



## The Missing Attitude: Gratitude a Big Need

Few of us probably believe that we receive all the appreciation we want, need or desire. In fact, we often hear ourselves and others say that we would like our work much better if people were only more grateful for us and appreciative of what we are doing. And if we took the time to assess the cause of many problems people experience, we would find a lack of gratitude at the root of many of them. Yet, gratitude works in two directions. If we're really honest, we would have to admit that one of the reasons people don't show more gratitude is that we're guilty of showing so little of it toward them. That's why it is important to have a professional discussion about gratitude. We need it. Our colleagues need it. And so do our students. In truth, our lives would be made richer if gratitude were found in abundance in our classroom and school.

The only form of gratitude that we totally  
control is our own.

When we think about gratitude, one reality ought not to elude us. The people whom we usually appreciate and respect the most are grateful people. Their attitude toward others makes them a joy—and exemplary in other people's eyes. They also seem to be the happiest people. Their ability to be grateful gives them the opportunity to focus on the positive rather than the negative. And when they express their gratitude to the people in their lives, others seem to want to bestow even more gratitude upon them. So, what prevents us from expressing more gratitude?

Unfortunately, one of the reasons is that we really aren't grateful. This fact should give us both pause and concern. Many of us are guilty of believing that others should be grateful for us, not the reverse. After all, we're the ones who are plugging away to make the school successful. The problem with this thinking is multidimensional.



First, there is no disguising it. When we have the attitude that others and the organization are lucky to have us—rather than that we are just as lucky to have them—it is written all over us. The best and most generous people in our school aren't likely to respect or reward such an attitude. Therefore, a lack of gratitude begets a lack of gratitude from others.

Second, a void of gratitude often keeps us from giving people and work all we have. As a result, the void limits our accomplishments. Opportunities to excel are missed. When this is the case, the void of gratitude had diminished the attitudes and actions which foster it in others.

Third, when gratitude is lacking, it's hard to be happy. Too, we have an underdeveloped capacity to be awed and are not likely to allow ourselves to be impressed by others and the miracle of the work and mission of the school. This often leaves us feeling negative. Once we experience gratefulness, however, these conditions reverse.

Fourth, sometimes we are so concerned with what we want that we spend little time reflecting on what we have, whom we appreciate, and what life would be like without the opportunities we have. Without gratitude, this condition will remain. As professionals, we can double or triple our effectiveness by being grateful. Here how to begin:

It's easy to change.  
We must simply decide to do so.



Finally, search out the people who work hard and go the extra mile. Then, give credit where credit is due. Thank the secretary who goes out of his or her way to help you, and the custodian who takes care of your room. And don't forget the colleague you always count on, or the administrator who hears your countless requests and tries to facilitate and support your success. Start by thanking people for what they do mean to you and for what they do for you. When you start to show gratitude you'll quickly realize how many things people do day in and day out that make your life more enjoyable. In addition, you'll discover that people will enjoy more and your relationships will grow stronger.

The Master Teacher knows that gratitude is a quality worth developing.

Thanks

The Master Teacher vol. 32 No. 15

