I know it may seem clichéd to use November as a reason to talk about gratitude, but honestly, it’s a gift that comes around each year that turns our thoughts away from the usual pressures of life and pushes us to consider and appreciate the small things. And in the fast-paced, material world we live in, that’s probably a good thing. It got me thinking about how gratitude impacts our students and how fostering gratitude in classrooms might improve not only the culture, but also the levels of thinking students engage in each day.

According to Jeff Froh in “Seven Ways to Foster Gratitude in Kids,” gratitude is linked to both the social and emotional welfare of students as well as their perseverance in academic tasks. They found that, “grateful young adolescents...are happier and more optimistic, more satisfied with their school, family, community, friends and themselves...and use their strengths to better their community...are more engaged in school, have higher grades and are less envious, depressed and materialistic.”

In thinking about the recent and continued instances of school shootings and violence, it would appear that bringing a little more gratitude and even empathy into our classrooms is vital. As Froh reminds us,” As our world becomes more culturally diverse and digitally connected, and as complex societal problems mount, gratitude may help catalyze the motivation and skills youth need to succeed not just academically but in the ‘life test’ too.”

Common core state standards ask students to be critical thinkers and prepare for college, career and life. Students who practice gratitude and think deeply about themselves and the world are on the path to doing just that.

Resources for teaching and encouraging gratitude:


http://www.pediatricsafety.net/2013/11/teaching-gratitude-empathy/

http://www.nymetroparents.com/article/NURTURING-GRATITUDE--Compassion-EmpathyIN-KIDS

http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/raising-a-grateful-child/

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_foster_gratitude_in_kids

Have questions or need resources? Contact us! Larimore_Della@lacoe.edu or Zoroya_Leslie@lacoe.edu

November/December Trainings

Nov. 4 & Dec 4: Argument Writing Without the Fight: Tools for Teaching Evidence and Justification in Common Core Writing. (Grades 6-12) Register @ http://lacoe.k12oms.org/1540-97402

Nov. 6 & 20: Strategies for Common Core Writing in the Elementary Classroom  (Grades K-5) Register @ http://lacoe.k12oms.org/1540-97288

Have you seen the new Executive Summary of the ELA/ELD Framework? Check it out: http://www.lacoe.edu/Portals/0/Curriculum-Instruction/Exec%20Summary_ela-eld_framework.pdf
Gratitude and Empathy: Creating Caring Citizens of a Global Community

With all of the good that comes with technology, the downside is that all of this immediacy and shrinking of the world has also created a narcissistic culture filled with posting selfies, constant checking into social media apps and creating a persona that may or may not be based in reality. It has in some ways, served to distance people from one another rather than bring them closer.

Marilyn Price Mitchell writes in her article, “Empathy in Action: How Teachers Prepare Future Citizens” (http://www.edutopia.org/blogs/tag/service-learning) that there has been a “48 percent drop in empathetic concern for others over the past few decades. Studies have linked low empathy to increased bullying, narcissism, rigid belief systems, and civic apathy.” She asserts that empathy is the “true north of the compass because it is the driver of caring and compassionate actions in the world.”

So what can teachers do to foster empathy? Service learning is a powerful way to not only reinforce core content knowledge, but also serve as a catalyst for gratitude, compassion and empathy. Students who engage in meaningful service learning projects make personal and global connections, achieve higher levels academically and become adults who act with civic responsibility. So at this time of the year, when gratitude is front and center, consider looking into service learning and giving students the opportunity to look both within themselves and outside to the needs of others.

““The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.””

-Barack Obama

Great Service Learning Organizations:

www.freethechildren.com
The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse:
http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu
http://www.globalvolunteers.org/students/