

A GUIDE TO

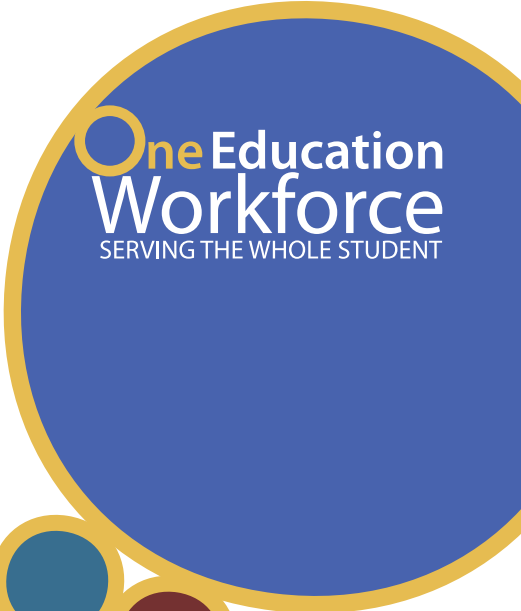
# Celebrate

## National Education Support Professionals Day

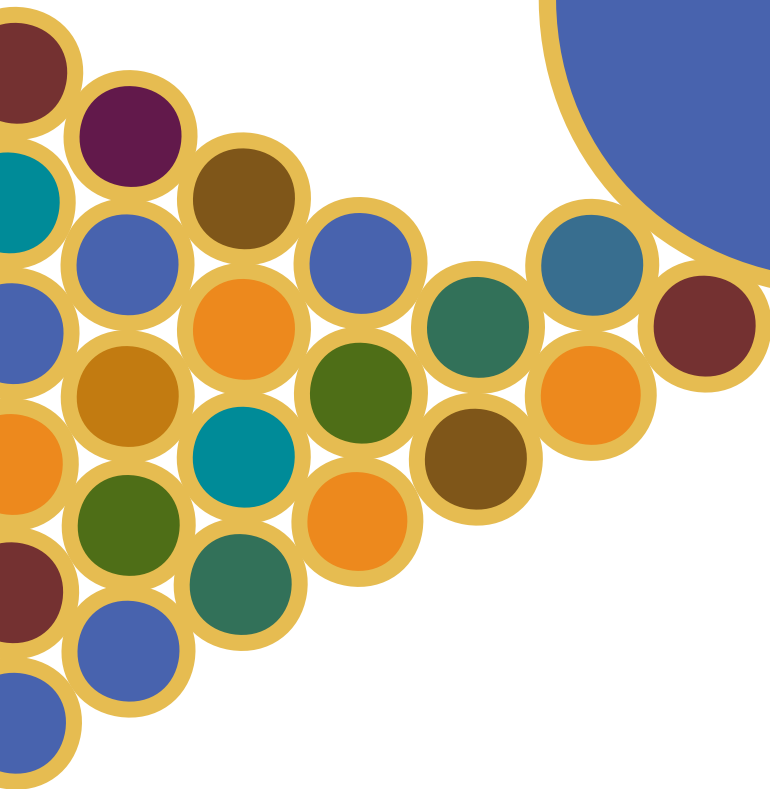


One Education  
**Workforce**  
SERVING THE WHOLE STUDENT

A  
GUIDE  
to Celebrate  
National Education Support  
Professionals Day



**One Education  
Workforce**  
SERVING THE WHOLE STUDENT



The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million education support professionals, elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

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ABOUT  
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# The National Education Association Vision, Mission, and Values

## OUR VISION

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

## OUR CORE VALUES

**These principles guide our work and define our mission:**

**Equal Opportunity.** We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

**A Just Society.** We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

**Democracy.** We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

**Professionalism.** We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

**Partnership.** We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

**Collective Action.** We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

# ABOUT This Guide



# Introduction

Education support professionals (ESPs) are equal and essential partners in public education.

**National ESP Day** honors education support professionals and recognizes the contributions they make to public education. National ESP Day is a time to strengthen support and respect for education support professionals.

National ESP Day is the Wednesday of American Education Week, which is always celebrated the first full week before Thanksgiving, so the actual dates vary from year to year.

This booklet is a guide to celebrating National ESP Day, providing ideas and sample documents to jumpstart National ESP Day activities.

Thank you for recognizing and celebrating the contributions made by ESPs.





WHERE  
to  
Find

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Food  
Services

Clerical  
Services

Transportation  
Services

Health and  
Student  
Services



ABOUT  
National ESP  
Day

Skilled Trades

Technical  
Services

Custodial and  
Maintenance Services

Paraeducators

Security  
Services

# History

In 1987, the NEA Representative Assembly called for the creation of a special way to honor the contributions of school support staff to public education. National Education Support Personnel Day was first celebrated that year. Since then, it has been observed on the Wednesday during American Education Week.

NEA's National Council of Education Support Professionals (NCESP) successfully campaigned at the 2002 Representative Assembly to change ESPs' formal name from "Educational Support Personnel" to "Education Support Professionals."

"The name change to 'professionals' acknowledges the major contribution ESPs make to children and public education every day," said Karen Mahurin, a school secretary formerly from Alaska with 22 years of experience. "We impact the lives of children every day, maybe not in the classroom but certainly in our own special and professional ways."

The name reflects a growing pride in the essential role ESPs play in creating great public schools for every American student. From instructional assistants and paraeducators to office workers, health and student services employees, and food services workers; from custodians, maintenance workers and bus drivers to security guards, technology specialists, and skilled trades workers, today's support professionals provide invaluable services that enable students to learn in positive, supportive environments.

## NATIONAL ESP DAY 2010–2015

NOVEMBER 17, 2010

NOVEMBER 16, 2011

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

NOVEMBER 20, 2013

NOVEMBER 19, 2014

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

# Proclamation

A proclamation is a way to declare an official public announcement. Elected officials make proclamations to commend people or announce upcoming special events.

Decide on which of your elected officials you would like to ask to sponsor a proclamation for National ESP Day.

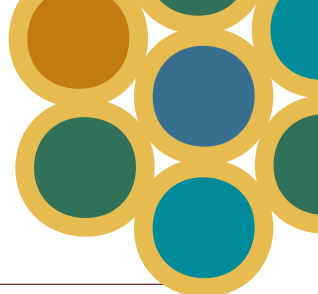
They can be any of the following:

- ▶ Federal or state representative
- ▶ Federal or state senator
- ▶ Governor
- ▶ Mayor
- ▶ City Council member

Send your elected officials a letter requesting a proclamation for National ESP Day. Inform them what ESPs do for public education and the children of your community. State what you would like the proclamation to say. (You can customize the sample proclamation on page 3.)

Follow up with the elected officials or someone from their staff to confirm their willingness to create the proclamation.

Make an appointment to meet with the elected official(s) for the signing of the proclamation. This should be done in a formal and public setting. Make sure to have ESPs present and have their pictures taken with the elected officials.



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## SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

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**Whereas**, public schools are the backbone of our democracy, providing young people with the tools they need to maintain our nation’s precious values of freedom, civility, and equality; and

**Whereas**, Education Support Professionals are integral to the education process; and

**Whereas**, Education Support Professionals provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students; and

**Whereas**, Education Support Professionals work tirelessly to serve our children and communities with care and professionalism;

Now, therefore, I \_\_\_\_\_,  
serving as \_\_\_\_\_,  
of \_\_\_\_\_,  
do proclaim [date], \_\_\_\_\_ as

### National ESP Day

And recognize and acknowledge the importance of Education Support Professionals in our public schools, colleges, and universities.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
\_\_\_\_\_, [month, year].

# Media Outreach

The media are important members of your community. Almost everyone gets news and information from a media outlet. A good relationship with them is critical to the success of your National ESP Day project.

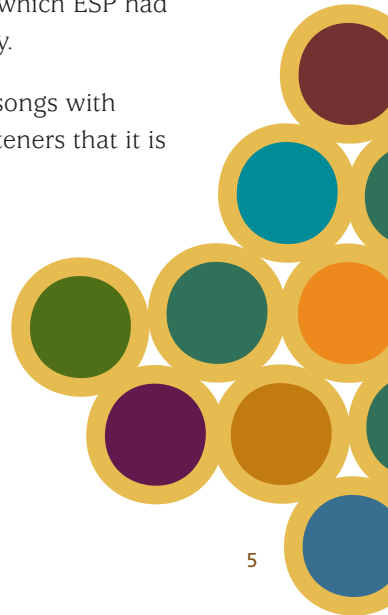
Building a meaningful relationship means contacting producers, editors, and reporters at your local cable television networks and radio talk shows, as well as local electronic and print media.

Remember to:

- ▶ Respect and honor a reporter's deadlines.
- ▶ Be honest and do not misuse the media.
- ▶ Go to them only with information that genuinely serves the public.
- ▶ Keep in mind that calling reporters to ask whether they received your fax is inappropriate.
- ▶ Be prepared to explain what you are doing.

Using the media is not only an effective way to celebrate National ESP Day, it is also a way to educate the community about the contributions that ESPs make to public education. Some ideas to get you started are:

- ▶ Invite a local newspaper reporter, editorial writer, or TV or radio news personality to spend a day working as an ESP and to then report what it was like doing that job.
- ▶ Run an ad in your local newspaper celebrating National ESP Day to remind your community that ESPs are equal and essential partners in the education process.
- ▶ Contact a popular local radio station about airing public service announcements (PSAs) to get the word out to your community about National ESP Day. Script the spots and offer to record them yourself or have students record them.
- ▶ Suggest that local media outlets either publish or broadcast quick interviews in which local citizens tell which ESP had the greatest influence on their lives and why.
- ▶ Ask a local radio station to play an hour of songs with ESPs or schools in the lyrics and remind listeners that it is National ESP Day.



# News Release

A well-written, double-spaced news release is a good way to alert print and broadcast media outlets of the National ESP Day observance in your community. Mail, email, fax, or deliver the news release far enough in advance to allow for the development of story ideas and the scheduling of coverage.

Here are some tips to make your news release more effective:

## **THE “HOOK”**

The hook is the opening sentence of your news release. It should contain a brief summary of what your release is about. This is essential to creating an effective release. The first paragraph should state who, what, when, where, and why.

## **THEME**

A theme is a creative way to improve your news release. “One Education Workforce Serving the Whole Student” or “Great Public Schools for Every Student” are examples of effective themes for National ESP Day.

## **VISUALS**

A visual will effectively get the attention of a journalist. It can be an illustration, graphic design, or photograph.

## **WEB SITE**

A Web site address provides the journalist access to more information about National ESP Day and about your Association.



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## SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release [date]**

**For Further Information**

**Contact: [name, phone number]**

**[Date of National ESP Day]**

**[Theme for the Day]**

Education support professionals (ESPs) in [name of town or district] and in communities across the nation will be in the spotlight on [date], as students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and the general public learn more about and celebrate ESPs.

“Education support professionals are essential partners in providing great public schools,” notes [full name], president of the [name of local education association or other sponsoring group]. “National ESP Day is a good time to celebrate the contributions ESPs make to our community every day.”

“Education support professionals are often the first people our schoolchildren encounter on a daily basis,” says [last name]. “They are the people who drive our children to school, help them cross the street, provide them a nutritious meal, and keep their school buildings clean and safe. ESPs are the unsung heroes of public education. It’s time we recognize their hard work and expertise by telling them ‘thank you.’”

Visit [www.nea.org/esphome](http://www.nea.org/esphome) [or state and/or local Web site] to learn more about education support professionals and the work they do.

Among the local events planned for [date] are: [list ESP Day events, times, places here — in bulleted form].

Groups and individuals interested in helping develop these or other activities for National ESP Day may contact [name] at [phone/email address].

## #

Note: Placing # # # or -30- at the end of the release indicates its conclusion.

# Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor can effectively get a message to your community. It is brief, to the point, and can serve as public notice of an event.

A letter to the editor carries credibility since it comes from citizens. You can usually find the address where you can send your letter on the editorial page of the paper. It often is possible to submit your letter to the editor via email.

When you send in your letter you must include your name, address, and daytime phone number. Your name is needed because a letter without a name is not as credible, and the newspaper will usually discard anonymous letters. Your address is required because newspapers prefer to print letters from local readers. Your phone number should be included in order for the newspaper to verify that you actually wrote the letter.

Note: The newspaper does not include your phone number if the letter is printed. It will list only your city of residence underneath your name.

Tips to remember when writing a letter to the editor:

- ▶ If possible, address the letter to the newspaper editor.
- ▶ Keep the tone objective and professional.
- ▶ Be brief and concise.
- ▶ Check for spelling and grammatical errors.

## SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

[Date] will mark the annual observance of National Education Support Professionals Day — a time for saluting our public schools support staff (ESPs) and the contribution they make to public education. The interaction between children, parents, and ESPs is vital to the continued success of public education.

Today's ESPs do more than provide nutritious meals and transport our children to and from school; they also serve as positive role models for them.

Parents and community members, I invite you to visit your child's school and learn for yourself how ESPs serve as essential partners in One Education Workforce Serving the Whole Student. A simple 'thank you' or card for these hardworking professionals would be welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I'm proud to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children.

[Signature]

[Your name]

[Address]

[Phone number]

# Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Local radio stations allocate a certain percentage of their free airtime throughout the broadcast day to promote special events and nonprofit organizations.

Unlike commercials, PSAs are free grassroots “spots” that range from 15 seconds to one minute. PSAs are effective because they disseminate important information economically.

First, contact the advertising manager at the radio station to find out the appropriate format in which material will be accepted. Also, inquire if there are any use restrictions. Lastly, determine how far in advance material should be submitted in order to ensure a timely broadcast.

While 15-60 seconds may not seem to be sufficient, you will be surprised by how much can be covered in that amount of time. In developing your PSA, use the same approach as a news release by identifying who, what, when, where, and why.

When you submit your PSA, be sure to include:

- ▶ Name of your organization
- ▶ Email or Web site
- ▶ City, state, zip
- ▶ Name of a contact person at your organization
- ▶ Phone number for the contact person
- ▶ Dates for use

30seconds

# 15 seconds

## **SAMPLE PSA #1**

## **THANK YOU**

### **(15 seconds)**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, a [job classification] in the \_\_\_\_\_ school district.

Thank you for supporting our local public schools.

Together, we're providing great public schools for every student.

Celebrate, with us, National Education Support Professionals Day, [date].

A message from [station call letters] and the [sponsoring organization].

## **SAMPLE PSA #2**

## **A COMMUNITY**

### **(15 seconds)**

Today is National Education Support Professionals Day.

This is a good time to remember that support professionals such as school secretaries, food service workers, custodians, and bus drivers are essential partners in public education.

We're part of One Education Workforce Serving the Whole Student. Together, we're providing great public schools for every student.

A message from [station call letters] and the [sponsoring organization].

# 0 seconds

# 30 seconds

## SAMPLE PSA #3

## EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS IN AMERICA

(30 seconds)

Education support professionals work hard for public education and for the students we serve.

America's public school education support professionals transport children to and from school safely and on time.

We are the first to greet children at the school door.

We maintain safe and clean school buildings.

We provide nutritious meals for schoolchildren.

We assist teachers in classroom instruction.

Education support professionals are essential to public education. We're part of One Education Workforce Serving the Whole Student.

And just like you, we're parents and community members.

Join us in celebrating National Education Support Professionals Day, [date].

A message from [station call letters] and the [sponsoring organization].

# Ways to Say “Thank You”

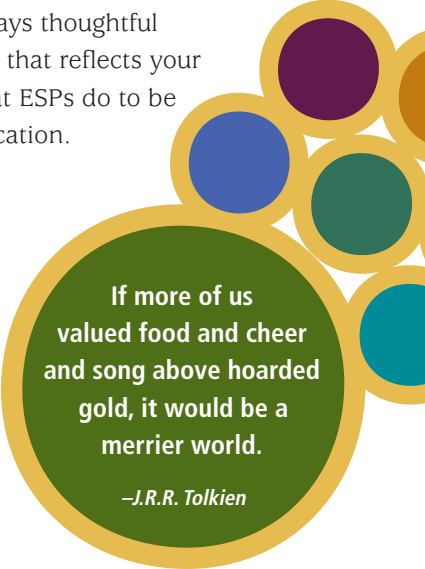
All year long, education support professionals keep schools running efficiently and effectively. Now it is time to say “thank you” for all their hard work, long hours, and dedication. National ESP Day is the perfect opportunity to recognize and celebrate their contributions.

Sending flowers, cards, and candy are always thoughtful ideas. You also may want to do something that reflects your colleague’s personality and celebrates what ESPs do to be equal and essential partners in public education.

This list provides a variety of ways to say “thank you” to ESPs.

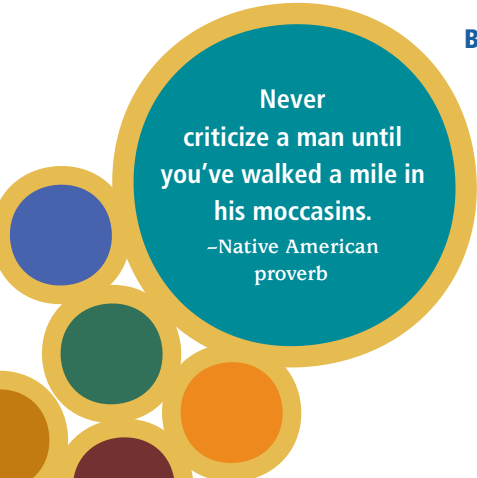
## **FOOD, FOOD, FOOD!**

Providing a breakfast and/or lunch for the ESPs in your building is a great way to show your appreciation. You can also say “thank you” by bringing an ESP some home-baked cookies or bread. Sharing homemade food and socializing with your colleagues is a great way to get to know ESPs.



If more of us  
valued food and cheer  
and song above hoarded  
gold, it would be a  
merrier world.

—J.R.R. Tolkien



Never  
criticize a man until  
you’ve walked a mile in  
his moccasins.

—Native American  
proverb

## **BE AN ESP FOR A DAY**

Show your support and admiration for ESPs by experiencing the school day as an ESP. Even if it is only for a small amount of time, your participation will be greatly appreciated.

## CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Donating to an ESP's favorite charity is a nice way to say "thank you" while helping the community. Often the organizations will provide you with a card saying that a donation has been made in someone's name.

In  
charity there is  
no excess.

—Sir Francis Bacon

Without  
music life would  
be a mistake.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

## LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES

Surprising an ESP with tickets to a concert, movie, or show is a great way to show appreciation. A nice gesture would be to provide enough tickets for their significant other and/or family.

## GIFT CERTIFICATES

Providing a gift certificate to a favorite clothing, record, or bookstore shows you have thought about an ESP's interests and allows her/him to pick an ideal gift. If you are not certain which store an ESP favors, provide a certificate to a local mall or shopping center. Mall certificates usually can be used at any store in the complex.

The man who  
does not read good  
books has no advantage  
over the man who  
cannot read them.

—Mark Twain

## SPA TREATMENT

Relaxing should be part of everyone's day, and there is nothing better than a massage, facial, or manicure/ pedicure to do the job. Ask your co-workers to chip in and surprise an ESP with a little lunchtime or after-work pampering.

Take rest; a field  
that has rested gives  
a bountiful crop.

—Ovid

## ADVOCATING FOR A WAGE INCREASE

Recommending a wage increase to a building principal or district administrator is one way to show support for ESPs. It may also be a perfect administration-sponsored gesture.

Money talks...  
but all mine ever  
says is goodbye.

—Anonymous

No act of  
kindness, no matter  
how small,  
is ever wasted.

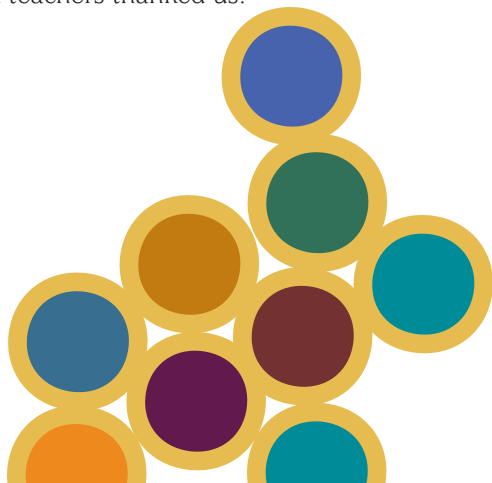
—Aesop

# Celebrating Success

## **BELOW ARE SOME SUCCESSFUL IDEAS SUBMITTED BY NEA LOCAL AFFILIATES.**

- ▶ We were honored by being relieved from our cafeteria and recess duties. The teachers of that grade filled in our spots. Then we went to Pizza Hut to have lunch together. It was nice eating with all the ESPs in the building. It was also nice to have the extra free time.
- ▶ Our local gave each of us a “thank-you” card and a lottery ticket. The local also held a raffle in each building, and the winning ESP member received a \$50 gift certificate to a local restaurant. Many buildings held breakfasts, lunches, and other unique programs for and about ESP members. I’m proud of the things my local does to highlight all our members.
- ▶ As president of our ESPs, I wrote a letter to our EA president. I asked if he could ask the teachers to send letters of appreciation to our school board about any support staff that had helped them in some way. He copied my letter and distributed it to the teachers. The appreciation letters they wrote were heartwarming.
- ▶ For ESP Day, our district gave us bagels, rolls, and juice for breakfast. We also received a note saying, “You are worth a million but we can only afford 100 Grand,” with the candy bar attached. It was really nice and much appreciated by all of us.
- ▶ In our local, we received a button that was designed by the ESP Council. It read, “People who care,” with a red heart in the middle with children holding hands. All ESPs received a red plastic apple with a lottery ticket and candy inside. It read, “You are the core of our success.”

- ▶ Over 2,000 teachers honored us with individual “thank-you” notes.
- ▶ Our local sent out Payday candy bars, with a note saying, “We have an extra payday for you.”
- ▶ My local Association gave out stemmed rose buds to the ESP staff, with a note: “For all you do, this bud’s for you.”
- ▶ Students wrote us letters thanking us for our hard work and expertise. It meant a lot that the children recognized our contributions to the school.
- ▶ In my own department I provided a bagel breakfast, along with an ESP pin and a certificate. It was a great day of recognition, and everyone felt special.
- ▶ Our local sent out Three Musketeer bars with a note: “All for one and one for all.”
- ▶ My Association purchased travel mugs and sent them to all support staff along with a “thank you.” They were well-received.
- ▶ Our superintendent recently attended our “Back to School” building representative dinner to offer her thanks for all we do every day. We do make a difference in our district, and our administration and teachers thanked us!



# Quotes

Quotes are a helpful tool in celebrating National ESP Day. Quotes can be used for newsletters, bulletins, and speeches. Below are some quotes about ESP members and the work they do.

*“We really are One Education Workforce working together for student success! Education support professionals are some of the most dedicated people you will ever meet. And, while you don’t often hear a lot about them, it is absolutely clear that each and every one of them plays a vital role in student success.”*

–Paula Monroe, NEA Executive Committee Member

*“We are a big part of our schools and a big part of our communities... everything we do is for the kids.”*

–Carter Foshee, 1998 NEA ESP of the Year

*“Children need all school workers. A person is not ‘just’ a janitor, not ‘just’ a custodian. Janitors can see children when teachers don’t see them. And bus drivers recognize that children who are disruptive on the bus are likely to be disorderly in the classroom. They are partners in education. We need each other to make this work.”*

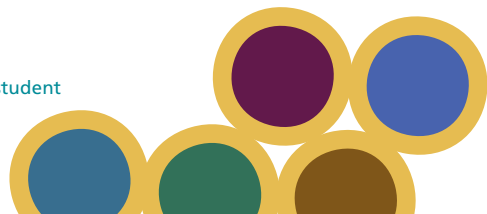
–Rev. Jesse Jackson

*“Support staff—hand in hand with teachers, administrators and parents—all help set examples for students.”*

–Katie Ridgeway, California Education Support Professionals

*“Every ESP on staff should be treated with respect and the knowledge that they are a valued member of our schools.”*

–Audrey Haskell, North Dakota Education Association





*“Too often ESPs’ contributions are overlooked or considered insignificant, but that trend is changing. As we move toward school reform, ESPs are there, on the front lines. The end result? Where ESPs are involved in the school/community team, you have better schools and more successful students.”*

–Laura Montgomery, President, National Council of Education Support Professionals (NCESP)

*“Driving a bus is like having to keep track of 65 students in a classroom with nothing but a rearview mirror.”*

–Nancy Toombs, President, Kentucky Education Support Professionals Association

*“ESP staff have a really important role to play in supporting student achievement.”*

–Debbie Szalkowski, Ohio Education Association

*“We must work as teams to improve education for all of our students, no matter what we do for a living.”*

–JoAnn Falk, 2002 NEA ESP of the Year

*“By providing personal attention and helping build up students who come in with low self-esteem, I make a difference. We all make a difference.”*

–Sherry McDonald, North Carolina Association of Educators

*“Support staff represent nearly half of all employees in our nation’s school districts. Simply put, schools can’t operate without us; teachers can’t teach without us, students can’t succeed without us.”*

–Kathie Axtell, 2009 NEA ESP of the Year

*“It’s all about helping these children succeed. If they can succeed in school, then chances are good that they will succeed in life.”*

–Phil Krueger, Wisconsin Education Association Council

*“The bottom line is that we’re not in this job to get rich; we’re in this job for the kids, and it doesn’t matter what role we play. This job is about teamwork.”*

–Sandy Wilson, Michigan Education Association

*“We’re behind the scenes keeping everything running, and people need to realize that.”*

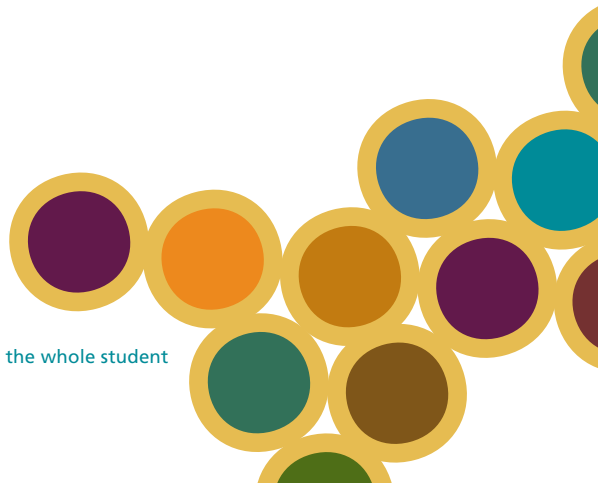
–Shirl Anne Ingram, Arizona Education Association

*“If you haven’t already been, in the future you will be an angel in some child’s eyes—for as long as you remain part of the public education system.”*

–Carter Foshee, 1998 ESP of the Year

*“Somewone once asked me, ‘How do you know if you have made a positive impact on the students you transport?’ Two sisters who were elementary students told me that when they play school bus driver, they fight each other to be me. I took that as a great compliment.”*

–Helen Cottongim, 2010 ESP of the Year



EDUCATION SUPPORT

**ESP**

PROFESSIONALS

One Education Workforce  
Serving the Whole Student

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