



Every Day Should Be Teachers' Day

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Today is World Teachers' Day. Teachers deserve to be recognized daily. Many times when we have celebratory days, weeks, or months, it points to the bigger issue that whoever we are recognizing is not getting recognized enough. It will take more than a day in October and a Teacher Appreciation Week in May to make teachers feel like they matter.

The real question is: How will teachers know they are appreciated and valued outside of this day and the week in May?

If you are a school leader and you don't know, ask. Many professions implement stay interviews. These are not discussed or implemented much in education, but they should be implemented. A stay interview is an opportunity for employees to express what they need to be willing to stay at the job. This should happen during the first semester, not when teachers are close to summer break. The lure of summer break can make teachers feel that they can overcome the barriers during the break only to return the next school year to the same problems.

Compensation will probably come up during some stay interviews. Due to school funding metrics, salary raises might be off the table. Instead, district leaders have to get creative. This may mean offering stipends for additional work. If a teacher is bilingual, the teacher should be paid for translating and interpreting. If a teacher spends time on a committee after school, the teacher should be compensated. Even if raising base pay is off the table, there should be funds to cover stipends, gifts, or other ways of appreciation.

Last, teachers need quality professional development. Telling teachers repeatedly about the summer slide or pandemic learning loss helps no one if the teachers are not provided with tangible support to close learning gaps.

Having a statement from the White House is great, but more work is needed to make teachers feel like they are respected professionals. They should feel so respected and supported that this day isn't even needed anymore.