the interventions did not significantly reduce classroom-specific stress or increase life satisfaction. Other studies have found gratitude interventions to increase life satisfaction in (e.g. Chang, 2010) and stress reduction techniques have previously proven effective at reducing stress among students (e.g. Charlesworth, Murphy and Buetler, 1981). However, the current experiment started at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year and finished at the end of the first semester. The authors therefore suggest that the timing of the experiment may not have been the best as the workload usually increases as the academic year progresses.

Despite this limitation this study suggests that gratitude journaling can help students recognize and clarify what is important in their life and increase the feeling of class meaningfulness and class engagement. This is important as previous research has found that meaningfulness is one of the primary psychological states responsible for people engaging in their work (May et al., 2004). However, it appears that the intervention works best in combination with other interventions aimed at lowering negative stress.

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Pupils and Gratitude



The Effect of Gratitude on Pupils

It is well known that a little thanks, praise and encouragement can go a long way and make a huge difference in a child's motivation and performance. This is especially true in the school environment where children have to overcome problems and difficulties with their work and social relationships on a regular basis.

Many studies have shown that the implication of Gratitude exercises, such as Gratitude Diaries (Flinchbaugh et al. 2011), and making children aware of the effect of their own gratitude on their performance and that of others as well as the gratitude they receive from their teachers, peers and parents and the effect that that has on their performance. This has been shown to build resilience (Seligman et al. 2009, Parks, 2011, Kristjansson et al. 2012, Maybury 2012), confidence (Howells, 2004, Seligman et al 2009, Flinchbaugh et al. 2011, Kristjansson et al. 2012) and improve academic performance (Seligman et al. 2009, Flinchbaugh et al. 2011, Froh & Bono 2011) and general satisfaction and motivation in school settings (Seligman et al. 2009, Mongrain et al. 2012, Kristjansson et al. 2012).

Howells, 2004

Howells in 2004, carried out a study looking at students in college courses that had the freedom to choose to apply a number of different learning strategies to their course work. He found that they chose to apply gratitude as they said that it had the most dramatic effects on their ability to study, but also on their relationships and general wellbeing.

He reported that students experienced "enhancement of the academic thinking process and deeper understanding of concepts". They were able to be more engaged and less distracted during classes, had greater motivation and had developed improved learning strategies. Students applying the gratitude learning strategies also experienced an increase in their levels of confidence and a generally improved quality of life and sense of interconnectedness with others.

Reasons for these Effects - Changing Student's Thinking

This is due to the fact that students feel more involved in the learning process and so can engage more and get more academic benefit from what the teacher says (Howells 2004, Flinchbaugh et al. 2011, Kristjansson et al. 2012).

It also changes the way students think in class discussions, for example, they give more carefully thought out answers

which are more likely to benefit the class as a whole, as well as themselves (Howells 2004). This is because they have to think more deeply about the answer they give and formulate well structured and informed comments and questions instead of just speaking for the sake of it and to get better grades (Maybury, 2012, Seligman et al. 2009).



Changing Student's Attitudes

Gratitude is the act of giving not receiving and the major attitude in education, as in many disciplines at the moment, is that of complaint, dissatisfaction and entitlement (Howells, 2004). The majority of students currently view their teachers as givers of knowledge and themselves as the receivers and this fosters a negative and resentful atmosphere in places of learning (Howells, 2004), which is especially noticeable as tuition fees rise (Howells, 2004). This does nothing but hinder learning, academic achievement and student's general well-being (Kristjansson et al. 2012). Howells, 2004, said "The lack of gratitude practised in the university context, be it on the part of teacher, student, dean, vice-chancellor, administrator, has the potential to undermine the cohesion that is so essential to the enrichment of a true community".

Seligman et al. 2009 state that a positive mood produces; broader attention (Fredrickson, 1998; Bolte et al., 2003; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Rowe et al., 2007), more creative thinking (Isen et al., 1987; Estrada et al., 1994), and more holistic thinking (Isen et al., 1991; Kuhl, 1983, 2000), compared to a negative mood which produces; narrower attention (Bolte et al., 2003), more critical thinking and more analytic thinking (Kuhl, 1983, 2000). Both ways of thinking are important, but schools emphasise critical, rather than creative thinking and this negative attitude which is common in the classroom allows only critical thinking (Seligman et al. 2009).

Gratitude allows students to take another approach to their attitudes to learning and realise that they have a lot to be grateful for, improving the productivity of the learning environment (Seligman et al. 2009, Flinchbaugh et al 2011, Kristjansson et al. 2012) which had been proven to be related to better learning which is one of the traditional goals of education.

The Effect of Pupil's Gratitude on Themselves.

Positive education and gratitude can be incorporated into normal everyday classes, for example, using character strengths and resilience in English to discuss the current text or changing the topics of student presentations from being about a time the students made a fool of themselves to a time you were valued by others instead, as in one study. This was found to fosters more positive aspects of the students personalities (Seligman et al. 2009) and resulted in the children producing the talks quicker and being more presenting them with higher levels of enthusiasm (Seligman et al. 2009).

Through gratitude exercises students identify their strengths and use these to help overcome their more problematic area (Seligman et al. 2009). This makes them feel better about the people they are working with and the work that they are doing, helping to develop better interpersonal relationships, networks of support and team working abilities (Flinchbaugh et al. 2011, Froh & Bono, 2011).

In another study discussed by Seligman et al. 2009, children identified what went well during the day, what had gone well the previous day in the morning before starting lessons or identified classmates that demonstrated the strength of the day, an example of indirect gratitude. This encouraged pupils to focus on the positives from the previous day and use these to work on the things that they find more difficult and starts the day with a better atmosphere and attitude, making the children more eager to learn and more enthusiastic (Kristjansson et al. 2012, Seligman et al. 2009).

Paying Gratitude Forward

The effect of students focusing on their gratitude can also be translated through to younger pupils. Older students, that have been taught about gratitude and how to implement it into their target setting and the way they deal with feedback and criticism, can then pass on the skills and techniques they have learned to the younger years (<http://www.youtube.com>). This results in there being consecutive years that have developed more resilience, are more engaged, perform better and are happier in themselves, their schooling and their abilities.

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Critique of Gap Between Theory and Empirical Results

There have been over 1000 articles submitted to peer reviewed journals in the past decade relating to well-being, gratitude, mental health attitudes and many other topics (Azar, 2011) this has led to a huge accumulation of both theory and empirical results. However sometimes they do not always match up as expected.

For example, Seligman et al (2009) theorised that well-being and gratitude should be taught in schools on grounds such as an antidote to depression. They later concluded that their Positive Psychology programme did not improve the outcomes measured, including students' reports of their depression and anxiety symptoms.

Seligman et al's (2009) findings are in themselves contradictory to Wood et al's (2008) study. Wood et al (2008) conducted a longitudinal study on first year undergraduate students. Gratitude was assessed at the start and ends of their first term, approximately 3 months apart. Their model in which gratitude led to well-being was supported, with people higher in gratitude becoming less stressed, less depressed, and having higher perceived social support at the end of the first term.

A separate study by Gillham et al (2011) highlighted that sometimes there is a gap between the theory and results within a single study. They theorised that certain characteristics would lead to greater well-being in adolescence. Their findings were: "Contrary to our theorised expectations, adolescents' strengths [including gratitude] did not reliably predict their reports of happiness. We believe this reflects a problem in measurement".

An example of theory and results completely contradicting each other would be the studies by Dahlsgaard (2005) and Peterson and Park (2006). Peterson and Park (2006) found that strengths shown by American adolescents including gratitude predicted higher grades at the end of the year. In contrast Dahlsgaard (2005) found that some middle school students with lower levels of gratitude produced the greatest improvements in life satisfaction and depression symptoms over a 1-year period.

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Examples of Wild Empirical Claims

Positive Psychology seems to be a hot-bed for unfounded claims. Everyone is an expert; just googling 'self-help' will give you an idea. Perhaps it is best said by Kashdan & Steger (2011): "It is hard to think of a precedent for the rapid assimilation of positive psychology into the mainstream imagination. Clearly, that is the mark of a powerful, or at least powerfully compelling, idea.". "However, not all efforts in the name of positive psychology have been sound. There is an enormous flood of 'aftermarket' positive psychology products out there, and more seem to be generated every month. Consumers can get their hands on 'positive' books, services, unlicensed life coaches, motivational CD programs, and even bracelets and rocks!". "There is probably little that true positive psychologists can do to defend the science from the more vulgar marketers, but the field should aggressively promote a clear vision of what science is, and what science is when it is applied to positive psychology"

Gratitude is no exception to this, especially in relation to educating this generation's children.

- Claims such as:
- "Gratitude is like a superpower" (<http://blog.learninginafterschool.org/2013/01/the-power-of-gratitude.html>).
- Gratitude has been said to make the brain up to 31% more productive (Achor, 2011).
- Being grateful can increase a child's life-meaningfulness and happiness by more than 15% (Bono, 2012; Froh et al 2008).

Even established psychologists such as Martin Seligman (et al, 2009) can make relatively unsubstantiated claims:

"Positive education . . . will enable youth to perform better at school and to perform better later in the workplace".
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Clinical Applications of Gratitude in Education

It has been proven in many different settings and capacities that gratitude and positive thinking can have many beneficial and positive clinical effects in both education and other aspects of life. Research has suggested that gratitude can counter-act regret (Roberts 2004); increase optimism (Emmons & Shelton 2002; Roberts 2004); make people less easily influenced by disappointment, regret, and frustration (Roberts 2004); increase health and wellbeing (McAdams and Bauer 2004; Watkins 2004; McCullough et al 2002; Emmons & McCullough 2003); improve mood (Watkins et al 2003); make people more satisfied with their life (Watkins 2004); build strength and resilience in people when dealing with problems and challenged in their daily lives (Emmons & Crumpler 2000; Emmons & Shelton 2002) and have a positive impact in the treatment of depression (Watkins 2004).

Motivation/Resilience

Developing resilience in children and young people is one of the hottest new topics in education today, and motivating children to work hard and enjoy their work has always been a challenge for teachers (Seligman et al. 2009, Kristjansson et al. 2012). Recent research has suggested that using positive psychology techniques, especially those involving gratitude, have proven to be very effective in increasing children's motivation in school towards their work and the school environment in general as well as being a high influential factor in the development of resilience (Seligman et al. 2009, Kristjansson et al. 2012).

Howells, 2004 and Kristjansson et al. 2012, found that students who took part in a reflective writing exercise after taking part in gratitude projects reported that they were able to handle problems more easily, be more motivated, be more engaged, and have greater ability to manage their time and to withstand pressure.

Dweck & Mueller 1998

In a study conducted by Dweck & Mueller 1998, they found that the praise a child receives after the completion of a task greatly affects the mindset they then continue in. They found that children who received positive feedback and constructive praise improved their scores on a set test by one point, while those that received negative feedback dropped one point in their score.

The praise that the children received was also found to improve their attitudes of wanting to persist with problems they encountered. It also improved their attitudes to work in general and determined whether they actively looked for further information which would help them solve these problems or information about how others had done it so that they could improve next time (Dweck & Mueller 1998, Flinchbaugh et al. 2012).

This has been shown to develop a children's resilience in academic situations and build upon their determination to try again after making mistakes (Maybury 2012, Parks, 2011).

This is perhaps especially important and influential in primary schools, as that is when the base level of a child's resilience is developed through trial and error based learning.

Educational Attainment and In-Class Performance

Gratitude has also been linked to increases in educational attainment (Flinchbaugh et al. 2012, Kristjansson et al. 2012). It is thought that this is through children focusing on their character strengths (Mangrain et al. 2012, Seligman et al. 2009, <https://www.viame.org>), which in turn lead to an increase in their self awareness, emotional control, self efficacy, resilience, flexibility in working and accurate thinking skills and strategies for forming positive relationships (Maybury 2012).

This allows students to be exposed to their individual achievement, giving them insight into their own abilities making the lessons that they are taught much more meaningful to them (Seligman et al. 2009, <https://www.viame.org>).

<https://www.viame.org/survey/Account/Register>

Depression

Depression is one of the growing health issues in children and young people today, especially with increasing pressure for top rate academic performance (Seligman et al. 2009).

Around 20% of children and young people experience an episode of clinical depression by the end of high school (Lewinsohn et al., 1993)

Focusing on only our weaknesses leaves people frustrated and can lead to anger (Howells, 2004). This can result in people becoming both physically and psychologically drained, which in turn can lead to depression (<http://www.authentic happiness>).

Instead focusing on strengths and using them allows us to satisfy our natural urges and feel good about ourselves and so perform better as we will feel more positive and confident in our abilities which will allow us to overcome what we find more difficult (Flinchbaugh et al 2011, Seligman et al. 2009).

The high prevalence of depression among young people, the small rise in life satisfaction and the connection between

learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in school (Seligman et al. 2009). There is substantial evidence from well controlled studies that skills that increase resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning can be taught to school children (Seligman et al. 2009, Kristjansson et al 2012) and so will help to produce a more productive and beneficial atmosphere in schools and start to work towards decreasing the number of these children suffering from depression (Seligman et al. 2012, <http://www.authentic happiness>).

Curriculum for Excellence

This new movement in education aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>).

Important aspect of the Curriculum for excellence and Personal Learning Plans associated with it focus on an individual's strengths, using these to identify where more work is needed in a positive and motivational way, setting goals and targets decided upon by the child and which are attainable. It also allows the child to be in control of their own future which in turn this motivates them more (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>).

This also encourages children to develop a love of learning, because what they are learning is more enjoyable for them and they are more invested in doing well as they have had a say in their goals and what they are learning.

Positive psychology and the effects of gratitude in education tick all the boxes of the Curriculum for Excellence, covering all four of the capacities. It encourages kids to take responsibility and control of their own learning, e.g. becoming "*Responsible citizens*" (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>) and to become more involved in their education and to commit and contribute more to it as a result, e.g. becoming "*Effective contributors*" (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>). It also leads on to them performing better in their academic work, e.g. becoming "*Successful learners*" (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>) and finally and most importantly, developing more confidence in their academic ability, focusing on their strengths and using these to come up with new and innovative ideas about how to tackle the aspects of their work that they find more difficult. They are then able to translate this confidence into the rest of their lives, making them more competent and confident people in general, e.g. becoming "*Confident individuals*" (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>).

This again reflects back onto the effect of gratitude and positive attitudes to education, making children more resilient to difficult situations and less susceptible to things like depression and bullying (Seligman et al. 2009, <http://www.authentic happiness.sas>).

The way that this makes people think differently about situations allows a movement away from people learning things solely to pass exams and because they have to and more towards people learning because it interests them and they get some enjoyment out of it. This encapsulates the ideas of the Curriculum for Excellence and builds upon them (<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>).

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Practical exercises

Three Good Things.

Write down three good things that happened each day for a week.

The three things can be relatively small in importance ('I answered a really hard question right in Language Arts today') or relatively large in importance ('The guy I've liked for months, asked me out!!!').

Next to each positive event listed write a reflection on one of the following questions:

? ‘ Why did this good thing happen?’

? ‘ What does this mean to you?’

? ‘ How can you increase the likelihood of having more of this good thing in the future?’

Using Signature Strengths in a New Way .

People can get more satisfaction out of life if they learn to identify which character strengths they possess in abundance and then use them as much as possible in educational settings, in hobbies or with friends and family.

Take the VIA Signature Strengths test for children (www.authentic happiness.org , <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>) and focus on identify characters strengths in yourselves and others, using strengths to overcome challenges, and applying strengths in new ways.

Gratitude Streams

Objective: To practice an easy way to stay grateful all day long

The world is so full of a number of things,

I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Share something you are grateful for, either by writing it down or telling someone, from the past 24 hours.

You dont have to say, "I'm grateful for..." at the beginning of the gratitude. That's assumed.

Then write down or discuss with the person that you tell

? How did that feel?

? When are five times during a normal week that you could use the Gratitude Stream to feel better?

The Gratitude Drill - best done with school children

Objective: To improve in the skill of finding things to be grateful for everywhere we look

You've never met an ungrateful person who was happy,

nor have you ever met a grateful person who was unhappy.

- Zig Ziglar

This is best done in groups of 3 or more

One person starts by saying one thing they're grateful for. Then the person to their left will share a different thing they're grateful for in three seconds or less (this can be increased if they find it too difficult).

If they can't think of one in that time OR if they repeat one that's been said, then they'll have to sit down. If someone says, 'My family,' it is still all right for someone else to say, 'My little brother.'

After discuss in the group

Is it possible to run out of things to be grateful for?

? How does it feel when we focus on things we're thankful for?

The Best Thing About... - again best done in a class, but could be modified to do individually.

Supplies Needed: One copy of Worksheet #14A

Objective: To help students practice focusing on what they are grateful for

Let's be grateful for those who give us happiness;

they are the gardeners who make our soul bloom.

- Marcel Proust

There's always something to complain about and something to be grateful for!

Split the class into two teams and read a list of things or people's names (like, "Oprah") out loud.

Each person has to say one good quality or thing they appreciate about that person or thing within three seconds. If they are successful, the team gets a point. If they are not, the team has to pass and the other team gets to answer about that same person or item.

If the answer seems even a little bit sarcastic or insincere, the team will have to pass.

Students have three seconds to complete the phrase, "The best thing about ___ is." Repeats or mimicking of a previous answer will cause them to lose their turn!

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Our country | 12. Cars | 23. Computer |
| 2. Our planet | 13. This classroom | |
| 3. Dogs | 14. My hands | 24. Cell Phones |
| 4. Birds | 15. This school | |
| 5. Rainy days | 16. This town/city | 25. Mondays |
| 6. Shopping Malls | 17. My neighborhood | 26. Sundays |
| 7. Parents | 18. Kleenex | 27. Today |
| 8. My body | 19. Music | 28. Right Now |
| 9. My book bag | 20. Movies | 29. Boys |
| 10. Television | 21. My brain | 30. Girls |
| 11. My name | 22. The President | 31. Teachers |
| | | 32. Sisters and Brothers |
| | | 33. Paper Clips |
| | | 34. Rubber Bands |

Gratitude Survey

http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/Tests/SameAnswers_t.aspx?id=298

Links to Videos Associated Gratitude, Positive Psychology and Education

1. http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work.htm

2.

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