

Acknowledging Staff Contributions

As the end of the school year approaches, take some time to think about how you can thank and acknowledge staff members who have made significant contributions to the students and your school community. With increasing demands on staff time, it is getting more and more difficult to encourage teachers and other staff members to take on extra voluntary duties, such as coaching or running clubs, but these are so important to the life of the school and the engagement of many students.

Establishing some kind of staff recognition program sends a very public signal of your appreciation for the extra work taken on by these people. It lets staff know they are appreciated by students, colleagues, parents and the administration; encourages them to continue these efforts during the next school year; and increases staff morale. Everyone likes to be acknowledged and feel appreciated for the work they do. Although it takes some time, such a program is always worth the effort.

Here are some ideas for acknowledging staff contributions:

1. During curriculum night in September, let parents know which staff members made a special contribution to the school the year before through voluntary activities and thank them. Encourage those teachers, as well as new teachers, to continue supporting the school in this special way.
2. Establish an “appreciation day” each week or each month dedicated to one staff member who participates in an extra curricular activity. Ask a student who has been the beneficiary of their contributions to make a short announcement on the P.A. system during opening exercises to thank the staff member. Post their picture on the bulletin board outside the office with a short blurb about their efforts, similar to the “Employee of the Week” profile that many businesses use.
3. Take some time during each School Council meeting to acknowledge staff members. Many parents may not know about the extra work these people do and it will contribute to the parent’s appreciation of, and pride in, the school.
4. Write a column in the school newsletter on a monthly basis highlighting their work and how students have benefited from their extra efforts.
5. Make an effort to personally seek out the staff member during their volunteer time (at a game or practice, during the yearbook meeting, at a club event, while the band or choir is practicing) to thank them for their time and efforts. Remind the students that the activity would not be possible without the staff member’s presence, encouraging them to also offer personal thanks.
6. Establish a “quiet hero” award for people who go above and beyond in their efforts for the students and the school. Ask students and parents to provide suggestions for the award based on their personal experiences. Give the award out on a monthly basis.
7. Keep thank you cards in your desk and write a personal note to staff members after the activity (sport, club, concert, play, show) they were involved in has ended.

8. If your school hosts a thank you reception for parent volunteers at the end of the year, take some time to also thank staff members.
9. Put some poster paper outside the main office and invite students to write comments of thanks for staff members who have taught, coached, advised or mentored them. Ask them to add pictures as well.
10. During graduation ceremonies, include a few words highlighting all the performances, sports, clubs and activities that have taken place over the course of the year organized by staff members. Publicly acknowledge and thank them for their efforts.
11. Create a special recognition certificate for each staff member who has led a performance, coached a team, advised a club, organized an activity or offered extra help to students. Give these certificates out at the last staff meeting of the year.
12. If your school can afford to, make a donation to a local charity at the end of the school year in honour of these staff members.

A school is more than just a place to learn to read and write. The extra activities that are offered in a school build pride, engage students, add to the experience of learning and help kids learn new skills and talents. Acknowledging the efforts of the staff members who make these activities possible is a great way not only to say thanks, but also to seek their continued help for the next year.

And, don't forget to thank yourself as well for being the quarterback of all these activities!