



At a Glance: Mirrors + Windows: (grades 7-8)

Welcome to ThinkGive!

This packet of materials provides an overview of our Windows + Mirrors program. Through the metaphor of "windows" and "mirrors," students see their own experiences reflected in their peers ("mirrors") and gain insights into different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives ("windows"). The program fosters self-awareness and empathy by encouraging students to explore their identities while gaining a deeper understanding of others. It also emphasizes the development of social courage, prompting students to share their personal stories and engage meaningfully with community members they might not typically interact with. By focusing on identity and social courage, Windows + Mirrors cultivates an inclusive environment where students can build connections and appreciate diversity.

Included in this packet:

- Scope + Sequence (12 lessons / 16 lessons)
- Sample Lesson Plan (Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted)
- Program Overview + Impact

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We look forward to connecting with you!
- The ThinkGive Team



Scope + Sequence: Windows + Mirrors (ThinkGive® Middle School, grades 6-8)

Students learn to see who they are as middle school students while looking outward at their wider community. They use social courage as they share their own stories and take action to connect with people in their community with whom they might otherwise never interact. The central focus is on identity and social courage.

Lesson name	Lesson Summary	Students will Examine	Central Quote	SEL Core Competencies
* Note: rows in grey are not included in the 12-prompt program				
Introduction	This lesson introduces the program's theme: Windows + Mirrors. Students consider how fictional stories and characters act as windows and mirrors to their experiences and identities and discover how to use windows and mirrors to learn from people and places. By the end of the lesson, students will be ready to use their newfound awareness to examine themselves and those around them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can they use the concept of Windows + Mirrors to understand and connect with others' perspectives and experiences? - How can they use the concept of Windows + Mirrors to explore their identities? - How can they act as windows and mirrors for others? 	<i>"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."</i> – Jane Goodall	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Social awareness: Perspective-taking Social awareness: Empathy
Connect with Yourself	This lesson helps students understand the internal and external factors shaping their identities. They use the Personal Identity Mirrors worksheet to consider how they've changed since they were younger, who they have become as middle schoolers, and what parts of themselves might need self-care. They consider how slowing down and connecting with their physical or emotional selves can be powerful. Finally, introduce the ThinkGive Three, which will guide their taking action throughout the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What it means to connect with yourself. - What opportunities do they have to slow down and care for themselves? - What are the mental habits that shape how they relate to themselves? 	<i>"The most important day is the day you decide you're good enough for you. It's the day you set yourself free."</i> – Brittany Josephina	Self-awareness: Identifying emotions Self-awareness: Authenticity Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception
Share Your Story	This lesson allows students to share who they are with others. They create a personal recipe to help them understand they have stories, interests, hopes, and dreams worth sharing, and then they share their story with a peer. By the end of the lesson, they understand that sharing a meaningful story is a gift because it shows trust and vulnerability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing an authentic story with others is a gift because it offers them a window and/or mirror. - Sharing an authentic story with others is a gift to ourselves because we develop courage and authenticity. - How sharing stories strengthens connection and belonging. 	<i>"When you show up authentic, you create the space for others to do the same. Walk in your truth."</i> – Anonymous	Self-awareness: Authenticity Relationship skills: Effective communication Self-management: Risk-taking
Give to a Friendship	This lesson prompts students to consider the fundamental aspects of friendship, the characteristics of healthy relationships, and how friendships can serve as a reflection or an opportunity for new experiences. Additionally, students examine how positive actions can cultivate trust and reinforce friendships over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The qualities of a good friend and healthy friendships. - How friends act as Windows and Mirrors. - How our friendships grow and deepen with purposeful kind actions. 	<i>"Life is partly what we make it, and partly what it is made by the friends we choose."</i> – Tennessee Williams	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Relationship-building
Connect With a (Chosen) Family Member	This lesson encourages students to consider ways to connect with a (chosen) family member. Connecting with people, including family members, can be challenging for various reasons. However, there is great value in making the effort because the family dynamic provides a sense of safety. Encourage students to take positive action to create a moment of connection with a chosen family member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How connection looks, sounds, and feels—from multiple perspectives. - How having empathy for family members promotes connection. - How can they better understand and appreciate the mirrors and windows in their relationships with chosen family members? 	<i>"Family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you in theirs; the ones who accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile and who love you no matter what."</i> – Unknown	Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Relationship-building Social awareness: Interconnectedness
Appreciate a Kindness Someone Gives to You	This lesson asks students to consider the people, places, things, experiences, and micro-moments they appreciate, which they might overlook or take for granted. Through this exercise, students consider the power of micro-moments and learn to identify opportunities to show appreciation for the kindness extended to them. They identify people who give them kindness and brainstorm ways to show their appreciation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does it mean to appreciate people, places, experiences, and micro-moments? - Things and experiences they enjoy are almost always the result of someone "planting a tree" for them. - How appreciating someone's kindness is an active form of giving. 	<i>"When eating fruit, remember the one who planted the tree."</i> – Vietnamese Proverb	Social awareness: Gratitude Responsible decision-making: Curiosity Self-management: Risk-taking
Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted	This lesson invites students to write about a person they've taken for granted and reflect on how this person serves as a window and/or a mirror for them. To help them develop their ideas, students watch the "Experiment in Gratitude" video and write a letter of gratitude. As an action, they can either read their letter to the person they wrote about or find a different way to express their appreciation for someone they've taken for granted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What it means to take someone for granted, and why they might do so unintentionally. - How is gratitude the opposite of taking people and things for granted? - The impact that their gratitude can have on others. 	<i>"When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude."</i> – G.K Chesterton	Social awareness: Gratitude Social awareness: Interconnectedness Relationship skills: Relationship-building
Support a Changemaker	In this lesson, students learn about changemakers. They consider the causes that matter to them, their character traits, and reasons for deciding to take action. By the end of the lesson, students will understand that there are many ways to support a changemaker, even if they don't know the person, and they find small, doable ways to offer support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The character traits of a changemaker. - They can find changemakers everywhere, impacting different communities. - Ways they can support a changemaker. 	<i>"The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."</i> – Socrates	Relationship skills: Collaboration Self-management: Personal agency Responsible decision-making: Advocacy

Connect With Intention	This lesson helps students understand how they can intentionally connect with others. The three parts build on each other. First, students practice slowing down, listening, and giving their presence to others. Second, they work in small groups to discuss ways to connect with intention in various scenarios. Finally, the video highlights how we all fall into routines and stop being present with our actions. By the end of the lesson, students will better understand how to intentionally connect with others by planning or paying attention to their surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the difference between doing things automatically vs. intentionally? - How being present with someone is a form of connection. - What activities do they want to do with more intention, and with whom do they want to interact more intentionally? 	<p><i>"Empathy is not scripted. It's about being present with someone."</i></p> <p>– Brene Brown</p>	<p>Self-management: Goal-setting</p> <p>Self-management: Personal agency</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Curiosity</p>
Learn About Someone	Students use windows and mirrors to think about what makes them more or less curious about someone. They consider the importance of empathy in learning about others. Finally, they practice being active listeners and learn something new about their classmates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why are curiosity and listening essential to learning about someone? - How can the empathy gap relate to assumptions, stereotypes, and curiosity? - There are many ways to learn about someone. 	<p><i>"Listen with curiosity. Speak with honesty. Act with integrity. The greatest problem with communication is we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply. When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to reply."</i></p> <p>– Roy T. Bennett</p>	<p>Social awareness: Empathy</p> <p>Relationship skills: Relationship-building</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Curiosity</p>
Challenge an Assumption You Hold	This lesson explores how and why we make assumptions, challenges students to think critically about their beliefs, and encourages them to step out of their comfort zones to challenge and address their assumptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone has a natural tendency to make assumptions about others. - What is the power of assumptions—and removing them—at the individual and societal levels? - How can they use an MRI to use empathy to challenge their assumptions? 	<p><i>"We must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading."</i></p> <p>– Deborah Tannen</p>	<p>Self-awareness: Examining biases</p> <p>Social awareness: Examining norms</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking</p>
Connect With a Peer You'd Like to Get to Know	Students consider how to connect with peers. The video, featuring strangers having a conversation without seeing each other, provides a compelling example of how a simple action, such as asking a thoughtful question, can help individuals connect. As the lesson progresses, students brainstorm questions that might help them connect with a peer and opportunities where these connections might happen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ways to connect through conversation and action. - How can they find spaces and opportunities to connect with peers? - How do connections between individuals make a community stronger? 	<p><i>"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'"</i></p> <p>– C.S. Lewis</p>	<p>Relationship skills: Relationship-building</p> <p>Self-management: Risk-taking</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Curiosity</p>
Give an Invitation	This lesson invites students to consider inclusion and how it appears in social dynamics. Students engage in an experiential activity that simulates inclusion and exclusion, reflecting on their emotions and ideas. Then, they watch a video to explore the power of invitations and inclusion in strengthening a community. Finally, they consider how and when they might help someone feel welcome by extending an invitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of extending invitations and practicing inclusion. - How extending an invitation connects to the concept of Windows and Mirrors. - How do invitations and inclusion strengthen a community? 	<p><i>"When everyone is included, everyone wins."</i></p> <p>– Jesse Jackson</p>	<p>Social awareness: Empathy</p> <p>Relationship skills: Relationship-building</p> <p>Self-management: Risk-taking</p>
Be Open to Something New	This lesson aims to inspire students to try something new, using windows and mirrors to enhance their learning. The Lu Ann Cahn video describes the neurological, emotional, and relational benefits of trying something new. Some students will choose an activity as their new experience, while others might start a conversation with someone they don't know or consider a different perspective. The "Do the New Project" activity helps students brainstorm new things they can try. Whatever their choice, their action will support their personal growth as they open up to new ideas, perspectives, and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of new perspectives and experiences on their growth and identity. - Being open to new ideas/perspectives/experiences requires bravery. - How considering new ideas/perspectives/experiences helps develop empathy. 	<p><i>"If you don't go through life with an open mind, you will find a lot of closed doors."</i></p> <p>– Mark W. Perrett</p>	<p>Self-awareness: Growth mindset</p> <p>Self-management: Risk-taking</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Curiosity</p>
Give to Your Future Self	This lesson encourages students to think about and embrace specific character traits that will help them become better individuals. The video "The Science of Character" focuses on identifying students' existing qualities and strengths and suggesting ways to enhance them. By the end of the lesson, students will commit to taking action directed towards someone in their family, friend group, or larger community, with the goal of developing a specific character trait in themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A person's character is shaped by the many small choices and actions they make over time. - Their growth mindset helps them to develop their character. - How can their self-directed actions positively impact those around them? 	<p><i>"Each of you is perfect the way you are ... and you can use a little improvement."</i></p> <p>– Shunryu Suzuki</p>	<p>Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception</p> <p>Self-awareness: Growth mindset</p> <p>Self-management: Persistence</p>
Wrap-Up	Students consider how they can continue to take positive actions to impact themselves and others even after ThinkGive has ended. These actions provide opportunities for self-reflection (mirrors) and learning from others (windows). They reflect on the impact of their actions and brainstorm ideas for keeping ThinkGive going, both as a group and as individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important to reflect on an experience to understand how to incorporate its lessons into your life. - How has ThinkGive impacted them and their communities? - How can they keep ThinkGive going and create an even more significant impact? 	<p><i>"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."</i></p> <p>– Maya Angelou</p>	<p>Relationship skills: Effective communication</p> <p>Self-management: Persistence</p> <p>Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking</p>

Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted



grades: 6-8



35 minutes

“When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.” – G.K Chesterton

Lesson Summary

This lesson invites students to write about a person they’ve taken for granted and reflect on how this person serves as a window and/or a mirror for them. To help them develop their ideas, students watch the “Experiment in Gratitude” video and write a letter of gratitude. As an action, they can either read their letter to the person they wrote about or find a different way to express their appreciation for someone they’ve taken for granted.

Students will Examine

- What it means to take someone for granted, and why they might do so unintentionally.
- How is gratitude the opposite of taking people and things for granted?
- The impact that their gratitude can have on others.

Pre-Activity Prep

- (Optional) Print Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Print or digitally prepare the Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Complete a sample Showing Gratitude worksheet (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted](#)
Video: [An Experiment in Gratitude](#) (7:13)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Think about your Last Action

Discuss or use Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) to explore how previous actions connected to the Windows + Mirrors theme.

- How did your action help you look in a mirror and see yourself more clearly?
- How did your action help you see through a window to understand someone else (their experience, beliefs, life, culture, etc.)?
- What character trait(s) did your action(s) highlight inside of you?
- What character trait(s) did your action(s) highlight in the recipient?

★ TEACHER TIP

To make the Windows and Mirrors concept more visual, create a public space where students can post Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

★ TEACHER TIP

If students feel dissatisfied with their actions or have yet to act, remind them that small, consistent actions help develop kindness muscles (ThinkGive Three), so keep trying!

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Ask: What if you woke up tomorrow and everyone you expressed gratitude for today was standing in front of you? Who would be there?

Record the answers as a group or have students create individual lists on paper.

Discuss/Journal:

- How often do you let these people know you appreciate who they are and what they do for you?
- Do these people act as a mirror for you by reflecting who you are or a window by teaching you about new ideas, experiences, and cultures?
- Is anyone missing? Are they missing because you tend to take them for granted?

NOTE: If needed, take some time to define and give examples of what it means to take someone or something for granted.

Give students time to add those they are taking for granted to the list (group or personal).

★ TEACHER TIP

If you kept the T-charts/worksheets from the "Appreciate a Kindness Someone Give to You" lesson, use them to help direct this lesson.

★ TEACHER TIP

If students have trouble choosing a person, encourage them to consider someone they care about or someone they've taken for granted who has been kind and helpful.

Write a Letter

Hand out or digitally share the Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student). Students choose someone they've taken for granted from their list and respond to the sentence starters on Page 1 to prepare their writing.

Students use Page 2 to organize their thoughts, and then on Page 3, they compose a letter to express their gratitude for this person. Encourage them to focus on micro-moments as they write. Point out that this activity is challenging. It can be hard to express our feelings in writing.

NOTE: Consider writing and sharing a sample letter as a model for the format and content of a letter, allowing students to connect with you.

Discuss:

- How does the person you wrote to reflect who you are?
- How does the person act as a window and teach you about unfamiliar experiences?



TEACHER TIP

Students might prefer to write a poem, create a comic strip, or draw a portrait of the person. The key is that their work explains why the person is important.

REFLECT

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Watch: [An Experiment in Gratitude](#) (7:13) by SoulPancake. This video takes an experimental approach to examining what makes people happier.

Discuss:

- Why were the letter-writers nervous?
- If you were in their position, how would you feel? Why?
- What was the result for the letter-writers?
- What was the result for the people they wrote to?

Give students another few minutes to polish their writing, using the video as inspiration. Ask for student volunteers to share their letters.

Discuss (post-share):

- How did what your peers share act as a window for you about their experiences?
- How did what your peers share act as a mirror for your own experiences?
- How is expressing gratitude for this person the opposite of taking them for granted?
- How do you feel taking time to be grateful for them?
- How might your appreciation impact this person?



TEACHER TIP

Connect the video and letter-writing activity to the ThinkGive Three's TRUE and BRAVE.



TEACHER TIP

Students could share by summarizing, highlighting, or sharing the name of the person they wrote about. They decide what they feel most comfortable sharing, as this activity may feel vulnerable for some.

DIGGING DEEPER

Discuss:

- When might it be challenging to compose a letter of gratitude (e.g., the person is deceased, incarcerated, estranged, the relationship is challenging, etc.)?
 - What might be alternative ways of practicing gratitude if expressing it to a person is challenging? What would be the benefit of this (e.g., writing a letter, even if you won't or can't deliver it to the person, can still be helpful because it allows you to express your internal thoughts externally)?
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CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], be brave and read your letter aloud to the person you wrote to. You can also send it by mail or email. If that feels too much, think of another brave way to share your gratitude with someone you take for granted.

Brainstorm

None needed

Things to Consider

- Expressing gratitude takes courage. Grow your bravery!
- Who is someone you take for granted?
- Imagine how you would feel if someone wrote you a gratitude letter!

Closing Quote

Use this quote to close out the lesson. The reflective questions could serve as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

"When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude." – G.K Chesterton

- What does this quote mean to you?
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★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone




★ CONNECTION

G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was an English writer, often called the "prince of paradox." TIME Magazine said of his writing style: "Whenever possible, Chesterton made his points with popular sayings, proverbs, allegories—first carefully turning them inside out."

Sample Actions

- I wrote my stepdad a letter saying how much I appreciate he's always there for me.
- I sent the most amazing teacher I have ever had a letter describing how she changed my life.
- I stepped out of my comfort zone and told someone I just met how grateful I was to have met them. I hope this will be the start of a friendship.

Student Journal Questions

-  How can showing appreciation reflect who you are? How can your appreciation act as a window for others?
-  How can showing gratitude for someone help that person see themselves more clearly?
-  What is one thing you can do to express gratitude more regularly?

Extensions

DO

Gratitude Surprise

Give students one or more Post-it notes to write something they're grateful for about someone in the school community. Then, students deliver the notes by placing them where the person will see them (e.g., in a locker, phone, or cleaning cart).

Audio: [Guided meditation on Gratitude](#) (7:54). The basic practice of gratitude has three simple steps:

- Settle your body and mind; bring your attention to the present moment.
- Recall something specific you appreciate—the more concrete and tangible, the better.
- Enjoy the sensations that arise and spread through your body.

WATCH

Video: [Kid President's 25 Reasons to Be Thankful](#) (3:47). Life can be challenging. It's important to remember the things that make life extraordinary. What would you put on the list?

Discuss:

- What items seemed ridiculous initially but made sense after you thought about them?
- Why is reflecting on gratitude a helpful practice?
- Create a class slideshow or video with your Reasons to Be Thankful.

Video: [Gratitude in the Classroom](#) (4:12). Middle school students started every morning by writing down something they were grateful for.

Discuss:

- What would happen in our community if we started this gratitude journal practice?
- What would you write in your Gratitude Journal?

As a group, list what you would write in your Gratitude Journal. Consider practicing gratitude as a class for the remainder of your time together.

READ/LISTEN

Short story: "The Seven Wonders of the World" ([PDF](#)). This story is about one young person's interpretation of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Pair-Share:

- What are your thoughts about the story?
- "The things we overlook as simple and ordinary and that we take for granted are truly wondrous." What simple and ordinary things have you overlooked and taken for granted?
- Add to the second list of the wonders of the world and explain why you are adding each new thing.

Poems: "Ode to My Socks" ([PDF](#)) and/or "Ode to the Artichoke" ([PDF](#)) by Pablo Neruda. The famous poet writes odes about seemingly ordinary things.

Discuss:

- Why is it important to be grateful for small things?
- What item(s) would you write an ode to?
- Write an ode to something or someone that you typically take for granted.



ThinkGive partners with educators to bring social and emotional learning (SEL) to K-8 youth.

Our mission is to empower youth to take actions that positively impact themselves and others; building character, confidence, and connection. Our programs explore inclusion, identity, empathy, and equity to help youth cultivate self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Why ThinkGive?_____

We emphasize action. Our programs empower youth to take self-directed and authentic actions that positively impact themselves, others, their communities, and the environment.

We increase access to SEL. We engage youth who need access to programs like ours. Over 75% of our partner educators serve under-resourced youth and receive free programming.



Check if your school or organization qualifies for free programming funded by our SEL for Every Child Fund at thinkgiveproject.org/fund

We make an impact. Students overwhelmingly report that after participating in ThinkGive programming, they feel empowered to be a force of good and positively impact their world. Programs develop prosocial skills, including connection (with peers, friends, family, teachers, and community), belonging, confidence, and empowerment.

We are flexible and adaptable. ThinkGive fits into just about any K-8 learning environment. Our programs are adaptable to your schedule, goals, and student needs. They can be taught standalone or complement and enhance broader SEL initiatives.

We are grounded in research. ThinkGive aligns with CASEL's core competencies and state and common core standards.

We provide exceptional support. The ThinkGive team partners with you and provides hands-on support so that you can implement programs effectively.

Why Now?

Youth mental health has deteriorated nationwide, and this crisis is disproportionately impacting under-resourced youth. In May 2023, the Surgeon General declared loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection a new public health epidemic in the United States. Research shows how teaching youth prosocial behavior is directly associated with positive emotional, social, and academic growth.



OUR IMPACT

STUDENTS REPORT...

84%

will be kinder
to others

81%

will be a force of good
in their schools and
communities

71%

are more willing
to stand up for
what's right

76%

feel more confident to
make a positive impact
on their world

84% felt more connected with family, **78%** with community, **77%** with friends

EDUCATORS REPORT...

100%

students feel more
empowered that they can
be agents of change

85%

students seem
more inclusive

75%

students seem
kinder to each other



“ThinkGive is a revolutionary SEL program that empowers students to immaterially gift kindness. It strengthens their connections to each other and their communities, shapes them as young citizens, and helps them see the impact of their actions.”

– Dana Meyer, educator, Carlisle Public School

“ThinkGive has and will help me be a more considerate, thoughtful, and compassionate person. Knowing the positive effects I can have on a person is truly amazing.”

– 7th grade student