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Virtual Volunteering: Teacher Appreciation Project

Project Overview:

Thank you for taking the time to brighten the day of one of the fantastic New York City public school teachers and staff members who Read Ahead is fortunate to partner with! The email you received confirming your participation in this opportunity includes the name and role of a teacher, administrator, or school staff member who supports Read Ahead in a local public elementary school. For this project, you will be answering a series of questions, and will create (and photograph!) an appreciation sign, which Read Ahead will compile into an appreciation note for each educator.

This project will take between 30 minutes and an hour to complete. Please make sure you have the materials to create a sign for your teacher (e.g. paper, writing utensils) available. If you are working with your family, we suggest giving an age-appropriate summary of this overview and background to your kids before getting started!

The instructions below are for volunteers who do not have access to PowerPoint. If you do have PowerPoint available, please visit our website and download one of our pre-formatted templates.

Background:

As you may know, NYC public school staff are stretched thin, even in the best times. Nearly 75% of students in the school system are challenged by poverty, and in some Read Ahead schools, that number exceeds 95%. New York City is also home to the largest homeless student population in the country. For example, at one Read Ahead school 21% of students are in temporary housing or are experiencing homelessness. Teachers and staff balance large classrooms, students with a variety of needs, and do an amazing job at it!

The COVID pandemic has added innumerable additional challenges to the work of educators, including schedule disruptions, the challenges of online learning, and addressing the trauma experienced by students in the past 14+ months. Read Ahead has been keeping in touch with our school partners throughout this crisis, and we are truly inspired by the perseverance, ingenuity, and unwavering commitment to students and families that our partner teachers, school staff, and administrators have displayed.

We appreciate that you are taking some time out of your schedule to help us brighten the day of these incredible educators by sharing some personal words of inspiration and appreciation.

Questions:

*Please respond to the questions below. Questions with a * are strongly recommended.*

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Note that your last names and contact information will not be shared. Please customize your reply with the teacher name provided in the email wherever possible. Read Ahead will compile your answers into a colorful pdf that will then be shared with school staff.

Need some inspiration? A sample can be found in the email you received from Read Ahead.

1. * First Name
2. * Last Name *(will not be shared)*
3. * Your Email Address *(will not be shared)*
4. * Please share a little about yourself (e.g. name, workplace, interests). *(2-3 sentences)*
5. If you are a Read Ahead mentor, please share why you joined the program and what you have enjoyed about your experience so far. *(2-3 sentences)*
6. * What is a message of support or thanks you would like to send to this teacher/school staff member? *(2-3 sentences)*
7. We know that our school staff are motivated by making a difference for our city's children, and that hearing about this impact truly brightens their days. Please feel free to share a memory of a teacher, school staff member, or mentor who made a difference in your life that you think might be inspiring for this person to read. Adults are encouraged to share a story from their childhood, and children are encouraged to think of a current or past teacher or mentor. *(2-4 sentences)*
8. *Share a reading recommendation for the teacher and/or for their classroom ! What is one book you've enjoyed recently (or an old favorite)? Why did you like it? *(1-2 sentences)*
9. * Is there a quote or piece of advice/wisdom that you've seen or heard recently that has been helpful for managing stress or inspiring you during this time? *(1-2 sentences)*
10. * I think that schools and teachers are important because_____ *(1-2 sentences)*
11. Any other messages to share with our amazing NYC public school teachers and staff?

Sign Making:

Please take a few minutes to make a homemade sign for your assigned teacher that you will take a photo of to include in your note.

- This can be made using paper and markers, or other materials around the house (post-its, highlighters, design something digitally and print it out).
- Artistic skill isn't a prerequisite but please try to take a moment to make them fun, festive, and thoughtful.
- Family members are encouraged to help out!
- Text could read: "Thank you, Mrs. X," "NYC appreciates you - keep up the great work, Mr. Z," etc.

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- Some volunteers have also created signs in Paint or other computer programs, so please feel free to do so if you don't have supplies handy, or would be more comfortable in that medium.

Please include this photo as an attachment in your reply email. Bonus points if you, a pet, or fun household background is included!

To submit your project:

Please email your answers development@readahead.org by the date included in your email confirmation.

Please feel free to add your responses to a Word document, or in the text of an email. Don't forget to attach a photo of your thank you sign! Read Ahead will format your note into one of our templates & share it with

Reach out to the Read Ahead team at development@readahead.org, with any questions.