

Supporting and Affirming Teachers Outline

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We know that from the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents — it is the teacher standing at the front of the classroom. — President Barack Obama

You can never pat a teacher on the back too much. — A retired elementary school teacher

Why focus on teachers?

- Their role in the educational system is critical.
- Teachers are often under-appreciated and don't receive the support they need.
- The rhetoric of school reform often blames teachers for school problems.
- Parents may not have the resources or ability to support teachers.
- There is a low threshold for church engagement.
- It can be a good way to get started working with a local school.

Get to know teachers and their needs

- Talk to teachers in your congregation and community.
- Listen and learn.
- Build relationships.

Gestures of appreciation

- Cards and notes
- Modest gifts
- Snacks for the teachers' lounge
- A special thank you lunch

Help teachers stock their classrooms

- Basic school supplies
- Tissues and hand sanitizer
- Classroom decorations
- Books

Recognize and celebrate teachers

- Community events
 - Host an end-of-school-year appreciation banquet for teachers in your local school.
 - Plan and publicize an event recognizing outstanding teachers.

- Congregational events
 - Have a commissioning service or blessing for teachers at the beginning of the school year.
 - Plan a special worship service to celebrate, recognize, and thank teachers.

Start a teachers' group within your church

- Support or affinity group
- A professional "community of practice"

Voice support for teachers

- Encourage a culture of speaking positively about teachers.
- Pray for teachers and schools.
- Advocate for adequate school funding and teacher salaries.

Resources

- Shapiro, Tim. "Congregation as Resource Center," *Congregations*. Issues 3 & 4, 2013: p. 14.

Closing prayer

Holy God, In Christ, you came to us as a teacher, who patiently instructed the disciples, who taught the multitude, who said "let the children come to me." God, we give thanks for those who serve as teachers in our community. We ask that you bless, support, and sustain them. Guide us as we seek ways to support, honor, and affirm their work. Amen.