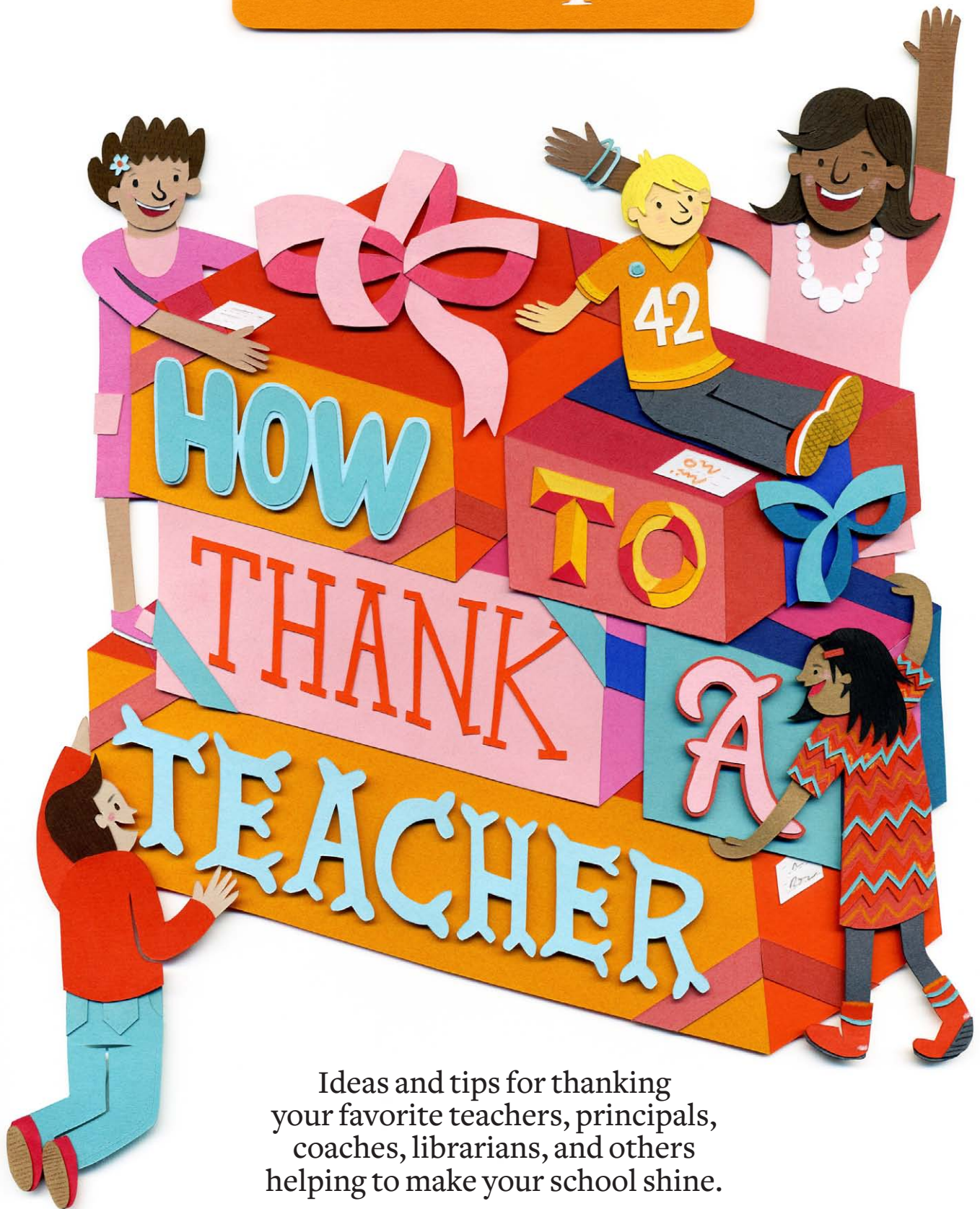


edutopia™



Ideas and tips for thanking  
your favorite teachers, principals,  
coaches, librarians, and others  
helping to make your school shine.



# SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION



## WHEN IT COMES TO EXPRESSING

your appreciation to teachers, here's the drill: if the words don't come easily, don't let them get in the way. This guide is full of simple, affordable, straight-from-the-heart actions and gifts that will speak louder than words. And for those among you who are comfortable putting pen to paper, check

out suggestions for written notes and thank-you letters.

The ideas and suggestions compiled here come from many corners: our annual holiday gift guides, Our Teacher Appreciation Week coverage, comments from Edutopia's Stuff We Love group, our Facebook discussions, and a poll we conducted asking teachers what gifts they appreciate most. Teacher wish lists reflect ever-shrinking district budgets and resources, featuring a consistent chorus of requests for classroom supplies. And, still, many teachers continue to extoll the virtues of a good old-fashioned thank-you note.

Read on for this year's suggestions for how to show teachers, principals, coaches, librarians, and super school staff your appreciation.

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- 1. GIFT IDEAS**  
From traditional to digital, some outside-the-box ways to say thanks
- 2. RESOURCES AND TOOLS TO CRAFT THE PERFECT GIFT**  
Web apps and websites to help make gift giving a little easier
- 3. TEACHERS TALK: WHAT'S THE MOST SURPRISING GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?**  
We asked; teachers answered
- 4. HOW TO WRITE A THANK-YOU NOTE**  
Tips for penning a heartfelt note

## Gift Ideas

# TEACHER APPRECIATION MADE EASY

WHETHER YOU WANT TO SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION with a classic — a thank-you note — or a 21st-century convenience — an e-card — here are some ideas to get the ball rolling. From food and special treats to DIY gifts to donating time and money, we cover all the bases. But this list is just a starting point. We think it's safe to assume that teachers will want to see your creativity and your talents.



### DO IT YOURSELF

There's no limit to the different things you can create to say thank you. Whether the unique project is something small or takes some major planning — say, organizing a flash mob — the key to a great DIY gift is the amount of heart you put into it.

#### SOME IDEAS

1. Coordinate a flash mob.  
(See “How to Organize a Flash Mob”: [edut.to/UOxEW](http://edut.to/UOxEW).)
2. Write a haiku.
3. Paint a picture.
4. Make a mixtape.  
(Soundcloud, [soundcloud.com](http://soundcloud.com), and Soundtracking, [soundtracking.com](http://soundtracking.com), are tools that can help you do this digitally.)
5. Produce a scrapbook.

### CHARITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK

Donating time or money can be a great way to honor a teacher. Ask your favorite teacher about the causes she feels passionate about and help her make a difference. And if there's one thing that teachers need more of, it's time. So if a student can offer to tidy up the teachers' lounge or a parent can help out in class, doing so can provide much needed relief for teachers. Also, think beyond the walls of the classroom — teachers need help balancing their work and family life too.

#### SOME IDEAS

1. Donate to a local hospital.
2. Plant a tree.
3. Wash your teacher's car.
4. Clean and organize a classroom supply closet.
5. Organize a week of homemade lunches for your teacher.

### FRESH TAKES ON TRADITIONAL GIFTS

Showing teacher appreciation is as old as school itself, and there are several popular, time-tested gifts. Homemade treats such as a box of cookies or brownies comes to mind. But now, thanks to some great websites and Web tools, there are many different ways to put a fresh take on a traditional gift. (Visit Edutopia's “Thanks” board on Pinterest, [pinterest.com/edutopia/thanks/](http://pinterest.com/edutopia/thanks/).)

#### SOME IDEAS

1. Give an e-card or digital thank-you collage.
2. Buy a gift certificate.
3. Give a subscription to an organic-produce delivery service.
4. Provide a membership to a wine or beer club.
5. Give an online newspaper or magazine subscription.

## Resources and Tools

# CRAFT THE PERFECT GIFT



IT'S NEVER BEEN EASIER to buy a gift card or build an online thank-you project. From Wallwisher, an online platform that lets you build message boards, to a plethora of websites designed to connect users with great charities, you can find great new gifts online. Here's a list of Web resources and apps that can help.

### \* SOURCING THE PERFECT GIFT

#### **GIFT ROCKET** [giftrocket.com](http://giftrocket.com)

This online start-up has brought gift cards into the digital era, and with 36 percent of teachers saying they enjoy receiving gift cards, it's a wonderful service for picking out a gift for your teacher. You can give tickets to a football game, the movies, a show, or some other fun activity. But the best part is that your teacher can use the credit for something else without hurting your feelings. Another option is Gyft ([gyft.com](http://gyft.com)), which offers many of the same services but on your smartphone.

#### **DONORSCHOOSE** [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org)

Donating to a classroom in need is a great way to honor your teacher. At DonorsChoose, educators from across the country post projects and ask for financial help from the public. Anyone can donate, making it an easy and sincere way to say thanks. Even better, find out if your teacher has already posted a project on the site and contribute there.

#### **ADOPT A CLASSROOM** [adoptaclassroom.org](http://adoptaclassroom.org)

Adopt-A-Classroom partners donors with teachers across the United States so educators are never without the funds to purchase critical resources and materials for their classrooms. Another site for giving is JustGive ([justgive.org](http://justgive.org)).

#### **ARTWORK FOR EDUCATION** [artworkforeducation.com](http://artworkforeducation.com)

This website features an innovative fund-raising program that showcases student artwork on custom greeting cards. The cards are sold in boxed sets and as single cards by participating retailers. Participating schools receive a percentage of the sales.

### \* WEB TOOLS

#### **WORDLE** [wordle.net](http://wordle.net)

Wordle is an online application that allows users to build word clouds, which makes it the perfect tool to help you say thanks. Show your teacher how you really feel with a cloud displaying words that mean the most about him or her. Tagul ([tagul.com](http://tagul.com)) is another option for building a word cloud.

#### **JIBJAB** [jibjab.com](http://jibjab.com)

For the teacher who has a great sense of humor, you can use JibJab to create an animated e-card. Turn your classmates into dancing elves, for instance. FaceinHole ([faceinhole.com](http://faceinhole.com)) is another fun e-card option.

#### **WALLWISHER** [wallwisher.com](http://wallwisher.com)

Like an online wall covered with sticky notes, Wallwisher makes it possible for a community to come together and post comments and share thoughts, which makes it a great way to create a collage of gratitude. Lino ([en.linoit.com](http://en.linoit.com)) and Stixy ([stixy.com](http://stixy.com)) are similar sites that let you post photos as well.



## Teachers Talk

# WHAT'S THE MOST SURPRISING GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?



WE ASKED EDUTOPIA READERS to share their most memorable stories, and we were entertained by your sense of humor. Thank you for the wonderful stories. Here are some of our favorites:

“They gave me a six-pack of Diet Coke. My students know I’m an addict!”

DARA VIA TWITTER

“As a high school vocational instructor, I rarely got any gifts, but one Christmas, a particularly challenging student placed a tiny wrapped present on my desk. I opened it to find a tiny tin Christmas box filled with Tylenol and a note from his mom that said, ‘I think you might need these. Merry Christmas!’”

NANCY VIA FACEBOOK

“Last year, I received a baby book with chew marks all over it and crayon all over the pictures. It was very interesting considering I don’t even have a child of my own!”

KATHRYN VIA FACEBOOK

“It is a tie between the used makeup and the well-worn hat (complete with someone else’s hair). Same year, different kids.”

AMY VIA FACEBOOK

“One of my middle school students once brought me a collection of seven or eight clowns, I think because she knew of my collection of Beanie Babies. The clowns were obviously old, with ceramic heads and painted faces, each about 8 inches tall. She told me her grandmother gave them to her but she was afraid of clowns. I called her mom who told me they were hers to give away. I still have them. Many fond memories!”

RHONDA VIA FACEBOOK

“At the end of the school year, the student of one of my elementary school colleagues came in with an odd-shaped gift wrapped in a brown paper bag. When the child proudly proclaimed to her that he had brought her a potted plant, she excitedly started to unwrap it. The student said, ‘No, no! You can’t open it here!’ Later she discovered that it wasn’t a potted plant but rather a pot plant.”

CYNTHIA VIA FACEBOOK

“I received a zombie survival kit. It was the most creative gift ever! It was a small white box with a red duct tape cross on it. Inside was a small bottle of zombie repellent (travel-size bug spray), a small first aid kit, a candy bar, and a Starbucks gift card with an explanation on how to use each item during the zombie apocalypse.”

KATELYN VIA FACEBOOK

“During my student teaching, my cooperating teacher and I both received small gift packages that included body wash, lotion, and deodorant. (I promise, I actually don’t stink.)”

APRIL VIA FACEBOOK



How to

# WRITE A THANK-YOU NOTE

**“THE MOST SPECIAL GIFTS**, the ones that really make me glow, are letters of appreciation,” wrote Julia Beers, a third-grade teacher at Malcolm X Elementary School in Berkeley, California.

Middle school teacher Kaleroy Zervos wrote that, above all, a simple thank-you note not only recognizes teachers’ day-to-day efforts but also underscores the idea that teachers are making the world a better by helping kids learn.

Although writing a note of thanks isn’t hugely time consuming, it’s not as easy as it looks. Here are a few tips and resources on what to write and how to write the perfect note that lets your teacher know how grateful you are.

**1 TURN OFF THE COMPUTER**  
It feels good to know someone is making a special effort to show their gratitude — former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy was famous for her handwritten thank-you notes.

**2 BE SPECIFIC** As Dr. Robyn Silverman, a parenting expert, writes in a blog post on her website ([bit.ly/8XCOC4](http://bit.ly/8XCOC4)), “Refrain from saying things like, ‘Thank you for teaching my child. He learned a lot.’” Instead she says you should be specific and highlight the lessons and ways your teacher has had an impact on your child. Students who are writing should remember to touch on specific ways they appreciate their teacher’s patience and hard work.

**3 BE YOURSELF** Sending a thank-you note is a formal gesture, but the note itself should reflect your relationship with your teacher. So write the way you normally talk to your teacher. If your teacher is a formal person, match that tone. If your teacher has a good sense of humor, then an inside joke is more than appropriate.

**4 LOOK FORWARD** Silverman also notes it’s great to “talk about the past and the future.” For students and parents, you can accomplish this by mentioning your favorite lessons so far and how they will help you or your student in future learning. Again, be specific.

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# HOW TO THANK A TEACHER

## ABOUT EDUTOPIA

Edutopia is produced by The George Lucas Educational Foundation and highlights what works in education. We are a nonprofit operating foundation dedicated to improving the K-12 learning process by documenting, disseminating, and advocating for innovative, replicable, and evidence-based strategies that prepare students to thrive in their future education, careers, and adult lives. Through our award-winning website, videos, and growing online community, Edutopia is supporting and empowering education reform by shining a spotlight on real-world solutions and providing proven strategies, tools, and resources that are successfully changing how our children learn.

To find and share solutions, visit Edutopia at [edutopia.org](http://edutopia.org), on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) and [YouTube](#).

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