Apples of My Eyes

THE TEACHER TREE PROJECT | A PRACTICAL STARTER KIT

Because teachers help children grow, communities can help teachers thrive. Start a monthly apple-tree giving tradition that supports both classroom needs and the person behind the classroom door. This is a happier, more sustainable Giving Tree: no one has to give away every last branch.

How to start in four weeks

WEEK 1 | Permission	Ask the principal and PTO/PTA to approve a small pilot. Check district rules about gifts, outside sponsors, privacy, student involvement and donated services.
WEEK 2 | Listen	Invite four educators to opt in to a short private survey about classroom wishes and personal favorites. Confirm what may appear on a public apple.
WEEK 3 | Build	Make a cheerful bulletin-board apple tree. Give each educator an apple with two or three approved wishes; invite one or two business sponsors per teacher if possible.
WEEK 4 | Deliver	Families choose apples; sponsors fulfill promises; PTO organizers distribute gifts fairly, thank contributors and update the next month's needs.

The people behind the tree

One PTO/PTA lead manages the overall project. **One parent or family liaison for roughly four educators** coordinates monthly wishes and delivery. **One or two local businesses per educator** can help with goods, gift cards or approved services. Students can make apples and write notes; adults handle requests, purchases and distribution.

The 50/50 idea

Aim for roughly **half classroom essentials** (paper, tissues, pencils, markers) and **half personal appreciation** (favorite snacks, a book, gardening supplies, a small local gift card). Treat this as a flexible aspiration, not a mandatory split: teacher preferences and school gift policies come first. **Never expect families to donate money.**

A simple budget

Four teachers × $40 per month = $160 monthly goal: about $80 for classrooms and $80 for personal treats. A three-month pilot would be $480 if fully funded. Donated items and thank-you notes count, too. You can start with far less.

What could an apple say?

Ms. Rivera | 8th-grade science Classroom: tissues, colored markers | Personal: lemon tea, mystery novels | Contact: PTO coordinator. *Do not display addresses, family circumstances, personal phone numbers or private survey answers.*

Teacher survey & monthly routine

Copy these questions into a private Google Form. Personal questions should be optional and answers shared only with approved organizers.

Teacher survey: ready to copy

1. **Display name and role:** How would you like to appear on the apple tree?
2. **Classroom priorities:** Which three items would help most this month? Quantities or links?
3. **Learning extras:** Any books, art materials or hands-on activities that would help?
4. **Personal favorites:** Snacks, drinks, book genres, hobbies, colors, flowers or local shops?
5. **Small comforts:** What inexpensive treat or gesture would brighten your week?
6. **Please avoid:** Any allergies, fragrance sensitivities or gifts you would rather not receive?
7. **Preferences:** Would you prefer a note rather than a gift? Anything else we should know?
8. **Sharing permissions:** Which answers may be printed on a public apple card?
9. **Refresh:** May coordinators check in with you monthly to update wishes?

Monthly coordinator checklist

[ ] Confirm each educator still wants to participate and wishes are current.

[ ] Track what is requested, claimed, delivered and still missing.

[ ] Check that every participating educator is receiving comparable attention.

[ ] Coordinate gifts through approved school channels and thank sponsors.

[ ] Invite anonymous feedback; update the tree and export a spreadsheet backup.

Free online ways to organize

MSMP website	Visit **msmarypoppins.com** for the project, resources and interactive Teacher Tree Planner. The first planner version keeps information in the local browser and exports CSV files; it does **not** synchronize volunteers automatically.
Google Forms	**forms.google.com** - private teacher-interest surveys and monthly updates.
Google Sheets	**sheets.google.com** - a school-approved, organizer-only shared list; import CSV exports.
SignUpGenius	**signupgenius.com** - volunteer roles or donation signups; the basic option is free, though advanced services can cost money.
MyRegistry	**myregistry.com** - a registry-style inspiration for requests from multiple retailers; check school policy and settings before using public lists.

A gentle reminder

This is **not** a replacement for properly funded public schools, and teachers should not have to coordinate their own appreciation. Participation is voluntary and should never become a popularity contest.

Ready-to-use invitations

Letter to a local business

Subject: Help our community grow a Teacher Tree

Hello [Business Name],

Our school is launching **Apples of My Eyes**, a Teacher Tree project inspired by the *Middle School Mary Poppins* podcast. Each month, participating educators share a few classroom needs and little personal favorites. We hope to celebrate them as people, not only as professionals.

Would [Business Name] consider becoming a monthly sponsor for one teacher or contributing to a small group? A modest donation of supplies, a book, a gift card or an approved service could make a real difference. Our PTO/PTA will coordinate requests and deliveries in accordance with school rules, so teachers do not have to organize their own appreciation.

If you would like to help, please contact [School / PTO contact]. Thank you for supporting the people who help our children grow.

Warmly,
[Your name and PTO/PTA]

Short message for families

We are starting an **Apples of My Eyes Teacher Tree!** Each apple features a participating educator and a few approved classroom or personal wishes. Pick an apple if you can, make a thank-you card, or offer to help organize. **Giving is always optional.** Ask [PTO contact] how to participate.

Sponsorship ideas

Grocers: tissues or snacks **Bookstores:** books **Cafes / restaurants:** treats or small gift cards **Garden centers:** plants **Office stores:** classroom basics **Other businesses:** teacher-approved experiences or services.

Your 60-second planning notes

School / PTO contact: _____

Pilot month and number of teachers: _____

Volunteer coordinator / family liaisons: _____

First two potential business sponsors: _____

Where the apple tree will live: _____

How gifts will be collected and distributed: _____

Share your Teacher Tree story and find the planning tools at msmarypoppins.com. Please secure school permission before sharing photos or students' information.

Stop. Regulate. Listen. Stay clever, little foxes.