



Teacher Confessions: I Really Don't Care for Teacher Appreciation Week

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Each school year the first full week of May is Teacher Appreciation Week. I never looked forward to it. Since April ends tomorrow, this means Teacher Appreciation Week will take place next week. The end of the school year is already hectic and tough and the last thing teachers need is an appreciation week to cover up the fact that appreciation hasn't been shown during other times of the school year.

Over the course of my career, I have seen many strategies implemented by various principals and seen ways organizations outside of schools show appreciation during Teacher Appreciation Week. Here are some of the ways appreciation has been shown and how it has landed with me.

I have been given the privilege to wear jeans, but I either had to wear a school shirt or a professional shirt with the jeans. Since I wasn't permitted to wear jeans every day previously, I didn't own enough pairs of jeans to cover a work week, so should I have done an extra load of laundry to participate? In most schools, I didn't have enough school shirts to cover a week, so should I have purchased school shirts to participate?

Lunch has been catered or cooked by volunteers. In every school where I have worked, I have had the last lunch. Who wants catered food that has been picked over by other colleagues? How do I know if my colleagues had washed their hands before they got food? Based on what I have seen in the women's restroom, I am not sure if some of my colleagues had the level of cleanliness, I needed them to have to eat food from the same serving dish. Additionally, if loving volunteers made food, what are their hygiene habits? These thoughts kept me away from the provided lunch.

Then there is the Starbucks gift card. I am a social coffee drinker who is also cold-natured. This means I only drink coffee during PD where I am freezing cold for the sake of warmth and comradery. Yeah, I know Starbucks has tea, but who wants tea from a place that doesn't prioritize tea?

Also, there are restaurants that have different specials during Teacher Appreciation Week. Some of them even offer a free meal. Those offers are typically on certain days. Let me get this straight. After I have been on my feet all day long, these restaurants want me to stand in a line and wait for a free item or meal? Miss me with that!

Come closer. No, I really, really close. Teachers do not want to be inconvenienced to be appreciated. Teachers want to be appreciated before Teacher Appreciation Week.

Instead of saving all the appreciation for the end of the school year, school and district leaders need to show teachers they are valued and important the entire year.

Restaurants should give out vouchers that could be used at any time up to a year after being received and those vouchers should be given at the start of the school year.

Gift cards, as one of my relatives, says should have “cash money” on them and not be tied to one place such as Starbucks, and these should be given at different points of the year just to show gratitude.

Principals can take tasks off of teachers’ plates throughout the year to let teachers know that they see their hard work and want to help lighten the load.

Principals can also have a sub sign-up sheet so teachers could have a class period covered in addition to their prep to provide more planning time at different points throughout the year. If principals cannot find a sub, they can be the sub.

Speaking of prep, the principal can cancel those meetings during prep or after school that could have been an email and return that time. I thought we learned this early in the pandemic, but some principals have fallen back into old habits.

Teacher Appreciation Week should be one of the last rounds of appreciation, not the first round.

So no, I do not really care for Teacher Appreciation Week as long it remains a cover-up for the lack of appreciation during the other parts of the school year.