

April 2019

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Celebrate your staff during appreciation week events

In May, several important employee groups will be honored for their work to support students. School Lunch Hero Day is May 1; Teacher Appreciation Week is May 4-8; National School Nurse Day is May 6; and National Music Week is May 3-10.

May is a busy month for recognizing and appreciating specific staff groups, but there are other similar events throughout the year for all of the important groups and people who help make school successful for students. These events include:

- National Principals Month, October
- National Education Office Professionals Week, Oct. 6-12
- Education Support Professionals Day, Nov. 20
- Substitute Educators Day, Nov. 22
- School Board Recognition Month, January
- National School Counseling Week, Feb. 3-7
- Classified School Employees Week, generally the second week in March, although the dates differ in some states.
- National Library Week, April 19-25
- National Volunteer Week, April 19-25
- National Student Leadership Week, April 19-25
- Administrative Professionals Week, April 19-25

See additional events in the Key Dates publication in this month's issue.

Recognize and thank these important contributors

Education is a labor-based business. Student achievement would not be possible without the tremendous people power supporting our schools and students. All of these people, except volunteers and school board members, get paid for their work, but we know they don't dedicate themselves to their jobs just because of the money. The majority of staff in our schools sincerely care about students.

Surely, they are thanked for their efforts during the normal course of their work. However, the extra boost that a special tribute brings can help them feel truly appreciated. Mark your calendar with these annual events and make plans to celebrate staff with a little something extra that says you appreciate their work and you are glad they are serving students.

How to recognize staff contributions

Staff recognition can be personalized or broadcast. If there is a budget, a catered meal for a small group, or even the whole school may be appreciated. If not, special recognition at a

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meeting or in the school newsletter can also be the best gesture.

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The goal in recognizing people is to make them feel valued, respected and appreciated. Be sure to offer sincere and heartfelt thanks and let your staff know that you appreciate them all year but you are taking this opportunity to express your gratitude.

If the staff recognition involves someone you work closely with, a hand-written note of appreciation, a phone call or a shout-out during a staff meeting lets them know you notice and appreciate them.

Everyone responds differently to being the center of attention. Tailor your thank you to the comfort level of your staff. If they are embarrassed at being in the spotlight, something less public would suit them better. If they are the lucky recipients of student artwork in their own classrooms, a student-made creation may not have the same impact for them as it would for staff who do not work directly with students.

Online resources for national recognition events

Most of the appreciation and recognition events are celebrated nationally, which means there is a sponsoring entity. The organization behind the event generally has helpful background information on its website that explains when and why the event was started, how to describe the objective of the event, and a list of resources and activities to help you in your districts.

A good example is National Music Week, which has as its objective “to create an understanding and appreciation of the value of music in the home, the community, the nation, and the world.” National Music Week is sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs (NFMC).” www.nfmc-music.org/about-us/national-music-week

Additionally, the website includes the why of celebrating during this week, forms and requirements for official participation, who might be target participants or sponsors, contact information for event organizers, the history and key dates of the event. This site even offers ideas for local celebrations for target audiences that include businesses, public and private schools, libraries, service clubs, churches and music clubs.

The National Federation of Music Clubs has provided a comprehensive resource for this event. Most, but not all, of the national recognition events also have suggestions or resources to help localize the events.

Be sure to check with your state school board association as well. There is often a resource section for national events on the website and district can often download copies of signed governor’s proclamations for posting on the district website. It’s a nice touch that emphasizes the value of these staff tributes.

Recognition round-up: Additional ideas to help staff feel appreciated

- **Personal profile:** Highlight a different staff member every week on your school or district website or in your school newsletter.
- **Invite others to recognize coworkers:** Close each staff meeting with time for staff shout-outs, allowing staff to thank colleagues for any reason.
- **PA announcement:** Thank staff during the morning announcements for going above and beyond.
- **Food:** Food is always appreciated. Organize a staff breakfast, or bring special treats for

staff meetings.

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Volunteers and other partners

- **Public thanks:** This is what social media is for. Offer a special thanks for an individual or group on your social platforms. Try to include a photo. Add the message to the school reader board and/or post it in the school newsletter.
- **Public thank you:** Present a certificate of appreciation at a school board meeting. Or introduce the volunteer or community partner at a basketball game or other school event.
- **Use the media:** Have the superintendent write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece in the local newspaper, acknowledging the contribution of volunteers and business partners who make a difference in your school.
- **Enlist students:** Volunteers are there for the kids. This is a good time for hand-made student art tributes.
- **Handwritten card:** Never underestimate the impact of a handwritten note in gratitude for a specific task or dedicated commitment in service to the school.

Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant