

We Asked Teachers How They Want to Be Appreciated. Here's What They Said



By Dalia Faheid — May 04, 2021

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How do you thank teachers this Teacher Appreciation Week for facing all the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Five former State Teachers of the Year raised that topic last week in an Education Week opinion essay that drew a flood of responses. In online comments, on Twitter, and Facebook, teachers shared on-the-ground advice on how best to appreciate the teachers who helped students navigate remote learning and other forms of improvised instruction during a pandemic this school year.

“Teachers have spent the year proving they can adapt and even excel under terrible conditions,” said Nancy Flanagan, who spent 30 years in a K-12 music classroom in Hartland, Michigan, commenting on the Education Week website. “Honor that.”

Make it personal

The most meaningful gift to teachers would be a personal note recognizing their efforts, Denver elementary school teacher Lori Laliberte commented on Facebook.

English-as-a-second-language teacher Judi Moy said she keeps the notes she receives in a special photo album, which she still cherishes many years later.

Like Moy, Florida teacher Susie Smith Philpot said she still loves getting heartfelt notes after 37 years of teaching.

Similarly, New Jersey educator Suzanne Woolslayer said she would love a letter to be sent to her principal about her achievements as a teacher.

Let teachers in on decision-making

Texas teacher Jessica Jones said she wanted more leeway from the administration to be able to teach.

“Just let me do my job without a million silly little tick-box chores, and then social shaming for not having done them,” she said.

New York teacher Kelly Lambert echoed Jones’s remarks asking for administrators to “leave us alone in peace to do our work for the rest of the year.”

Several teachers, like English teacher Sherri Friedrich, highlighted the need for teachers to have a seat at the table when decisions are being made for the school year.

Jessica Hall said teachers should have a “mega horn” when it comes to making decisions.

“It’s long overdue that those saying what education should be are those actually in education in the classrooms,” Hall said.

New Jersey educator Barbara Smith agreed, saying “people who have never done this job need to keep their opinions, if uninformed, to themselves.”

Many said they wanted improvements to teaching conditions at higher levels, like higher pay, smaller class sizes and cancelling standardized testing.

One Maryland early-childhood teacher tweeted that being paid enough would show that teachers are “treated like the highly educated and experienced professionals we are.”

An 8th grade reading teacher in Connecticut, Doris Murphy, tweeted that standardized tests “take weeks, produce useless, unreliable data during a pandemic, and only add stress and anxiety to an already stressed and anxious population.”

“Pay attention to actions not words,” commented Julie Beans on Facebook. “The same politicians and people calling us heroes raise our health insurance premiums, stagnate pay and eliminate our pensions, weasel around class-size amendments, and penalize us for test scores while holding students blameless.”

Give them a much-needed break

“It is the hardest year for any teacher, veterans or newbies,” said St. Louis English teacher Tricia Frank. “Give me a break.”

Some, like educators Judith Turgeon and Michaela Bell, suggested giving teachers like them a spa day to unwind.

While some teachers joked that they wanted “lots and lots of chocolate” or their “sanity back,” many, like Idaho teacher Tracie Thompson Detrick and Las Vegas teacher Kelly Tyndal, said a simple “thank you” would suffice.

Respect and encouragement for a job well-done are enough to appreciate teachers, educator Linda Plakke commented on Facebook.

“I don’t want gifts...I don’t want stuff...but kindness in general would go a long way,” said Massachusetts teacher Kathryn Dufour on Facebook.

Teacher Terri Jo Harding said all she wants is to know someone thinks she is doing a good job.

Most importantly, Nevada teacher Megan Campbell tweeted, appreciate teachers every day, not just during Teacher Appreciation Week.



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