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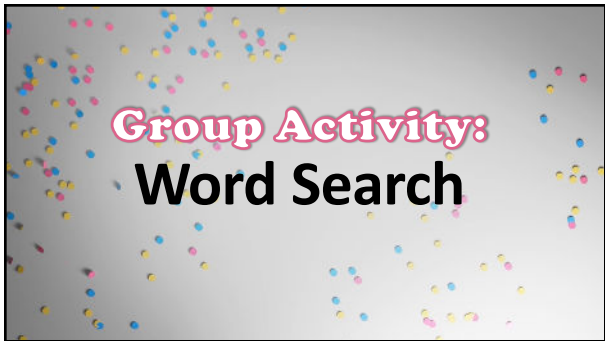
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Let's Get To Know Each Other...

- Name
- Where You Are From
- Moment of Appreciation
- Share One Answer

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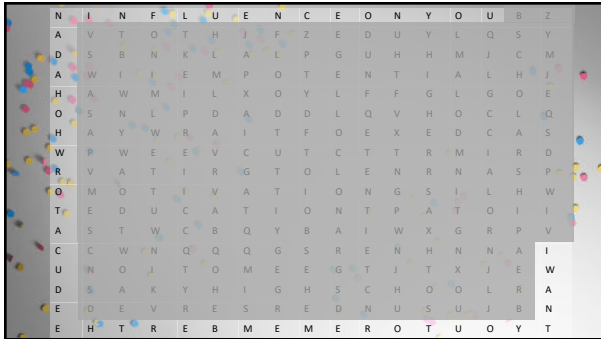


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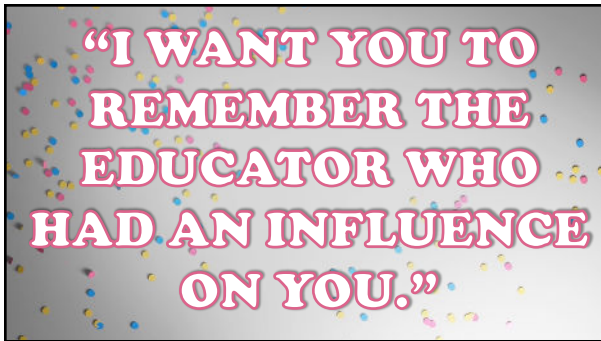
Some Of The Words That I Found

- COLLEGE
- DREAM
- EDUCATION
- EMOTION
- ENGAGE
- FAMILY
- GRIT
- HIGHER
- HIGH SCHOOL
- IMPACT
- INSPIRE
- MOTIVATION
- POTENTIAL
- SAT
- SCHOLARSHIP
- TALENT
- TRIO
- UNDERSERVED

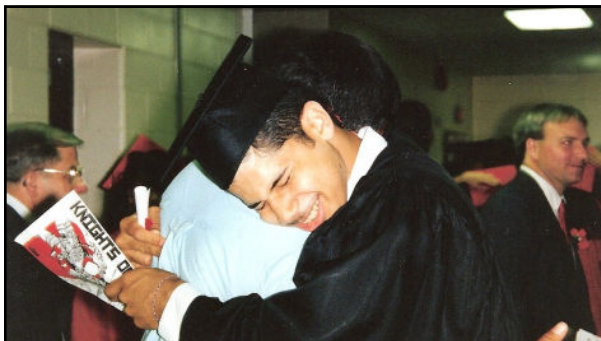
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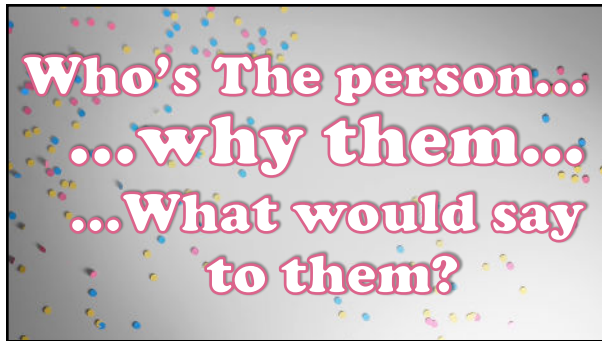
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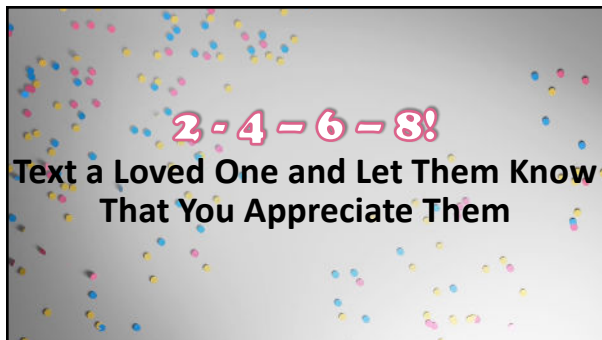
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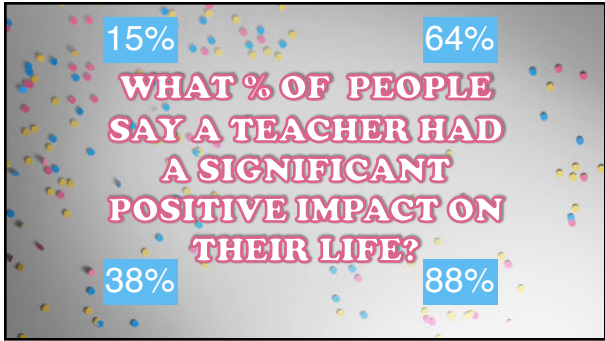
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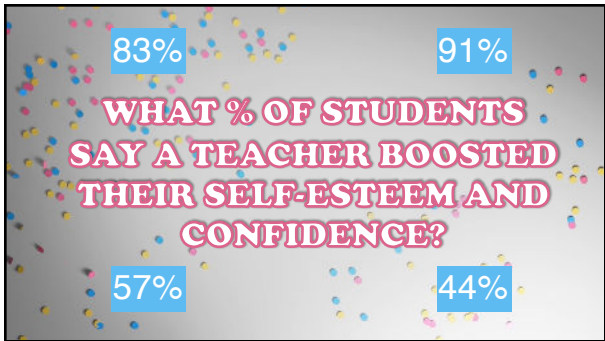
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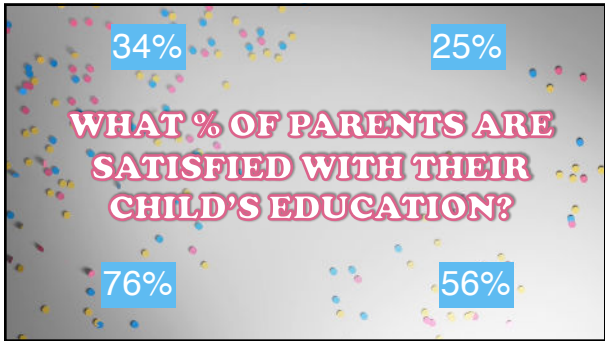
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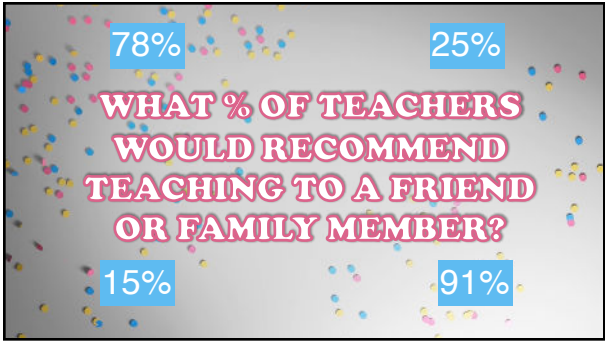
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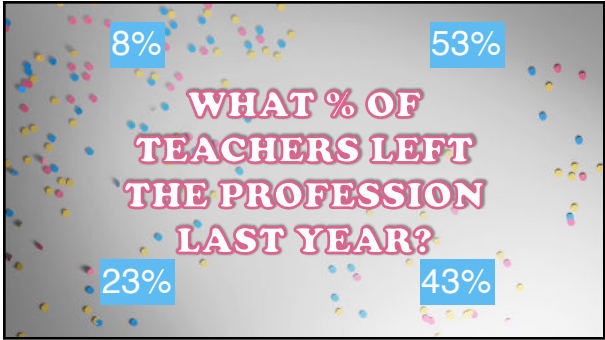
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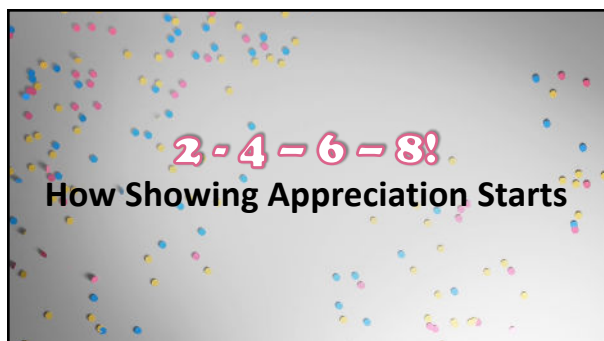
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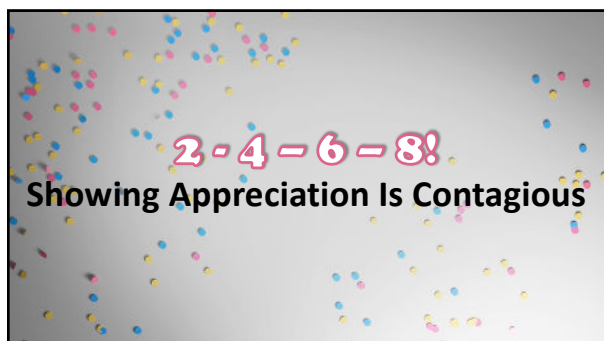
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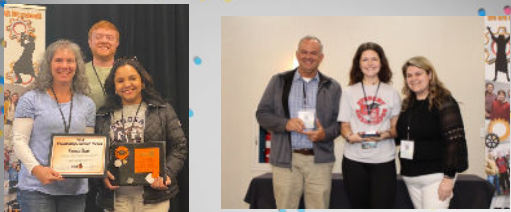
Outstanding Educators of the Year



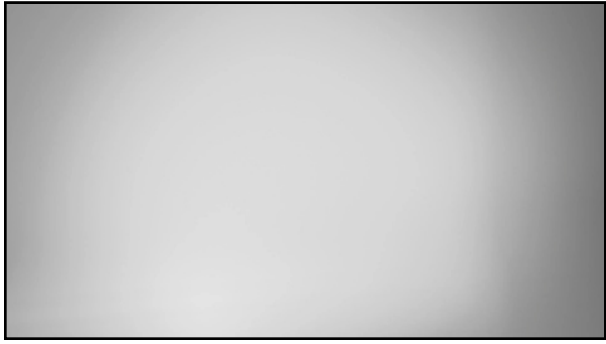
- Selected by staff and students.
- Make a significant, positive impact on students.
- Actively support the mission and vision of their school.

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A BIG Surprise from CoolSpeak



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Everyone Benefits

Students/Educators: • Much-needed recognition and celebration • Confidence boost • Leadership development	Schools/Districts: • Recognition (media, social media) • Celebration • Bragging rights
Community: • Opportunity to recognize and share gratitude • Relationship building • Model Positive Behaviors	

28

2 - 4 - 6 - 8!

What Educator In Your School Or Community Deserves To Be Recognized & Why?

29

How To Make Someone Feel Appreciated?

- Be specific... What, exactly, are you thankful for?
- Include how they helped you...
- Make it personal...
- Surprise Them...
- Give them something...
- Brag on them...to others...
- Say it clearly... "You are appreciated."

30

How To Surprise Them

- Select a teacher, counselor or staff member.
- Get students and staff that want and can share meaningful things.
- Prepare the student and staff ahead of time.
- Use Prompts: Give me an example... Why this person... Give me a word...
- Record them sharing their testimonials.
- Select the right person to present the appreciation.
- Surprise them.
- Show love.

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Mr. Baker

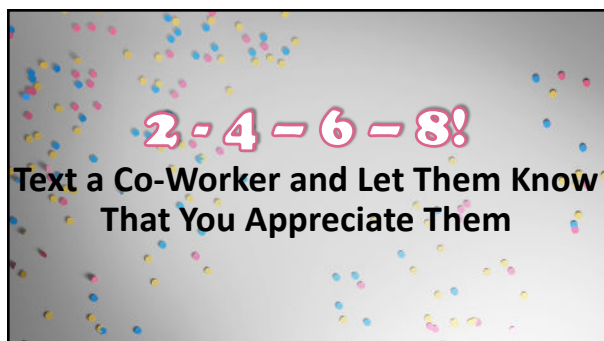
Thank you so much for the email and gift card. This has been a difficult year. I've even thought about retiring. The day of the rally I had already lost my prep period to cover another class. I was not a happy person. When I walked into the auditorium and the students were clapping and cheering it hit me. It was a powerful experience. I was lucky that I saw Mrs. Leonard crying as she was celebrated so I was able to prepare and keep the tears at bay. That event lifted my spirits and forcefully reminded me why I am here. I'm not going anywhere. Thank you so much!

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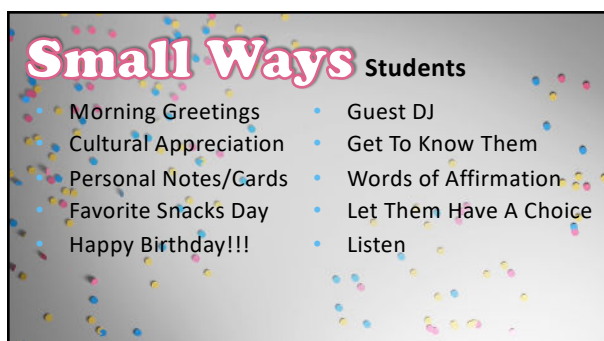
Mrs. Roddy

I am humbled to have been chosen by my students and grateful for your company's kindness. When Mr. Ojeda visited Northrop High School and called me on stage, I was completely caught off guard. I had been grumbling about not wanting to go to the assembly, because I needed to be working with students and I was concerned that I would be missing valuable time to meet with them. Listening to Chu, helped lift my mood gave me more drive to keep pouring into the students. I love that there were videos of the students sharing why they chose me. It brought me to tears. I love what you are doing for students and the encouragement to use their voices! Again, I just wanted to thank you for the recognition and the gift card. This meant so much and was received on a day that I was struggling and truly needed it.

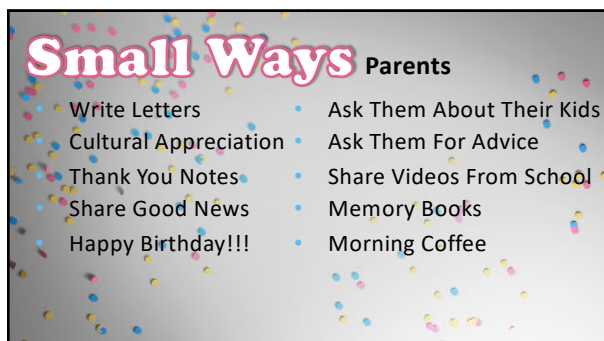
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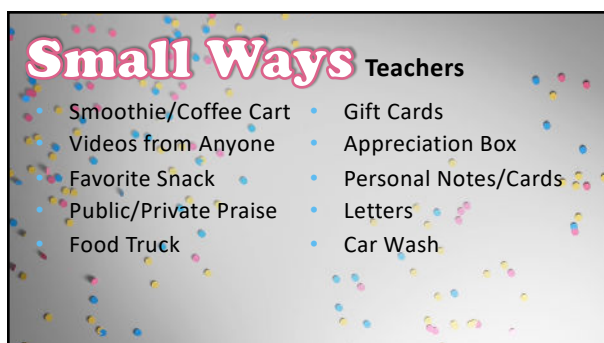
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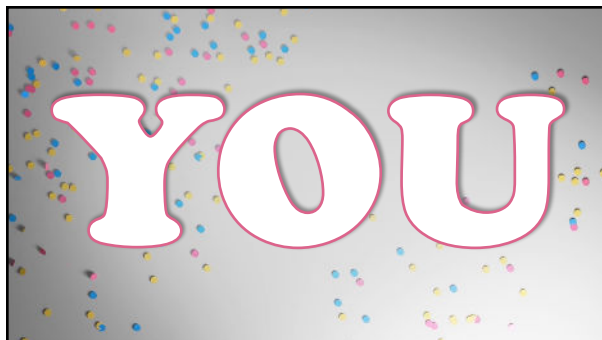
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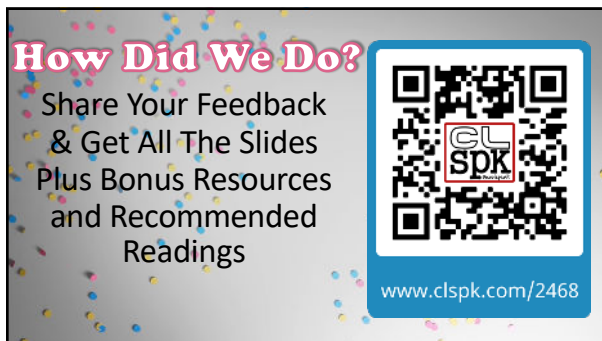
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How To Make Someone Feel Appreciated?

- Be specific... What, exactly, are you thankful for?
- Include how they helped you...
- Make it personal...
- Surprise Them...
- Give them something...
- Brag on them...to others...
- Say it clearly... “You are appreciated.”

How To Plan A Surprise Appreciation?

- Select a teacher, counselor or staff member.
- Get students and staff that want and can share meaningful things.
- Prepare the student and staff ahead of time. Let them know what the expectations are.
- Use Prompts: Give me an example... Why this person... Give me a word... What is something they did...
- Record them sharing their testimonials.
- Select the right time and place for the appreciation.
- Select the right person to present the appreciation.
- Surprise them and show love.



Sample Student of the Year Nomination

Note: We use Google Forms for our nomination process.

This form must be completed by the District Program Manager with input from College & Career Coaches. Nominations are limited to one district. Nominations and supporting documentation are due by close of business on *(date)*.

Award Criteria

To qualify for the GEAR UP Kentucky Student of the Year award, a student must:

- Be enrolled in a GUK school in a full service cohort currently served by the GUK program.
- Be an active GEAR UP Kentucky Student Ambassador (must have been registered as an Ambassador by established deadline).
- Be in good academic standing, including a minimum overall GPA of 2.5.
- Consistently demonstrate positive leadership at school, in GEAR UP activities, and amongst their peers.
- Have a signed GUK media release form on file at the school.
- Provide an appropriate photo of self.
- Create a brief video testimonial that responds to the statement, "Why GEAR UP matters to me." (Video should: be between 30 seconds and 3 minutes in length, recorded in landscape format and include student stating their name, grade and school.)
- Commit to fulfilling the duties of the Student of the Year during the 202x-202x school year (assisting with recruitment and leadership of Student Ambassadors and attending GEAR UP Kentucky Institute for a College-Going Culture with parent/guardian permission).

One Student of the Year will be selected through an application process in spring 202x to attend the national GEAR UP Youth Leadership Summit hosted by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) in (location, dates). Student must be accompanied by one parent/guardian or designated school staff member, and travel expenses will be covered for both parties.

Student Information

School: *(dropdown selection)*

Student Name: *(short answer)*

Student Grade: *(dropdown selection)*

Nomination Information

Information provided below will be used in promotional materials throughout the year and to introduce the Student of the Year at the Institute. As such, responses should be thorough (recommend length: five to seven sentences). The District Program Manager should work with the nominated student to complete the following long answer questions.

Describe how the student has demonstrated leadership at school, at GEAR UP activities, and amongst their peers.

Describe how the student has participated in GUK activities as a Student Ambassador and/or promoted the mission/ services of GEAR UP in their school.

(Optional) Provide any additional information about why the student was selected by GUK staff to represent their high school (e.g., how they have overcome barriers to achieve their personal or academic goals).

Student has agreed to fulfill the responsibilities of Student of the Year and are committed to obtaining parent/guardian permission to attend the 2024 Institute. *(Yes/No radio buttons)*

Documentation of Student GPA - Please upload report from Infinite Campus *(Add File option)*

Video Compilation of 2024 GEAR UP Kentucky Students of the Year





Outstanding Educator of the Year Overview

Award Criteria

To qualify for the GEAR UP Kentucky Outstanding Educator of the Year award, an educator must:

- Make a significant, positive impact on students
- Actively support the mission and vision of GEAR UP Kentucky in their school

Selection Process

GEAR UP Kentucky district program managers were asked to post, via Microsoft Teams, the name of their selected educator, their position, and 3-5 sentences describing how this individual contributes to the success of GEAR UP Kentucky (students and program) and supports the mission and vision of GEAR UP Kentucky. They were also asked to ensure that the individual they selected would be able to attend the GEAR UP Kentucky Institute for a College-Going Culture, where they would be recognized.

Selecting One Educator for Extra-Special Recognition by CoolSpeak

To ensure fairness, the names of all the GUK Outstanding Educators nominated were entered into a free, online random name picker. A couple of options to use to do this include:

- wheelofnames.com
- pickerwheel.com



Reflections from GUK District Program Manager Jarrod Fenwick

Jarrod Fenwick, GEAR UP Kentucky District Program Manager for Marion County Schools, says, "I love that we recognize students and teachers! Teachers don't really have many opportunities to be recognized for anything that they do unless they're a coach or club sponsor. And, I know for me, it's a great opportunity to shed a light on what GEAR UP is statewide but also my own individual identity of Marion County."

The 2023 Marion County High School Outstanding Educator of the Year was Rachael Trent, a school counselor (seen in the photo at the left with Jarrod and 2023 MCHS GUK Student of the Year India Young). Mrs. Trent's name was drawn to be the educator given extra-special recognition by CoolSpeak. About this experience, Jarrod says, "It was a lot of fun to gather up the students (to be recorded sharing their thoughts) and see first-hand how Mrs. Trent changed their lives. It's one thing to work with someone and see how they help you out, but it's really powerful to see the students' perspective as well. It truly made Mrs. Trent's year. She's usually not an emotional person, but she couldn't hold back her tears!"

After the 2024 GUK Institute, Jarrod submitted a press release to his local newspaper about the MCHS GUK Student and Outstanding Educator of the Year – which led to Jarrod, the Student of the Year and the school principal being interviewed. Jarrod says, "It was neat to be able to be featured on the front page of the local newspaper!" (QR code at bottom of page links to article.)



Reflections from GUK District Program Manager Sarah Jones

When 2024 Robertson County School Outstanding Educator of the Year Timothy Miller's name was randomly selected for CoolSpeak's special recognition, it was especially fortuitous and meaningful, as the 2023-24 school year was Mr. Miller's last year as a teacher.

Sarah Jones, GEAR UP Kentucky District Program Manager for Robertson County Schools, says, "Mr. Miller thought it was the best thing ever. He totally is not one that ever thinks he should get recognition for his service to students, but it is super-deserved. He was so awed and surprised with the fact that more people knew about it and were able to keep the secret."

Sarah (seen in the photo at the right with Mr. Miller and 2024 RCS GUK Student of the Year Jessica Denkins) says, "For the two weeks after the event took place, he was beaming and everyone always stopped him in the halls and would tell him how deserving he was of this award. He told me he didn't realize how many people actually thought these things about him and how the students really cared and listened."



Want to read the newspaper article about the Student and Outstanding Educator of the Year from MCHS? Here it is!





20 Cool Teacher Appreciation Ideas

1. **Appreciation Wall of Fame**

Dedicate a hallway or bulletin board where students and parents can post sticky notes or messages celebrating teachers. Rotate the spotlight weekly so each teacher gets featured.

2. **Surprise Supply Drop**

Organize a “school supply shower” where students bring in classroom essentials (markers, tissues, sanitizer) wrapped like small gifts.

3. **Themed Appreciation Days**

Plan a week with fun mini-themes: *Monday = Coffee & Donuts, Tuesday = Flowers & Notes, Wednesday = Wellness (yoga/stretch session), Thursday = Thank-You Videos from students, Friday = Catered Lunch.*

4. **Student-Made Video Montage**

Compile short video clips of students finishing the sentence: “*My teacher makes me feel...*” or “*The best thing my teacher taught me is...*”. Share it at a staff meeting.

5. **VIP Parking Pass**

Create a rotating “front-row parking” spot for teachers who go above and beyond, complete with a fun sign.

6. **Teacher Gratitude Grams**

Set up a system where students and colleagues can send free “Gratitude Grams” (short notes or drawings delivered during the day).

7. **Classroom Takeover**

Admins, staff, or even student leaders step in for a period so teachers can have an extra break, planning time, or even a surprise coffee run.

8. **Hallway Applause Tunnel**

At the start of the day, have students line the hallways and cheer/clap as teachers walk in, like a pep rally just for them.



9. **Teacher Playlist & Shoutouts**

Collect teachers' favorite pump-up songs and play them during passing periods or over the PA system, paired with a shoutout.

10. **Legacy Book Project**

Gift each teacher a blank book where students (past and present) contribute letters, memories, or drawings throughout the year. By the end, they have a personalized keepsake.

11. **Morning Coffee Cart**

Have student leaders push a decorated cart through the halls in the morning delivering free coffee, tea, and snacks to teachers.

12. **Teacher Spotlight Social Media Campaign**

Feature one teacher a week on the school's social media with photos, fun facts, and quotes from students about why they're appreciated.

13. **Customized Door Decorations**

Each homeroom or club "adopts" a teacher and surprises them by decorating their classroom door with a theme that matches their personality.

14. **Mystery Snack Attack**

Place a basket of the teacher's favorite snacks or drinks in their room with a note signed "Your Secret Appreciator."

15. **Golden Apple Trophy**

Pass around a symbolic award (a painted apple, crown, or superhero cape) each week to a teacher chosen by peers or students.

16. **Memory Lane Display**

Create a hallway exhibit with old yearbook photos of teachers alongside student quotes about how they make an impact today.



17. School-Wide Gratitude Chain

Students write thank-you messages on strips of paper and link them into a giant paper chain displayed in the school.

18. Teacher Karaoke or Lip Sync Battle

Host a fun after-school event where students perform songs dedicated to their teachers—or teachers themselves get to shine on stage.

19. Self-Care Surprise

Provide mini gift bags with candles, bath bombs, or stress-relief kits—little things that promote relaxation outside of school.

20. Flash Mob of Thanks

Organize a surprise moment where students break into a quick choreographed cheer, chant, or dance in the cafeteria or gym just for the teachers.



20 Cool Student Appreciation Ideas

Recognition & Celebration

1. **Shout-Out Wall** – Post student names and achievements (big or small) on a bulletin board or hallway wall.
2. **PA Announcements** – Give daily or weekly shout-outs over the intercom for kindness, effort, or leadership.
3. **Student of the Week Spotlight** – Feature students on social media, newsletters, or a hallway display.
4. **Positive Office Referrals** – Send students to the principal's office not for discipline, but to be recognized and praised.
5. **Surprise Recognition Raffles** – Every positive act earns a raffle ticket for small prizes.

Experiences & Privileges

6. **Front of the Line Pass** – Give a “skip the lunch line” or “early dismissal” pass as a reward.
7. **DJ for a Day** – Let students choose the hallway music between classes.
8. **VIP Seating** – Reserve a special decorated chair or section in the cafeteria, gym, or auditorium.
9. **Extra Recess / Free Time** – A bonus block of outdoor or indoor fun for individuals or whole classes.
10. **Principal Swap** – For an hour, let a student “be the principal” (with a fun badge and simple tasks like reading morning announcements).

Gifts & Tokens

11. **Personalized Notes** – Teachers or leaders write handwritten “We see you” notes recognizing effort and character.
12. **Swag Bags** – School-spirit items (stickers, lanyards, pencils, shirts) given randomly or for achievements.
13. **Snack Attack** – Surprise students with popcorn, granola bars, or fruit at the end of the day.
14. **Birthday Balloons or Cards** – Recognize each student's birthday publicly or with a small gift.
15. **Photo Booth Fun** – Create a decorated photo booth for students to take pictures celebrating accomplishments.



Community & Belonging

16. **Wall of Dreams** – Give students space to share their goals, then celebrate when they reach milestones.
17. **Peer Appreciation Day** – A day where students write notes of gratitude to classmates.
18. **Student Talent Showcase** – Host events where students can share their art, music, poetry, or hobbies.
19. **Random Acts of Kindness Challenge** – Spotlight and reward students who go out of their way to help others.
20. **Legacy Projects** – Give seniors or 8th graders a project (like planting a tree, mural, or time capsule) so they feel they left a mark.



20 Cool Parent Appreciation Ideas

Recognition & Gratitude

1. **Parent Appreciation Wall** – Display photos and thank-you notes from students about their parents.
2. **Shout-Outs in Newsletters** – Highlight parents who go above and beyond in each school newsletter.
3. **Social Media Spotlights** – Post “Parent of the Month” features with their story or contributions.
4. **Handwritten Notes from Students** – Have kids write personal thank-you notes sent home in backpacks.
5. **Principal’s Call of Thanks** – Call a handful of parents each month *just to say thank you*.

Events & Experiences

6. **Parent Appreciation Breakfast** – Host a morning coffee & pastry event before school.
7. **Family Fun Night** – Organize a free event with games, music, and snacks to celebrate families.
8. **“We See You” Award Ceremony** – A short program to honor parent volunteers and supporters.
9. **VIP Seating at School Events** – Reserve prime seats for appreciated parents at concerts, plays, and graduations.
10. **Parent Talent Showcase** – Invite parents to share skills, cooking, or performances in a fun event.

Practical Gifts & Gestures

11. **Gift Bag Drop** – Distribute small appreciation bags (school swag, snacks, coffee gift cards).
12. **Car Line Thank-Yous** – Hand parents a donut, flower, or thank-you card during morning drop-off.
13. **Photo Keepsakes** – Provide framed student photos with notes that say, “Thanks for raising a superstar!”
14. **“Parent Survival Kits”** – Bags with tea, snacks, pens, tissues, and a fun thank-you note.
15. **Flowers & Chocolate Day** – Students hand parents small gifts as they leave a school event.



Building Community & Belonging

16. **Parent Shout-Out Board** – A bulletin where staff, students, and other parents can post gratitude messages.
17. **Legacy Tree or Mural** – Parents contribute a handprint or leaf to a display that honors their role in the school.
18. **Thank-You Video** – Students create a video expressing gratitude, played at a parent night or shared online.
19. **Parent Ambassadors Recognition** – Special recognition for parents who help mentor or welcome new families.
20. **Gratitude Chain Letters** – Families pass along appreciation notes, creating a chain of kindness across the community.