



CURRENT EVENTS

# How to Celebrate American Education Week in Your School Community

By Jennifer Gunn

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With dedicated teachers, administrators, and other school staff, public schools are there every day for every student, preparing tomorrow's leaders. That's why, during November, we celebrate public schools during American Education Week. Take part in this national event with a few celebration ideas below, and share online using the hashtag #PublicSchoolsForAll.

## Monday

Kick off this year's [American Education Week](#) by celebrating excellence within your school community. Have students present their school projects to other classes, host a student work gallery walk, or film a video of students and teachers sharing accomplishments or what they're most proud of in your school—then play the video in a morning assembly to share the awesome and get everyone cheering for each other.

## Tuesday

Celebrate and share American Education Week with parents by inviting *families* to visit school. Have a Parents Breakfast, invite parents to visit school classes, or host a Family Fun Night! Family Paint Nights or Potluck Dinners are great ways for parents, teachers, and students to enjoy time together. Or, host a Gallery Night, where parents can walk through the school and see the fantastic projects students have completed so far this year.

## Wednesday

School nurses, paraeducators, bus drivers, food service workers, maintenance professionals... Education takes a village! Celebrate that village by recognizing the education support professionals that help make your school community *amazing*. Consider hosting a breakfast for them or having students write thank you notes to all those who keep them safe, healthy, and at the top of their academic game.

## Thursday

According to the National Education Association, "It's been many years since most members of the public have been in a classroom. Given that no more than 20 percent of a community's adult population has school-age children, most people don't have an accurate understanding of what our schools are all about today." That said, today is Educator For a Day. Bring the outside world in by welcoming community members and leaders to participate in events at your school. Invite an elected official to be an "educator for a day," or bring in local business owners to present in classes.

Schools could not run without those who step in at the last minute. Celebrate your substitute teachers by making a special thank you poster or give them a special gift like a [customized T-shirt or mug](#), or a Substitute Teacher kit (think: a portable kit with various classroom supplies to make their expected and unexpected days in the classroom that much easier).

## More Ways to Celebrate

- Get social and share your school's American Education Week celebrations on social media.
- Contact your local newspaper or news outlet to publish a profile on someone who deserves the recognition in your school community.
- Provide gift certificates for coffee to your school's staff or all-stars. Or raffle off a larger gift certificate to a local spa or restaurant.
- Take over the duties of your support professionals! For example, relieve your cafeteria workers for the day and serve *them*, or have students serve lunch to your school aides.
- Provide coffee and breakfast for your colleagues and give out thank you notes from school leadership and/or students and parents.
- Have students create and sign a thank you poster for the staff lounge.
- Create a contest that asks students to write essays or create posters saluting educators in their community.
- Solicit local businesses to offer incentives for educators during American Education Week. Discounts or thank you signs in their window make a beautiful statement. (Perhaps local businesses could also display student artwork during the week to celebrate the accomplishments of the area's learners!)
- Order buttons and give them to staff members as a celebration of their contributions. Possible slogan: "Very Important Educator: Our School Runs Because of You!"
- Order coffee cups or mugs (or other personalized swag) that give a warm thank you to your school staff.
- Host an assembly and give out awards to teachers and support staff. Let students present or create the awards.
- And, of course, download and print these (free) American Education Week Posters:
  - Elementary: 8×11 18×24
  - Secondary: 8×11 18×24

For more information, check out the [National Education Association's American Education Week page](#).

*Jennifer L.M. Gunn spent 10 years in newspaper and magazine publishing before moving to public education. She is a curriculum designer, teaching coach, and high school educator in New York City. She is also cofounder of the annual EDxEDNYC Education Conference for teacher-led innovation, and regularly presents at conferences on the topics of adolescent literacy, leadership, and education innovation.*

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