#ThankfulforYou Campaign

**Research:**

Every year, the Kirkwood School District (KSD) launches the “Teacher of the Year” program where colleagues select one individual to represent their school as the teacher of the year. During the 2020-21 school year, based on feedback from our teacher of the year committee, KSD hit pause on the traditional program and, in March 2021, launched the #ThankfulForYou campaign.

The following year, even as the traditional “Teacher of the Year” program returned, the District reviewed feedback from year one of the program and wellness survey results administered by the Human Resources Department. The response was to bring back the program for a second round during January and February of 2022 and again engage in efforts to ensure our staff understands we are #ThankfulforYou.

Additionally, the program is in alignment with two of our four Strategic Plan objectives; specifically: “Student and Staff Social, Mental and Emotional Health”, and “Communication and Engagement.”

**Planning:**

The 2020-21 school year was like no other, requiring every staff member to step out of their comfort zones. We switched from the traditional teacher of the year program to focus on celebrating every staff member and recognizing the remarkable things happening to support our students. The teacher of the year committee officially declared 2021-22 the “Year of the Educator.”

The goal for both phases of the program was to make sure every single staff member was recognized for the important work they do for students. That means everyone who comes in contact with kids – teachers and teaching assistants, counselors, nurses and paraprofessionals who support our students at school. It also means those staff who support our facilities – maintenance staff, buildings and grounds crew and custodians. It also means the
teams that work behind the scenes to support staff and students – our administrative services team and technology team. And, it means those who keep our schools organized and running – secretaries, administrators and facilitators.

**Implementation:**

The Community Relations and Development (CRD) team designed a #ThankfulForYou campaign. This included branding with primary and secondary logos. The campaign was officially launched with an all-staff appreciation video. All staff were invited to submit a “thank you” note to a colleague. Responses were collected via a digital form. The KSD CRD team cross-checked all staff lists to ensure all 1,000 staff members across the district received at least one note of thanks from a colleague.

CRD then generated printed thank you notes for each staff member and delivered them at #ThankfulForYou coffee truck events at each school. In attendance at the #ThankfulForYou were the KSD administrative team along with Board of Education members. All staff within each school/building were invited out for a cup of coffee and pastry treat. Staff members were also handed an envelope with their thank you notes.

With no visitors allowed inside schools, it was a wonderful time to connect outside with colleagues and say “hi” in person after only seeing many via Zoom for over a year. Custom banners with the school name were signed by the administrative team and board members. The banners still hang in each school.

After the administrative team and BOE visited each school, each school was also gifted a “word cloud” poster with all the adjectives used to describe their unique building and school. We gifted a printed and framed poster to each school. These #ThankfulForYou posters hang in the main offices of each school, and were presented to the Teacher of the Year committee member at each school.

During year two, we had the opportunity to engage with our staff indoors. Also, in response to feedback from our first year, we were able to modify the time to better accommodate staff schedules. This included a staff gift of a tumbler with our #ThankfulForYou logo on it, and the opportunity for staff to stop by for an infused flavored water and a snack bar.
**Evaluation:**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, we relied on feedback from the Teacher of the Year committee as well as personal conversations these events facilitated. In addition, we received unsolicited positive feedback during other committees including our Teacher Advisory Committee and our Support Staff Advisory Committee. KSD recently began survey work to better evaluate “climate and belonging” amongst staff and will continue to utilize that data for future decision-making.

#ThankfulForYou

Winter 2022 Events