



Cooking: Appreciation and Baking

What if baking helped elementary students honor the elderly?

Megan wanted her class to use their cooking skills as a way of showing appreciation of older people. Too often grandparents are seen as a source of pocket money and support, with less time taken to appreciate them and spend time with them.

"We live in a society where youth is elevated over age, and I wanted students to have an opportunity to appreciate their grandparents. I gave the students an assignment.

"We are going to invite your grandparents or an elderly friend of the family into school (permission needed) and bake them something as an expression of our appreciation and respect. Each person, including me, will prepare and pack a box to take to him or her, including some food we have prepared. We can also make a card or a bookmark or something else to give. We will need to explain what is in our boxes and why we have included it.'

"We made lists and plans, and I used mine as an example. We sent our invitations and organized the hall with chairs around small tables. We did our baking and lined small gift boxes first with wax paper and then with napkins. We took the boxes to our elderly friends in the hall. Several grandparents and family friends were seated around each small table, and there was an adult to offer drinks and be at each table. My mom came, and she had several boxes from children as well as from me; not all of the students had grandparents who could come. Afterward, we discussed the event and how we felt about it. At first, some students found it difficult to talk with their grandparents and family friends, because it was an unusual situation for them. Everyone wrote about sitting and talking with their elderly relative or friend, and enjoying just being able to spend time together and show appreciation."

What's going on here?

Megan considered the purpose of the skills she taught, **reshaping her practice** by considering how to bring about the interactions she wanted to happen (informal

conversation, listening, visiting, serving) and by modeling them through taking part in the assignment herself.

Megan **saw** cooking and making things as a way of expressing gratitude and helping children show respect.

She **engaged** learners in putting cooking in a relational context, interacting with the wider world and making choices based on that interaction (inviting the elderly to school).

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What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

The children were expressing **love** in action by giving time and effort in baking, making things for others, and giving time to sit, listen, and talk. They were demonstrating love and respect as they honored the older generation. Expressing appreciation and being thankful raises awareness not only of our own situation, but also brings to mind the situation of others. Gratitude involves a reorientation of life, with thankfulness as the default setting. Gratitude toward God and others is a response to life as a gift from God.

What difference does it make?

This lesson gave children a different reason for developing cooking skills: their skills were used for the good of the community. By highlighting gratitude, Megan helped children connect their learning to their relationship with their grandparents.

Where could we go from here?

The concept of using food skills for the good of the community could be extended to other projects in the wider community, such as inviting children from the neighborhood

and their parents. Ways can also be explored of practicing other skills in the curriculum in relational contexts where someone outside the classroom is served by the skill.

Digging Deeper

The word for respect in biblical Hebrew is “to bow down.” Respect and honor were shown by a physical position. We do not have the elaborate formal manners of some other cultures, but we can still explore with students how we show respect today. Respect is showing that we consider others worthy, and is a form of love. Scripture includes a clear focus on respect for the elderly (Leviticus 19:32).

Thankfulness can be expressed toward God (Psalms 92:1) and others (1 Timothy 2:1). Martin Luther saw gratitude as the basic attitude; it is like a mold that shapes life. When someone does something for you there is a sense of thanks that are due, hence Luther’s saying that “unthankfulness is theft.” It’s too easy in a rights-culture to slip into ingratitude.

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was “thank you,” that would suffice. Meister Eckhart

A sense of gratitude has been identified as good for our health, something the Bible said many years before (Proverbs 15:30). Thanks focuses us on what we already have (Philippians 4:6).

To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted... . Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude. Albert Schweitzer

Next: Cooking and Honoring
What if cooking helped students to...



