

It's May! Along with the big push to get through the end of the school year, May is also the month where we take the time to formally give our teachers the appreciation they deserve informally every day. The week is nothing extravagant – meals or snacks from the PTA, a candy bar from the superintendent, a thank you note from a parent or child - these are generally the things that make up the week. What I know from talking with our teachers, however, is that often times these smallest of gestures can be the most meaningful. Sure, everyone loves a gift card and no one would turn down a raise, but it is the note from one of my most challenging students that I received more than 15 years ago that I still keep in my desk drawer as my most cherished token of appreciation.

In recognition of our teachers and what they do every day to support our students and improve our communities, I want to share some words from poet and former teacher Taylor Mali and his work titled "What Teachers Make". The work is based on his thoughts when asked by a friend at a dinner party what he "made" as a teacher.

**"You want to know what I make?  
I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.  
I can make a C+ feel like a Congressional Medal of Honor  
and an A- feel like a slap in the face.  
*How dare you waste my time  
with anything less than your very best.*  
I make parents tremble in fear when I call home:  
*Hi. This is Mr. Mali. I hope I haven't called at a bad time,  
I just wanted to talk to you about something your son said today.  
To the biggest bully in the class, he said,  
"Leave the kid alone. I still cry sometimes, don't you?"  
And it was the noblest act of courage I have ever seen.*  
I make parents see their children for who they are  
and what they can be.  
You want to know what I make?  
I make kids wonder,  
I make them question,  
I make them criticize.  
I make them apologize and mean it.  
I make them write, write, write.  
And then I make them read.  
I make them spell *definitely beautiful, definitely beautiful, definitely beautiful*  
over and over again until they will never misspell  
either one of those words again.  
I make them show all their work in math  
and hide it on their final drafts in English.  
Here, let me break it down for you, so you know what I say is true:  
Teachers make a difference, now what about you?"**

Thank you to all of the teachers doing the work and making a difference. Your paycheck can never tell the whole story of what you actually make. The value of a great teacher cannot be measured in dollars and cents, but is measured in lives changed and dreams realized