



## Building a Positive School Climate with Gratitude

According to the Greater Good Science Center ([www.greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu)), gratitude supports interpersonal connections and promotes emotional well-being. MHANYS' School Mental Health Resource and Training Center has compiled some ideas for parents/guardians, students, community organizations, business owners and school administrators to recognize teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week and year-round.

### Teacher Appreciation Week

Teacher Appreciation Week is a wonderful opportunity to show gratitude and appreciation for educators. Below are teacher recognition ideas - from small activities to do each day of the week, to larger "events". All focus on the promotion of physical health, and mental health and wellness.

#### Celebrate together!

- Host a breakfast or lunch. Consider a 'souper' teacher theme with homemade soups from parents/administrators or PTA-sponsored selections from a local restaurant.
- Create a trail mix bar in the faculty room with small bags so teachers can make their own mix to bring home.
- Set up a sundae bar at the beginning of a faculty meeting.
- Bring in emotional support animals at the end of the day, during lunch or at a faculty meeting.

#### Individual gift ideas:

- Give each teacher a 'wellness' bag or mug filled with healthy snacks, messages of gratitude, and information about physical and mental health and wellness. Consider contacting your insurance provider for promotional items; they often have hand-sanitizer, chapstick or mini first aid kits imprinted with their logo.
- Give a small plant with a tag saying, "Thank you for helping our students grow!" or container of teas with the message, "You are a special TEAcher!". Visit pinterest for other gift ideas and messages of gratitude.
- Place smaller gifts in mailboxes each morning.

**Involve students, families and the community:**

- Involve PTAs to solicit donations from community organizations or businesses to raffle at faculty meetings. Ideas include: free yoga or exercise class, complimentary massage, workout gear or fitness tools like yoga mats, bands or weights, fruit baskets, chocolates, school supplies, or gift cards. Coffee shops or ice cream shops might donate a “free” coupon for each teacher.
- Ask art students to donate artwork to be framed and raffles.
- Design personalized cards made by students at home that are delivered to each teacher with a small gift - see “Individual ideas” on front page.
- Share positive messages from students and parents during morning announcements. Messages can directed to specific educators or can be more general by having students/families respond to the following: “(District name) has the best teachers because\_\_\_\_\_”)
- Create a staff ‘Shout-out’ bulletin board where students and staff can write notes on post-its praising the work of teachers or draw small pictures. Consider focusing on a theme, such as “Super Powers”, encouraging students to name their teacher’s super power. For example, “Miss Gibson’s superpower is that she inspires everyone to read more books.”
- Create a bulletin board with teacher baby/childhood photos and/or ‘fun facts’ and encourage students to guess which the teacher.
- Ask local restaurants and businesses to offer discounts for teachers during the week by showing their school ID.
- Invite a professional from the community to offer their services during teacher “breaks” or at the end of the school day. Examples include chair massages, group exercises from a personal trainer or yoga instructor, cooking class from local chef, or Paint and Sip (sweet tea or flavored water). Several services could be offered throughout the week allowing teachers to sign up for one.
- Encourage administrators or other school staff to share their talents and skills with teachers instruct them in a hobby, such as cake decorating, knitting or jewelry-making. They could also donate a few of their creations for a raffle.
- Engage parent and student groups to decorate each teacher’s door with words of praise and appreciation.
- Hold a free car wash for teachers at the end of the day or give Key Club or other student groups the supplies to wash teacher’s windshields during the day.
- Ask community centers, businesses, and families to hang signs and banners that give thanks to teachers. Place thank-you messages on the district marquee.

## Ways to Show Appreciation and Build Community Year-Round

Don't wait for May to show appreciation for the people who make your school district a special place for students to learn and grow. Highlight monthly national awareness campaigns to celebrate the people who make your school district amazing year-round. The community and parent groups, along with the school administration, can take advantage of these monthly themes to express their gratitude for educators and staff, while offering support, information and fun activities.

### **September – *Self-Care Awareness***

Create an Opening Day 'Staff Survival Kit'. Fill a gift bag, decorative canister or small school tote bag with healthy snacks, hand sanitizer, small journal, lotion, pens, post-its and other school supplies, and information about exercise, sleep, mindfulness, etc.

### **October – *Eat Better, Eat Together Month***

Ask the cafeteria staff or local chef to do a cooking demo after school or share quick recipe ideas for busy week day meals.

### **November – *Gratitude Month***

Create a "Thanks a latte for all you do" card and attach it to a coffee mug. Encourage students to write thank you notes to their teachers before the Thanksgiving Break.

### **December – *Stress-Free Holiday Month***

Host an after school sale event for teachers and school staff with local vendors (i.e. Arbonne, Pampered Chef, Avon, Thirty-One, local businesses, etc.). Consider organizing a "handmade" gifts station led by a parent or creative staff member.

### **January – *Book Month***

Host a Book Club for fun - not as a professional development book study. Set up a library display of books and magazines in the media center or faculty room about self-care, physical fitness and mental health awareness.

### **February – *Heart Month***

Recruit school nurses to provide after school checks for blood pressure and resting heart rate, and organize daily walks or snowshoeing outside, or an obstacle course in the school's gym. Each day someone participates, they put their name in a drawing for a prize at the end of the month.

**March – Nutrition Month**

Invite a local nutritionist to speak at a faculty meeting or during lunch shifts about healthy food choices. Provide healthy snacks or breakfast options once per week.

**April – Volunteer Month**

Organize a number of volunteer opportunities in the community for school staff. Alternatively, each building or the whole district can “adopt” a cause and organize activities to raise money or collect donations. For example, staff might pay \$5/week to wear jeans on Fridays. Money collected can go to a local charity identified in advance.

**May – Mental Health Awareness Month**

Plan a calendar of daily activities to promote mental health and wellness of staff. Include a combination of “tips” on nutrition, sleep, exercise, etc. and activities that can be completed in small groups, such as short walks after school, running the bleachers, yoga in the gym, guided imagery and breathing exercises.

**June – Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Month**

Host a teacher lunch that emphasizes fresh salads, such as a “salad bar” or place an apple with a message on every person’s desk. Create a Farmer’s Market in the parking lot after school or invite a food co-op in during lunch.

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To help facilitate the above, consider recruiting a team who will be responsible for organizing the activities, such as a parent group or district health committee.