

Question: How are you keeping teachers motivated this year?

Fighting for freedom. We are trying to make it fun! Our theme is *Star Wars*—The Force Is Strong at Freedom. We don't want to go to the dark side.
—Tanja Pederson (@DrP_Pederson), principal, Freedom Elementary School, Harrisburg, South Dakota

Sweating it out together. I am doing my best to track down answers as quickly as possible, while keeping communication open and frequent. And we will be starting a group exercise class this week to kick in some endorphins together.
—John Alstad (@john_alstad), principal, Miller Elementary, Bismarck, North Dakota

Staying positive. Modeling positive, upbeat attitudes.
—Rachael George (@DrRachaelGeorge), elementary principal, Sandy Grade School, Sandy, Oregon

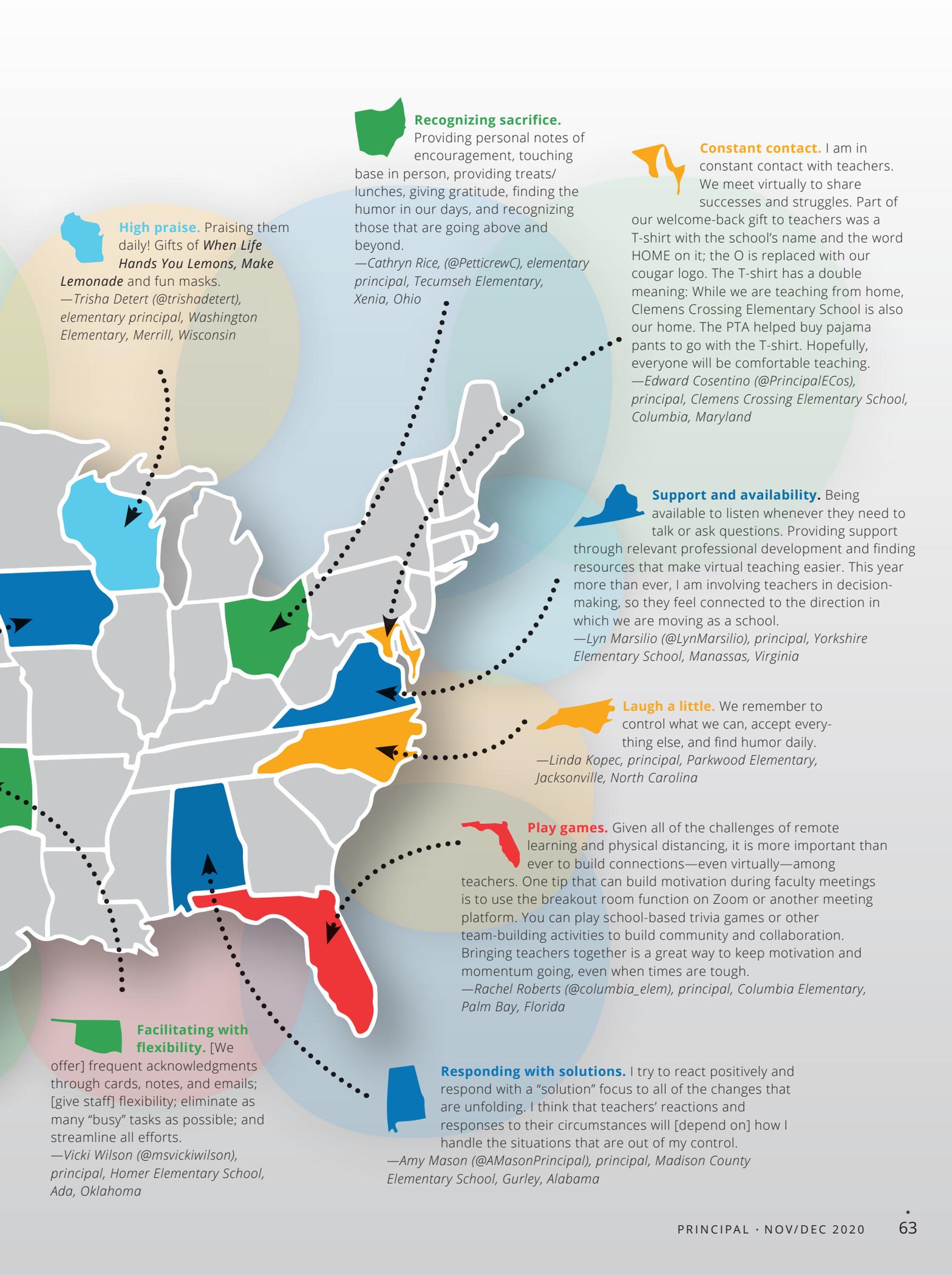
Surprising them. We have been putting surprise treats outside their doors—candy, fruit, new calendars from the dollar store, drinks from Sonic, bottles of water, special cookies, special supplies, etc. Since we can't gather or move freely throughout the building, finding a little surprise has been fun.
—Kristin W. Stolte, principal, Linton Elementary, Fort Collins, Colorado

Feeding them like family. My staff is working on campus to provide distance learning. I walk through the classrooms and give verbal and written encouragement daily. Additionally, my teachers' "love language" is food, so I enjoy feeding them as well. Our staff is like a family.
—Scott Borba (@lgesupt), superintendent/principal, Le Grand Elementary School, Le Grand, California

A free lunch. I have them work in teams [and provide] paid luncheons.
—Henry McCain, principal, Clayton Junior High/Kiser Elementary, Clayton, New Mexico

Focus on accomplishments. By appreciating them, encouraging teacher efficacy and collective efficacy, focusing on what we have been able to accomplish, and letting them know that they are "enough" through positive messaging.
—Laurie Luczak, principal, Hokulani Elementary, Honolulu, Hawaii

Training for resilience. I kept teachers motivated by connecting regularly in Zoom meetings, texts, and emails. We referred to the concepts and tools of resiliency [from] a course I taught, and I encouraged them to lean on the values we developed for our school that are applicable to life. I used humor and constant encouragement to highlight their individual strengths.
—Kris Meyer (@riskmeyer), principal (ret.), St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly, Iowa



High praise. Praising them daily! Gifts of *When Life Hands You Lemons, Make Lemonade* and fun masks.
 —Trisha Detert (@trishadetert), elementary principal, Washington Elementary, Merrill, Wisconsin

Recognizing sacrifice. Providing personal notes of encouragement, touching base in person, providing treats/lunches, giving gratitude, finding the humor in our days, and recognizing those that are going above and beyond.
 —Cathryn Rice, (@PetticrewC), elementary principal, Tecumseh Elementary, Xenia, Ohio

Constant contact. I am in constant contact with teachers. We meet virtually to share successes and struggles. Part of our welcome-back gift to teachers was a T-shirt with the school's name and the word HOME on it; the O is replaced with our cougar logo. The T-shirt has a double meaning: While we are teaching from home, Clemens Crossing Elementary School is also our home. The PTA helped buy pajama pants to go with the T-shirt. Hopefully, everyone will be comfortable teaching.
 —Edward Cosentino (@PrincipalECos), principal, Clemens Crossing Elementary School, Columbia, Maryland

Support and availability. Being available to listen whenever they need to talk or ask questions. Providing support through relevant professional development and finding resources that make virtual teaching easier. This year more than ever, I am involving teachers in decision-making, so they feel connected to the direction in which we are moving as a school.
 —Lyn Marsilio (@LynMarsilio), principal, Yorkshire Elementary School, Manassas, Virginia

Laugh a little. We remember to control what we can, accept everything else, and find humor daily.
 —Linda Kopeck, principal, Parkwood Elementary, Jacksonville, North Carolina

Play games. Given all of the challenges of remote learning and physical distancing, it is more important than ever to build connections—even virtually—among teachers. One tip that can build motivation during faculty meetings is to use the breakout room function on Zoom or another meeting platform. You can play school-based trivia games or other team-building activities to build community and collaboration. Bringing teachers together is a great way to keep motivation and momentum going, even when times are tough.
 —Rachel Roberts (@columbia_elem), principal, Columbia Elementary, Palm Bay, Florida

Facilitating with flexibility. [We offer] frequent acknowledgments through cards, notes, and emails; [give staff] flexibility; eliminate as many “busy” tasks as possible; and streamline all efforts.
 —Vicki Wilson (@msvickiwilson), principal, Homer Elementary School, Ada, Oklahoma

Responding with solutions. I try to react positively and respond with a “solution” focus to all of the changes that are unfolding. I think that teachers’ reactions and responses to their circumstances will [depend on] how I handle the situations that are out of my control.
 —Amy Mason (@AMasonPrincipal), principal, Madison County Elementary School, Gurley, Alabama