



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



Languages of Youth Appreciation Lessons



Introduction

The Importance of Caring Adults

One of the foundations of the South Dakota 4-H program is the relationships between 4-H youth and caring adults. By facilitating a space where youth feel safe both physically and emotionally, caring adults create opportunities for 4-H youth to experience belonging. A sense of belonging will lead to 4-H youth having more positive outcomes in their lives and 4-H experiences. Caring adults can increase this sense of belonging and strengthen their positive relationships with 4-H youth through showing appreciation in their interactions.

Appreciation vs. Recognition

In the South Dakota 4-H program, one of the ways we celebrate and show positive outcomes for our 4-H youth is through recognition. This is mainly done through the awarding of 4-H youth for specific achievements. Examples of this include handing out ribbons and awards at your achievement day shows or recognition events.

Although some 4-H youth do value and get joy out of receiving these awards, many others (especially older youth) may not want them. Many 4-H youth also do not like to be publicly recognized. Think of the reactions some youth have when they are asked to step forward during your county's recognition event.

Instead of focusing on recognition, these lesson plans will help teach the different types of appreciation to youth. While recognition focuses mainly on performance, appreciation focuses on the value of youth. Recognition focuses on what a person does, appreciation focuses on who a person is. By showing appreciation for our 4-H youth, not only will their sense of belonging increase but their relationship with caring adults will also strengthen.

Primary Contributing Authors:

- Becca Tullar, SDSU Extension 4-H Educator - Brown County
- Nathan Skadsen, SDSU Extension 4-H Educator - Minnehaha County
- Chelsea Hutchison, SDSU Extension 4-H Educator - Tripp and Gregory Counties
- Jenae Hansen-Gross, SDSU Extension 4-H Volunteer Development Field Specialist
- Ron Frederick, SDSU Extension 4-H Educator - Rosebud

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: Introduction to Appreciation Types	4
Lesson 2: Words of Appreciation	10
Lesson 3: Quality Time	14
Lesson 4: Appreciation in Action.	19
Lesson 5: Tangible Gifts	24
Lesson 6: Physical Touch	28



INTRODUCTION TO APPRECIATION TYPES



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 1: Introduction to Appreciation Types

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

TIME NEEDED

Hook: Paint the Moon (5 min)

Book: Define Appreciation (5 min)

Look: Let's Fill Our Buckets (10 min)

Took: Appreciation Ranking (5 min)

SKILL LEVEL

10-13 years Old



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Youth will learn the definition of appreciation

OBJECTIVE 2 – Youth will classify and sort appreciation examples into five different categories: words, quality time, acts of service, tangible gifts, and appropriate physical touch

MATERIAL LIST

- Large white board, sticky note, or something similar to take notes and brainstorm
- Book "How Full is Your Bucket" for kids by Tom Rath
- Appendix A Appreciation Cards, cut up and laminated (if able)
- A "bucket" for each student. This could be anything from actual sand buckets, to homemade cardboard buckets, to serving bowls. If you will be teaching multiple lessons to the same group, having a bucket that the students can personalize and return to in each lesson would be preferable.



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

BACKGROUND

One of the foundations of the South Dakota 4-H program is the relationships between 4-H youth and their peers. By facilitating a space where youth feel safe both physically and emotionally, the 4-H program creates opportunities for 4-H youth to experience belonging. A sense of belonging will lead to 4-H youth having more positive outcomes in their lives and 4-H experiences. The sense of belonging and positive relationships between 4-H youth can be enhanced through intentionally showing appreciation between each other.

While recognition is usually a one-size-fits-all approach to recognizing youth (ie. first place always gets a purple ribbon), appreciation can be modified to fit what “fills the tank” of each 4-H youth best. Dr. Gary Chapman has identified five different “languages” of appreciation. They include:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Acts of Service
- Tangible Gifts
- Appropriate Physical Touch

The five different languages of appreciation acknowledge that everyone receives appreciation differently and are fulfilled by different things. Identifying these differences and showing appreciation to youth in multiple ways will allow caring adults to better create a positive youth development environment.

VOCABULARY

Recognition vs. Appreciation – Instead of focusing on recognition, these activities will ask you to consider appreciation. While recognition focuses mainly on performance, appreciation focuses on the value of youth. Recognition focuses on what a person does, appreciation focuses on who a person is. By teaching 4-H youth to practice appreciation, not only will their sense of belonging increase but their relationships with other 4-H members and caring adults will also strengthen.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

This is the first lesson of a five part series on Languages of Appreciation developed by the Positive Youth Development Outcome Team of South Dakota 4-H. This should be the first lesson taught, the other lessons may vary in order taught.

HOOK - PAINT THE MOON

Introduce the game called ‘Paint the Moon’. In this game students will use an imaginary paintbrush to ‘paint the moon’ (pretend to paint something in the sky). There will be a trick that each person must do to successfully paint the moon, and you will let them know if they were successful or not. There is only one imaginary paintbrush, so only one person can try and paint the moon at a time.

The ‘trick’ that each person must do is they must say thank you when they are handed the paintbrush. If they don’t say thank you, they cannot successfully paint the moon. If students are having a hard time picking up on the trick, demonstrate painting the moon yourself and add emphasis when you say thank you.

After completing the game, have the students reflect on why we say thank you and please. Some reflections questions could be: When do we say thank you? When do we say please? When did we learn to say those? How does it feel when someone tells you thank you?

BOOK - DEFINE APPRECIATION

Ask the students if they’ve heard of the word appreciation before? Help define it for them if they haven’t. Ask students to think of ways that they show appreciation or have been shown appreciation

Explain that some scientists and researchers have identified that appreciation can be divided into five different types. Using a whiteboard, or something similar, write out the types of appreciation (words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, tangible gifts, and appropriate physical touch.)



Brainstorm types of appreciation and what category they would fit in. Ask students to write or draw the example of appreciation under the category that it would fit in.

LOOK - LET'S FILL OUT BUCKETS

Read the book "How Full is Your Bucket" for kids by Tom Rath. Have the students discuss how they feel after someone does something nice for them. Ask them to think about what types of appreciation "fills their bucket" the most.

Introduce the fill your bucket relay race. Have cards spread out on the floor or some other surface with different examples of appreciation (Appendix 1). Give each student a 'bucket' (see Materials Needed section) and instruct the students that they will be racing to see who can fill their bucket first. After being told to start, students will search through the different types of appreciation cards and find ones that they enjoy receiving the most. They must find 8 different types of appreciation in order to fill their bucket completely. First to fill their bucket wins.

TOOK – APPRECIATION RANKING

After everyone has completed filling their bucket, have the students take out their types of appreciation and sort them into the five categories. Whichever category has the most cards is the type of appreciation that they most enjoy. Explain that this does not mean that they don't like appreciation from the other categories and that they have equal amounts of cards in more than one category. This just gives them an idea of what type of appreciation they seek out the most. Explain that as we move forward with the additional lessons, we will discuss how to share appreciation with those around us.

EXTENDED LEARNING

If time and technology allow, students may take the official "love language" test that they five types of appreciation are based on. It can be found at <https://5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/love-language>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Adapted from "5 languages of Appreciation in the Workplace" by Gary Chapman and Paul White (2007), "5 Love Languages of Children" by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell (1997), and "5 Love Languages for Teenagers" by Gary Chapman (2000)

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdstate.edu.

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents

P-00366-01



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Cut out cards

High Five	Side Hug
Pat on the Back	Hand Shake
A-Frame Hug	Thank you note
Cake with the words “thank you” on it	Ice Cream Gift Card
I brought you a can of your favorite soda!	Giving someone a wrapped gift
Playing games with others	Sitting with others in a circle talking/laughing



Cut out cards

Sharing a meal together	Canoeing together
Going on a walk with others	Thank you for teaching me a new way to tie a knot!
I saw you helping the other kids with their project, great job!	You did a great job leading the other kids in cleaning up today!
You did a great job giving your speech today. I'm very proud of the progress you've made!	I tried one of the cookies you baked and it was delicious. Great job!
Helping someone skate	Helping someone study
Raking the yard together	Let me help you clean up!
Holding a door open for someone.	





WORDS OF AFFIRMATION



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 2: Words of Affirmation

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

TIME NEEDED

Hook: Activity (5 minutes)

Book: Lesson (5 minutes)

Look: Take-aways (15 minutes)

Total time: 25 minutes

SKILL LEVEL

10-13 years Old



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Youth will identify ways and words/phrases that help communicate appreciation.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Youth will practice sharing written words of appreciation with other members in the group.

MATERIAL LIST

- Ball or another throwable object
- White board or large piece of paper and writing utensils
- Small rocks (can be collected from the site or ahead of time, sharpies, or other permanent markers.
- Various markers, crayons, stickers, and different colored printing paper or construction paper.



BACKGROUND

This is the second lesson of a 6-part series on Languages of Youth Appreciation, developed by the Positive Youth Development Outcome Team of South Dakota 4-H. The lessons, aside from the first, do not need to be completed in order and may vary.

The word encouragement means to instill courage. Words of affection and endearment, words of praise and encouragement, words that give positive guidance all say, "I care about you." Youth often feel the greatest sense of appreciation in expressions that affirm them. The tone of voice, the gentleness of a mood, the sense of caring all communicate emotional warmth and appreciation.

HOOK - NAME GAMES

When it comes to words of encouragement, learning the names of the people you are encouraging is a very important step! The more you can personalize the encouragement to the person receiving the encouragement, the more impactful it is. To ensure that everyone in your group knows each other's names, lead the group in a quick ice breaker game!

Name Toss/ Juggling

Everyone should be in a circle. This is a game where a ball or another harmless item will be tossed from person to person in the group with a cadence that should be followed whenever a ball is being thrown or caught. One person starts with the ball and then lets the person they are going to throw the ball to know that it is coming by saying "Here you go ____." They can then toss the ball to that person. When the chosen person gets the ball, they should respond with "Thank you ____." This allows the names of each person to be said twice for the entire group to hear. Try to make sure that the ball is being thrown across the circle and not to those people standing directly next to each other. As soon as everyone has gotten the ball once then it should be returned to the person who started with the ball. If you want to mix it up, add multiple objects and have them thrown in the same order that the first ball went in. You could have the order go backwards as well. Challenge the group by having them complete the pattern as fast as possible.

Name Line

Get everyone to stand in a line or sit in a circle. The first person says their name and a favorite thing. The second person then says their name and a favorite thing, as well as the name and thing of the person before them. Each person after that adds the names and items of all of the people before them. Challenge the group by having them complete the line as fast as possible.

BOOK - WORD BRAINSTORM

Ask the students to brainstorm ways that they might share words of encouragement with others in their lives. For example writing notes, social media posts, texting, and sharing voice memos. If you have the ability, create a word cloud on a white board or large piece of paper. Have the students share words or short phrases that they like to hear. Have them also identify when are good moments to share words of encouragement and when do they like to have them shared with them.

LOOK - ROCKS OF APPRECIATION

Ask the students to consider where they usually receive words of appreciation. Do they words usually come after they successfully complete some task (like play in a baseball game or get an A on a test)? Do you ever receive words of appreciation that are unexpected? If so, when and how? How does it feel? Today we are going to create some words of encouragement that others can unexpectedly receive.

Hand out rocks and sharpies. Have the students write short phases or words of encouragement on each rock. Then hide the rocks around the meeting space or around their homes.

After the activity, have the students brainstorm ways they can share appreciation in unexpected ways and at unexpected times.



TOOK - NAME CLOUD

Pass out a sheet of paper and something to write with to each person. Have them write their name in the center of the sheet of paper. Have the group sit in a circle and explain that you are going to share a word of appreciation with everyone else in the group. Have the students pass their sheet to the person to their left. Each person will then write a note of encouragement for the person who's piece of paper they have. Then after about a minute the students pass the paper to the left again. Continue to do this until the papers reach their original owner and everyone has had a chance to write a note on everyone else's papers. During this time have music and treats available to create a fun, celebratory atmosphere.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL ENRICHMENTS

Gratitude Wall

If you are meeting in a space that allows, create a 'gratitude wall' space. This space can be decorated ahead of time or with your small group. Provide sticky notes and writing instruments and allow youth to post thank you notes or moments of gratitude. Good environments for this would be camps or classrooms.

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdstate.edu.

P-00366-02

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



QUALITY TIME



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 3: Quality Time

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

Character Development: Empathy, Gratitude, and Personal Responsibility

TIME NEEDED

Hook: Activity (5 minutes)

Book: Lesson (10 minutes)

Look: Take-aways (5 minutes)

Total time: 20 minutes

SKILL LEVEL

10-13 years Old

KEY TERMS

- Quality Time
- Focused Attention
- Shared Experiences
- Appreciation Language
- Giving vs. Receiving



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Youth will define what quality time is and how it shows appreciation.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Youth will identify ways to give and receive quality time meaningfully.

MATERIAL LIST

- Markers or pens
- White board or projector
- Handout with discussion questions
- Optional: Chart paper and sticky notes



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

BACKGROUND

This is the third lesson of a six-part series on Languages of Youth Appreciation, developed by the Positive Youth Development Outcome Team of South Dakota 4-H.

Quality time is focused undivided attention. Quality time is a gift of presence to a youth. It conveys this message “You are important, I like being with you.” The key to quality time is found in the values and priorities you as an adult determine to cherish and implement.

VOCABULARY

Term	Definition
Focused Attention	Emphasize the importance of being present and engaged when spending time with someone, rather than being physically present but mentally elsewhere.
Shared Experiences	Highlight that quality time often involves doing things together, creating memories and a sense of connection.
Appreciation	Recognizing and valuing the good qualities or actions of someone or something.
Interaction	Direct involvement or communication between people.
Perspective	A way of looking at or understanding something. (Understanding that others might value quality time differently.)
Presence	The state of being in a particular place at a particular time. (In this context, emphasizing mental presence as well as physical.)

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

Review the Scenarios: Take a look at the scenarios provided in the lesson plan:

- Your friend has been working really hard on a school project.
- Your sibling helped you with a difficult task.
- Your parent has been feeling stressed lately.
- A new student has joined your class and seems lonely.
- Your teammate scored the winning goal in a game.

Decide on Delivery Method: How will you present these scenarios to the students? You have a few options:

- **Verbal Presentation:** You can read each scenario aloud to the class. This is simple and allows for immediate discussion.
- **Handout:** You can type or write the scenarios on a handout for each student or group. This allows students to refer back to the scenario and work at their own pace.
- **Projected Text:** You can display each scenario on a whiteboard or projector. This is good for whole-class discussion.

Prepare Discussion Format: Decide how you want students to discuss the scenarios:

- **Small Groups:** Divide students into groups of 3-4 to discuss each scenario and brainstorm ideas together. This encourages collaboration and peer learning.
- **Whole Class Discussion:** Present each scenario to the entire class and facilitate a discussion, taking answers from various students. This allows for a broader range of ideas but might be less engaging for some students.
- **Think-Pair-Share:** Students first think individually about a scenario, then discuss with a partner, and finally share with the whole class. This combines individual reflection with collaborative discussion.

Gather Necessary Materials: Depending on your chosen delivery and discussion format, you might need:

- Copies of the handout (if using).
- Pens or pencils for students to jot down ideas.
- Whiteboard or projector and markers (if using for display or recording ideas).



Allocate Time: Ensure you have enough time within the lesson (the suggested 15 minutes) for presenting the scenarios and allowing for adequate discussion. You might need to adjust the number of scenarios you use depending on your time constraints.

- **Prepare for Sharing:** If you use small groups, decide how you want them to share their ideas with the larger group. Will each group share one idea per scenario? Will they create a list to share?

HOOK

Introduction - What Makes You Feel Special?

- Begin by asking students: "Think about a time someone made you feel really special or appreciated. What did they do?"
- Allow a few students to share their experiences. Write down some of the actions they describe on the board (without categorizing them yet).
- Transition: "The things you just shared are all ways people show appreciation. Today, we're going to focus on one specific way called 'Quality Time.'"

BOOK

Exploring "Quality Time"

- Ask: "What do you think 'quality time' means?" Encourage student responses and guide them towards the idea of focused attention and shared experiences.
- Define "Quality Time": "Quality time is about giving someone your undivided attention and enjoying being together. It means putting away distractions and focusing on the person you're with."
 - Examples of quality time:
 - ▶ Having a focused conversation without looking at your phone.
 - ▶ Playing a game together.
 - ▶ Going for a walk or bike ride.
 - ▶ Working on a project side-by-side.
 - ▶ Reading a book aloud together.
 - ▶ Watching a movie without interruptions.
 - ▶ Listening attentively when someone is talking.
- Emphasize what quality time isn't: multitasking while "spending time," being physically present but mentally elsewhere, rushed interactions.

Brainstorming and Discussion - Showing and Receiving Quality Time

- Divide the students into small groups (3-4 students).
- Give each group one or both of the following prompts for discussion:
 - "What are some ways you like to receive quality time from others (family, friends, etc.)?"
 - "What are some ways you can show someone you appreciate them through quality time?"
- Have each group brainstorm a list of ideas.
- Bring the class back together and have each group share a few of their ideas. Write these on the board or chart paper, categorizing them under "Receiving Quality Time" and "Giving Quality Time."

LOOK

Activity - "Quality Time Scenarios"

- Present the following scenarios (either verbally or on a handout) and have students discuss in their groups or as a whole class how quality time could be used to show appreciation in each situation:
 - Your friend has been working really hard on a school project.
 - Your sibling helped you with a difficult task.
 - Your parent has been feeling stressed lately.



- A new student has joined your class and seems lonely.
- Your teammate scored the winning goal in a game.
- Encourage students to think creatively and consider different ways to offer focused attention and shared experiences.

TOOK

Reflection and Wrap-up

- Distribute the handout with the following reflection questions:
 - On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not at all, 5 being a lot), how much do you think you appreciate receiving quality time from others?
 - Think about someone you care about. What is one way you could show them appreciation through quality time this week?
 - Why do you think giving someone your focused attention can make them feel appreciated?
- Have students write down their answers. You can offer them the option to share their reflections if they feel comfortable.
- Summarize the key points of the lesson: Quality time is about focused attention and shared experiences. It's a powerful way to show someone you value them. Encourage them to be mindful of how they both give and receive appreciation through quality time.

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdbor.org.

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents

P-00366-03



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



ACTS OF SERVICE



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 4: Appreciation in Action

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

English Language Arts:

W.4–5.3, SL.4–5.4, SL.4–5.6

Civic Engagement / Service

Learning: Understanding community needs, teamwork, and leadership

TIME NEEDED

This lesson may span multiple sessions depending on the chosen service project.

- Introduction & Planning: 30–45 minutes
- Service Project Implementation: Varie Hook & Book (1–3 hours or multiple shorter sessions)
- Reflection & Presentation Took: 30 minutes



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Youth will understand how acts of service can communicate appreciation and care.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Youth will work collaboratively to plan and complete a community-based 4-H service project.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Youth will reflect on and share how their service made an impact on themselves and others.

MATERIAL LIST

Materials will vary depending on the service project chosen, but may include:

- Paper or whiteboard for brainstorming
- Markers, pens, and sticky notes
- Planning worksheets (task lists, timelines, supply lists)
- Reflection sheets or journals
- Presentation materials (poster board, slideshow, photos)



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

BACKGROUND

This is the fourth lesson of a 6-part series on Languages of Youth Appreciation, developed by the Positive Youth Development Outcome Team of South Dakota 4-H. The lessons, aside from the first, do not need to be completed in order and may vary.

Each lesson introduces youth to a different way of showing and receiving appreciation. Acts of Service brings the series to life by encouraging youth to apply what they've learned through a meaningful 4-H service project. This culminating activity emphasizes teamwork, leadership, and gratitude in action—core principles of 4-H and youth development.

VOCABULARY

Term	Definition
Service	Doing something helpful or kind for someone else.
Community	A group of people living or working together with shared interests.
Volunteer	A person who freely gives their time to help others.
Appreciation	Showing gratitude or recognizing someone's effort and care.
Reflection	Thinking back on an experience to understand what was learned or felt.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

Before the Lesson:

- Review community needs or opportunities (school, nursing home, park, animal shelter, etc.).
- Decide whether youth will choose a single group project or plan smaller individual projects.
- Gather planning sheets, brainstorming templates, and reflection journals.

During the Lesson:

- Prepare a visual board titled "Ways We Can Serve."
- Provide access to basic materials for brainstorming (markers, poster paper, sticky notes).
- Arrange for adult supervision or permission as needed for off-site service projects.

After the Project:

- Provide time and space for youth to reflect and present their projects.
- Encourage photos or short videos documenting their work

HOOK

Ask youth:

- "When has someone helped you without being asked?"
- "How did that make you feel?"
- "What's one way you could show appreciation through action instead of words?"

Explain that Acts of Service are about doing something for others—helping, supporting, or giving time—to show gratitude and care.

Share examples of 4-H service projects: cleaning a park, helping at a community event, writing thank-you cards for veterans, or organizing a food drive.



BOOK

Step 1: Brainstorming the Project

- Divide into small groups or plan as a full club.
- Brainstorm community needs or people who might appreciate extra help.
- Choose a project that can realistically be completed within available time and resources.

Step 2: Planning

- Assign roles (leader, recorder, materials manager, photographer, etc.).
- Create a simple task list and timeline.
- Identify supplies, permissions, and helpers needed.

LOOK

Step 3: Action – The Service Project

- Carry out the project together!
- Encourage teamwork, communication, and positive attitudes.
- Take photos or record short clips to document the process.

Make sure that proper safety precautions are being taken. Document and report any impacts that your service project has.

TOOK

Reflection and Presentation: After completing the project, gather as a group to discuss and share.

Reflection Questions:

- “How did you feel after helping someone else?”
- “What do you think your act of service meant to the people you helped?”
- “How does doing something for others show appreciation?”
- “Would you want to serve again? Why or why not?”
- “What did you enjoy most about serving others?”
- “How did this project show appreciation to your community?”
- “What did you learn about teamwork and gratitude?”
- “How could you continue acts of service beyond this project?”

Presentation Ideas:

- Youth can share posters, photos, or slides showing their project.
- Invite parents, community partners, or club members to attend a short “Celebration of Service.”
- Each participant or group presents what they did, who they helped, and what they learned.

Youth sharing options:

- Quick circle share
- Journal reflection
- Pair-and-share with a partner
- Photos or simple poster recap of what they accomplished

Closing Thought: Remind participants that appreciation doesn’t always need words or gifts—sometimes the greatest way to show gratitude is through action.



Additional Resources

If you are having issues planning your service project, consider using the Michigan State University Extension 4-H Service Project Planning Guide, Link: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/236/67527/PlanYourCommServProj.pdf>

If you would like to explore service projects versus service learning, Iowa State University Extension has a helpful page explaining the difference between the two. Link: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/service-learning>

Remember, service projects come in all shapes and sizes. Make sure to plan one that you will be able to successfully accomplish based on time, skill, and resources.

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdbor.org.

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents

P-00366-04



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



TANGIBLE GIFTS



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 5: Tangible Gifts

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

English Language Arts:

W.3-5.3, SL.3-5.1

Character Development:

Empathy, Gratitude, and Personal Responsibility

TIME NEEDED

Hook: 5 minutes

Book: 10 minutes

Look: 5 minutes

Total: 20 minutes

SKILL LEVEL

10-13 year olds

KEY TERMS

- Tangible
- Appreciation
- Personalized
- Gift
- Meaningful



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Youth will define what a tangible gift is and how it shows appreciation.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Youth will identify ways to give and receive tangible gifts meaningfully.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Youth will create a small, personalized tangible gift for someone they appreciate.

MATERIAL LIST

For the Hook:

- Trail mix ingredients (or pre-made trail mix)
- Small cups or napkins

General Materials:

- Markers, pens, colored pencils
- Index cards or small notes (optional for messages)

Friendship Bracelet Supplies:

- Embroidery floss, yarn, or string
- Beads (optional)
- Tape or clipboards to hold bracelets while weaving
- Scissors
- Pre-cut paper or card templates
- Stickers or decorative items
- Envelopes (optional)



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

BACKGROUND

This is the fifth lesson of a six-part series on Languages of Youth Appreciation, developed by the Positive Youth Development Outcome Team of South Dakota 4-H.

Tangible gifts focus on showing appreciation through meaningful, thoughtful items. Youth learn that gifts don't need to cost money—creativity, care, and personalization are what matter most. This lesson uses simple materials to demonstrate how giving something handmade can strengthen relationships.

VOCABULARY

Term	Definition
Tangible	Something you can touch or hold.
Appreciation	Showing someone you value or care about them.
Personalized	Made to match someone's individual personality, likes, or interests.
Gift	Something you give to show you care, celebrate, or say thank you.
Meaningful	Something with special importance that makes someone feel understood.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

Before the Lesson:

- Set up a small snack station for trail mix.
- Prepare bracelet supplies sorted by color or type.

General Prep for All Options:

- Gather art/writing supplies: markers, crayons, scissors, glue, tape, stickers, old magazines, construction paper.
- Create a clean, inviting workspace and organize stations.
- Provide name tags or labeled envelopes for take-home items.

Additional Prep for Option 1: Gift Design Challenge

- Prepare or co-create a "Gift Idea Inspiration" sheet with examples like bookmarks, bracelets, "open when" letters, or origami.
- Pre-cut construction paper (bookmark strips, mini cards).
- Create simple sample projects.

Additional Prep for Option 3: Appreciation Station

- Print or cut card templates from cardstock.
- Create or co-create an "Idea Bank" with message starters:
 - "Thank you for..."
 - "I appreciate you because..."
 - "You made my day when..."
- Optional: Set up a "Delivery Station" or mailbox for cards.

HOOK

Give each participant a small cup of trail mix. As they snack, discuss:

- "How do you feel when someone shares something with you?"
- "Is sharing a snack a type of tangible gift?"
- "What makes a simple gift meaningful?"

This sets the tone that gifts do not need to be expensive—they can be thoughtful and simple. Introduce the concept of Tangible Gifts as one of the Languages of Appreciation—reminding participants that the thought behind the gift matters most.



BOOK

Discuss:

- A tangible gift is something you can see, touch, or hold.
- The meaning behind the gift matters far more than the cost.
- Examples of meaningful gifts:
 - A handmade bracelet
 - A drawing
 - A positive note
 - A small item that shows someone was thinking of you

Ask youth to share small gifts they've received that made them feel appreciated.

LOOK

Option 1: Gift Design Challenge

- Brainstorm small, meaningful gift ideas.
- Design or draw a gift on paper using art materials (or decorate packaging).
- Encourage creative, low-cost ideas for someone they appreciate.

Option 2: Friendship Bracelets

Explain that today's activity is to make a friendship bracelet as their tangible gift.

Instructions:

- Choose string or beads that remind them of the person they appreciate.
- Tape one end of the string to a table or clipboard.
- Braid, twist, or knot the bracelet.
- Add optional beads or a note of appreciation.

Encourage creativity and personalization—each bracelet should reflect the person they are making it for.

Option 3: Appreciation Station

- Use provided supplies to create a thank-you or thinking-of-you card.
- Include a message, "friendship coupon," or positive quote.
- Write who it's for and how that person has made a difference.

TOOK

Option 1 & 3 Reflection:

- "How did it feel to make something for someone else?"
- "What's the difference between buying and making a gift?"
- "What's one way you could use this appreciation language at home or school?"

Encourage youth to deliver or mail their creations to their chosen recipients.

Option 2 Reflection: When bracelets are complete, allow youth to think about who they would like to give their tangible gift to.

Use reflection questions:

- "Why did you choose this person?"
- "How do you think they will feel when they receive your bracelet?"
- "How do you feel giving a gift you made?"

Encourage youth to deliver the bracelet during the session if possible—or take it home to give later.

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdstate.edu.

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents

P-00366-05



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



PHYSICAL TOUCH



Types of Appreciation

Lesson 6: Physical Touch

EDUCATION STANDARDS

SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

Relationship Skills, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making

Character Development: Respect, Empathy, Cooperation

TIME NEEDED

Hook: 5 minutes

Book: 10 minutes

Look: 20-25 minutes

Total: 35-40 minutes

SKILL LEVEL

10-13 year olds

KEY TERMS

- Appreciation
- Meaningful
- Physical gesture
- Respect
- Team-building



EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVE 1 – Identify various positive physical gestures used to express appreciation in groups and teams.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Use respectful communication to ask others what kind of celebratory gesture they prefer.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Demonstrate team-building celebration skills such as high-five chains, fist bump relays, or group cheer routines.

OBJECTIVE 4 – Recognize cultural, personal, and comfort-level differences related to physical gestures.

OBJECTIVE 5 – Reflect on how positive touch can strengthen teamwork, belonging, and community.

MATERIAL LIST

- Space for movement
- Cones or markers for stations
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Gesture Menu" Posters (Optional)
- Scenario Cards
- Stickers or markers
- Music for group cheer/hype activities (Optional)



BACKGROUND

This is Lesson 6 in the Languages of Youth Appreciation series. Appropriate Physical Touch is celebrated in sports, clubs, and summer camps as a way to build:

- Morale
- Team spirit
- Trust
- Confidence

Gestures may include:

- High-fives
- Fist bumps
- Elbow bumps
- “Nice job!” hand raise
- Team huddles
- Victory dances
- Clap cheers
- Air high-fives
- Partner celebrations

Youth will learn that gestures are:

- Fun
- Positive
- Optional
- Chosen by the person receiving them

VOCABULARY

Term	Definition
Gesture	A movement that expresses a feeling, such as a high-five or wave.
Comfort Level	How comfortable or preferred something is for a person
Cue	A signal – like body language – that shows how someone feels.
Preference	What someone likes best.
Team Culture	The positive habits, routines, and celebrations a team creates.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- Set up several Celebration Stations around the room.
- Use scenario cards about group success and celebrations.
- Create a Gesture Menu Chart with listed gestures:
 - High-five
 - Fist bump
 - Wave
 - Air high-five
 - Clap cheer
 - Team chant
 - Elbow bump
 - “You got this!” gesture
- Prepare a visible poster that says: “Ask First, Then Celebrate!”



HOOK

Celebration Corners

Label four corners:

- High-Five
- Fist Bump
- Air High-Five
- Wave/Smile

Call out prompts:

- “Go to the corner that matches your favorite way to celebrate!”
- “Now go to the corner you think most people prefer!”
- “Now go to the corner that would be best in a noisy sports game!”

Discuss:

- Why different people chose different corners
- How teams benefit from having multiple ways to celebrate

This naturally opens up discussion about preferences and comfort levels.

BOOK

Teach youth:

- A celebration gesture is a shared moment, not just an action.
- People show appreciation differently.
- Asking can be simple:
 - “High-five or fist bump?”
 - “Want a cheer?”
- Body language matters:
 - A raised hand = “high five me”
 - A smile + nod = “I’m open to connection”
 - Closed arms = “I’d rather not right now”

Activity:

Have youth brainstorm a list titled: “Gestures That Make People Feel Celebrated” Examples include:

- High-fives
- Fist bumps
- Short group cheer
- Double-high-five
- Clap wave
- “You Rock!” sign

LOOK

Set up rotating stations such as:

- Station 1 – High-Five Relay: Teams race to high-five each member, choosing how (regular, air, jumping, etc.).
- Station 2 – Pick-Your-Gesture Partner Challenge: Partners ask: “How would you like to be celebrated?” Then perform the chosen gesture.
- Station 3 – Team Cheer Creation: Groups create a short positive celebration cheer (e.g., “Go Green Team!”). Optional: Add motions.
- Station 4 – Mystery Scenario Cards

Students rotate every 4–5 minutes.



TOOK

Discussion prompts:

- “Which gestures made you feel the happiest?”
- “Which gestures were surprising or new?”
- “How do you know if someone is open to a high-five or fist bump?”
- “Why is it important to offer choices?”
- “How can our group continue to celebrate each other positively?”

Optional: Youth vote on official group celebration gestures to use for the rest of the day.

Optional Extensions:

- **Book Tie-In Activity:** Read Consent for Kids! or A Kids Book About Boundaries. Then discuss: “How does choosing a celebration show respect?”
- **Culture & Celebration Mini-Lesson:** Explore how different cultures celebrate wins, and then have youth share their own family/cultural celebration traditions.

SDSU Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer in accordance with the nondiscrimination policies of South Dakota State University, the South Dakota Board of Regents and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Learn more at extension.sdstate.edu.

© 2026, South Dakota Board of Regents

P-00366-06



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**