

Cultivating Grateful Young Hearts

Adapted from "Growing Grateful Hearts: Cultivating True Gratitude in the Early Years" from Teaching Leading, Caring, (TLC), LLC

Gratitude is more than a polite "thank you." It's a deep emotional awareness that someone has done something kind, often at a cost or effort. For young children—especially those from birth to five—this understanding doesn't come naturally. Their world is understandably self-centered as they are still developing their sense of self and others.

We recognize that as early childhood educators, WCC staff and our parents have the unique opportunity to plant the seeds of gratitude early—helping children grow into more empathetic, resilient, and socially connected individuals. With intentional strategies and consistent modeling, we can help even the youngest learners begin to recognize and express appreciation in meaningful ways.

Research shows that children who practice gratitude are happier, more empathetic, and build stronger relationships. Gratitude also supports emotional regulation and enhances well-being. While infants and toddlers may not fully understand the concept, early experiences shape the emotional and cognitive foundations needed for gratitude to grow.

For preschoolers, developing language and social awareness allow for more intentional discussions and demonstrations of thankfulness. Rather than focusing on teaching gratitude as a behavior, think of it as a skill that develops gradually—nurtured by the environment and relationships children experience every day.

Teaching gratitude is not about rote politeness—it's about nurturing an emotional skill that takes years to develop. In the early years, our role is to provide rich, responsive environments where gratitude can take root and slowly grow. With patience, consistency, and a focus on meaningful relationships, we can help children grow grateful hearts that will serve them for life. See below corresponding information on gratitude development in children and how to learn more.

With Thanksgiving approaching, it gives each of us the opportunity to focus on gratitude. I speak for WCC when I say that we are sincerely appreciative of the amazing support we receive from you and what is particularly noteworthy, is your support of our fundraisers such as Potomac Pizza night and Charleston Wrap which raised nearly \$1500 in support of our programming and needs. We could not ask for better partners in your child's education. And we want to support you-- if your family is in financial need due to the government shutdown, please reach out to me.

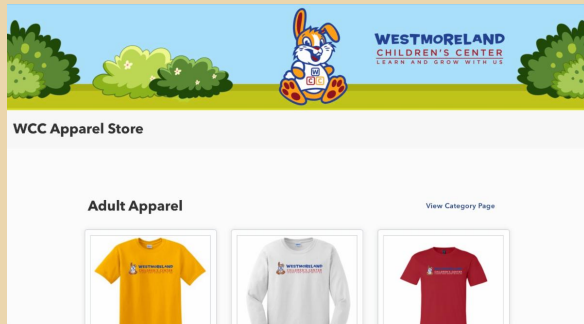


Last but certainly not least, we wish all that served in the United States Armed Forces a Happy Veteran's Day on November 11th. We salute you and are grateful for your honored service.

With deep and sincere gratitude,

Libby

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Grab Your WCC Apparel Today!

Showcase your school spirit by getting your WCC gear at our online store at <https://wcc-backtoschool.itemorder.com> where we offer a variety of apparel available in an array of sizes, styles, and colors for both adults and children. This is the perfect time and

opportunity to get holiday gift items.

WCC receives a percentage of sales to support WCC's programs and resources .

WCC Fall Festivities









November 2025

- 3 - Picture Day for Circle students
- 4 - Picture Day for Westbrook students
- 6 - Growing Grateful Hearts: Cultivating True Gratitude in the Early Years Seminar (see below)
- 11 - Veterans Day
- 25 - Early Dismissal at 1 pm
- 26-28 - Thanksgiving Holiday - **WCC Closed**

December 2025/January 2026

- 10 - Chipotle Fundraiser (4–9 pm); Details to follow
- 23 - Early Dismissal at 1 pm

December 24 - January 2
Winter Break - **WCC Closed**

5th - *Classes resume*

Class Happenings



Starfish Class (pictured above)

The Starfish will have lessons about picking and harvesting crops. They will learn what harvesting is and why it is so important during this time of year.

They will also learn the difference between a fruit and vegetable. The meaning of Thanksgiving will also be taught with discussion of the Pilgrims and Native Americans as well as the Mayflower.

Our Starfish will create many arts and crafts related turkeys with construction paper and colorful feathers and popsicle sticks. Further, children will work on the letter T, in which they create paper turtles. In addition, our Starfish will learn more about gratitude and why it matters.



Bumble Bees Class (pictured above)

The Bumble Bees Classroom "All Things Fall" unit began in October, focusing on seasonal differences and incorporating phonetic awareness activities to introduce letter recognition. The Bees particularly enjoyed learning about farms, fall, and friendship.



In November, the Bees will continue exploring seasonal changes, with a focus on harvesting and migration. They will create fall-themed art, integrating basic math concepts through shapes, colors, sorting, and pattern-making. The Bumble Bees' activities this month will emphasize gratitude, thankfulness, community, friendship, and kindness during this Thanksgiving season.



Teddy Bears Class (pictured above)

The Teddy Bear classroom is currently filled with open-ended artwork and various projects. These pieces beautifully illustrate the children's development in several key areas, including small motor skills,



The Teddy Bear classroom theme for November is "Changes In The Weather." The children will discuss and "Learn Through Play" weather changes from one season to the next.

eye-hand coordination, and teamwork.



Bunnies Class

This month, the Bunnies Class is focusing on Routines and Helping Hands. We have also been exploring the changing season from Summer to Fall, and the children are doing a wonderful job recognizing their names on their snack cards.

The Bunnies have been introduced to numbers, colors, letters, and shapes, and we will build on this foundation throughout the month of November.



This month the Bunnies theme shifts to celebrating children around the world by exploring different cultures.

The Bunnies will also be learning about the Harvesting Season by creating shapes like scarecrows, birds, and trees. The Bunnies plan to discuss the different crops that are grown and which ones we enjoy eating.



Pandas Class (pictured above)

The Panda classroom had a fantastic October! The children greatly enjoyed taking fall nature walks and exploring pumpkins and apples using their five



Looking ahead to November 2025, a few of the Panda classroom themes include an Introduction to Literature, Nutrition, and Gratitude.

senses. The class also celebrated Diwali, "Pumpkin Fun" day, and Halloween. Some of the Pandas' October monthly themes included Nocturnal Animals, Farm Animals, and Pumpkins and Apples. Among the many subjects the Pandas learned about were differentiating between nocturnal and diurnal animals, identifying and drawing diagonal, horizontal, and vertical lines, and creating patterns (AB, ABC, AABB, ABCD).



Leopards Class (pictured above)

In November the Leopards will wrap up their discussions on the contributions made from farming livestock and begin to talk about the differences between farms and what each can produce. They will have a unit on harvesting to learn about crops that are harvested during this season and the importance of agriculture.

Our Leopards will also have a unit on the First Thanksgiving focusing on Pilgrims and Native Americans, and learn about the meaning of gratitude



The Leopards will continue to work on sight word recognition by adding the words "and", "is", "left" and "right" to our ongoing list and daily activities. In the math category they will continue to develop their addition/subtraction skills and sorting abilities. We look forward to a fun month!

through group discussions and writing activities. They will participate in art activities that reflect a bountiful harvest to display in our classroom plus celebrate this wonderful season with a Harvest Tea Party where the children will present a harvest tale to their families.



Dragonflies Class (pictured above)

The Dragonfly Classroom's current focus is on classic children's literature, nursery rhymes, and poetry. The children are concentrating on essential literacy skills, including letter recognition, phonics, sight words, listening comprehension, and expressive language. The children are also deeply engaged in a long-term project: creating original stories for a classroom storybook, which they plan to complete by the first week of December. I am impressed by their developing proficiency in preparing and planning for extended projects, which is building important life skills.



The classroom calendar is full of exciting events this month, including:

Pajama Day -- November 7th

Giving Tree Project - November 10th–18th

Informal Parent-Teacher Conferences -
The week of November 10th–14th

Hilary Shaw Chats with Westy

Hilary grew up in Washington, DC, and attended the National Cathedral School before attending Tulane University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English. She then went to American University and earned her Masters In Arts in Education. Hilary's career began teaching 2nd grade followed by Pre-K, 5th and 8th grades.

Hilary worked at home raising her children for 18 years and is returning to education at WCC in the Starfish class as an assistant teacher.

Westy puts questions to Hilary to learn more:

What do you like to do on the weekends?

Play golf. I took it up once my kids grew older—it's time-consuming!

What are the most meaningful destinations you have visited?

Safari in Tanzania, exploring the fjords in Norway, and seeing the Moai statues on Easter Island

Who are your favorite authors?

Ernest Hemingway and David Sedaris

What's your guilty pleasure?

Reality TV

What could you not live without?

My family and travel

What are your favorite smells?

Citrus, lavender, and cookies baking in the oven

How do you unwind after a long day?

Taking a walk and watching true crime documentaries

What is a great book you have read recently?

The Narrow Road to the Deep North by Richard Flanagan and North Woods by Daniel Mason. North Woods was inventive and beautifully written

What is an essential for a road trip?

Great music and great snacks

What are you most looking forward to?

Traveling to Lapland to see the Northern Lights this Christmas

Thank you Hilary for letting us get to know you better. Your friend, Westy



Understanding Gratitude Through Development

In connection with the above article on gratitude.
Provided by TLC.

Infants (0–12 Months): Building Trust and Connection

Infants can't express gratitude, but they can feel safety, comfort, and connection. When caregivers respond to their needs consistently and with warmth, infants begin to understand that they are valued. This trust becomes the emotional base from which gratitude later emerges.



Toddlers (1–3 Years): Imitation and Emerging Awareness

Toddlers begin to understand routines and cause-and-effect. While their thinking is still egocentric, they notice when others help them. They may say “thank you” with prompting, but the emotion behind it is still developing. At this stage, modeling and repetition are key.

Preschoolers (3–5 Years): Perspective-Taking and Real Understanding

By age three or four, children begin to understand that others have thoughts, feelings, and intentions. They can start to comprehend that someone went out of their way to help them or give them something. This opens the door to a more genuine sense of gratitude.

Strategies to Cultivate Gratitude in Young Children

Model Grateful Behavior Daily

Children learn gratitude by watching adults. When consistently saying “thank you” to children and each other, they model respectful, appreciative interactions.

Incorporate Books and Storytelling

Picture books provide age-appropriate language and relatable characters for exploring gratitude. After reading, engage children in reflective conversations. Stories help children identify gratitude in familiar situations and give them words to express their feelings.

Create a Culture of Thankfulness

Make gratitude a part of your culture. Even simple statements like “I love snack time” can be scaffolded to: “I am thankful we have yummy and healthy snacks today!”

Teach Perspective-Taking in Simple Ways

Help children understand that others' actions have meaning and intention. Instead of prompting a forced “thank you,” guide them to reflect: “Mr. Jack helped you zip your coat because he cares about you. What could you say to let him know you're thankful?” Pointing out the “why” behind helpful acts builds understanding beyond manners.

Celebrate Acts of Kindness

Recognize when children help each other, and highlight the emotional effect: “You gave your friend a turn. That made him smile! That was a kind and thoughtful thing to do.” This encourages children to notice and value kindness, both given and received, which is a foundation for gratitude.

Use Creative Expression and Play

Art and pretend play are great mediums for teaching gratitude. Children can:

- Make thank-you cards for family members or staff.
- Create a “thankful tree” with paper leaves.
- Role-play scenarios where they help or thank each other.

Creative activities make abstract emotions more tangible and easier for young children to explore. To continue this topic of gratitude, join the FREE ZOOM workshop:

Growing Grateful Hearts: Cultivating True Gratitude in the Early Years

November 6, 2026 6:15-7:15 PM EST

Go to www.teachingleadingcoachingtlc.com/training to register!



Where's Westy?

Westy has been busy, busy, busy! He just seems to pop up everywhere. Take a look around WCC's classrooms and hallways as he promotes exploration, reading, building blocks and exciting concepts.



School Wide News

Camp Westmoreland (CW) 2026

Camp registration will be available in early January with WCC families given first placement priority. Camp Westmoreland kids participate in a variety of age appropriate and fun-filled activities associated with each theme (subject to change), as well as supervised free choice activities. In addition, each theme-oriented session includes:

- Special Events
- Arts and Crafts
- Music and JumpBunch
- Gross motor activities
- Water Play

Camp will be closed June 19th and July 3rd for holidays and our hours will now be 8-4 with aftercare from 4-5:30, Monday-Friday. Camp Westmoreland serves children aged two (*must be age 2 by September 1, 2025*) through 5. We offer a summer program designed to enhance your child's learning through a variety of activities in a safe, stimulating and fun-filled

environment.

Parenting Seminars on Literacy, Gratitude

Our first parent seminar "Raising a Reader: A Conversation with Early Literacy Expert Lynn Klaiman on October 7th was enlightening and informative. See below on the free Zoom training seminar on gratitude provided by Teaching Learning Caring (tLC).

Applications for the 26-27 School Year

Tours for incoming children began October 15th. If you have a child who is eligible for the 26-27 school year, please make sure to submit an application which can be found on our website: www.wccbethesda.com. We began accepting applications for new students on November 1st.

Labeling Clothes

With cooler weather here, please remember to label outerwear such as coats, jackets or sweaters that your child wears to school. If you are missing a piece of clothing, reach out to your child's teacher to see if it is in the lost and found.



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