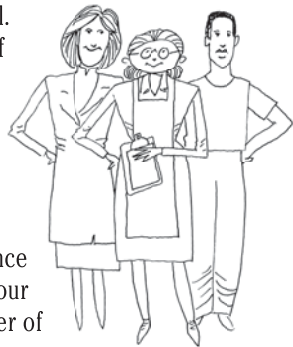


You may have heard about the NJEA program **Teacher for a Day**, which invites members from the community such as the mayor, council people, board members, and business owners to spend a day at school in the shoes of a teacher.

Since nearly a quarter of all NJEA members are Educational Support Professionals, you may have wondered if there was a similar program that included ESP. While NJEA encourages all locals considering the **Teacher for a Day** program to include an ESP component – and has done so successfully in the last couple of years – there are some things to consider.

Several ESP positions require special certifications and trainings that make it nearly impossible for outsiders to fulfill these roles. In addition, there are concerns with student safety and insurance liability. You may find someone from the community with a CDL who wants to be a school bus driver for a day, but the district’s insurance would most likely prohibit it. The same goes for those who might be willing to use the industrial equipment in the cafeteria. Custodians undergo hazmat training and often have black seal licenses, so their positions could be difficult to fill. Some school administrative staff members work with confidential student information, so that must be considered as well.



That being said, there is no reason why the public shouldn’t have the opportunity to experience the difficulties and rewards of your work day as an important member of the school team.

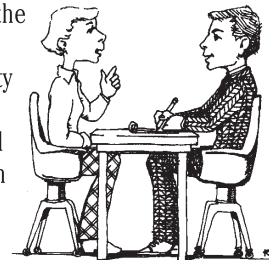
Most ESP careers can be shadowed. For example, a community member can ride along as a bus aide, assist with some duties in the cafeteria, and work with a custodian or paraprofessional. Think about the various job categories in your local and ask those members how they can best incorporate community members into their careers for a day.

If your local association is not participating in the **Teacher for a Day** program, it is possible to still hold an ESP event in your school or district.

Pinch Hit for an ESP

In baseball, the pinch hitter does not play the entire game. He comes in for an at-bat or an inning or two, if needed. When inviting outsiders to participate in ESP careers, think of them as pinch hitters; they can’t do everything you do, but they can help.

- 🍏 The first step is to form a committee. Try to include each job category that will be participating. You may even include an administrator to help with some of the permissions and red tape. Reach out to your UniServ representative and keep him/ her apprised. You can request help from NJEA Communications through your UniServ rep, if needed.
- 🍏 Create a proposal that includes the number of people you wish to invite, the role they will play, a possible guest list, and a time line. Be sure to plan at least three months in advance of your event date. Good times of year to hold such an event include ESP Appreciation Day in November (*Wednesday of American Education Week*) and the weeks leading up to school budget elections. Another time to consider hosting an event is before a privatization threat comes to your door.
- 🍏 Make an appointment to meet with your superintendent to review the plan and gain support. Explain that this will help the community better understand the roles of all public school employees and will shine a positive spotlight on the school district and its staff.



- 🍏 If you gain approval, use some of the resources on the NJEA **Teacher for a Day** web page to help you get started. Write letters to potential participants. Make sure they are available to stay for your entire shift. Try not to invite people who will lose a day’s pay by attending. Consider salaried employees, business owners, and even retirees.
- 🍏 List the ESP careers in your local and ask potential guests for their first and second preferences. Remember, you want them to enjoy the day and come away with a deeper appreciation for the work you do.
- 🍏 Pair your guests with ESP members who are enthusiastic about the program and the work that they do. They are ambassadors for your local association, school district, and career, so choose wisely.
- 🍏 Invite the guests to school a week or so in advance at a scheduled time so you can go over the logistics of what is expected of them. Give them a chance to meet their cooperating ESP and answer any questions they might have. Most of all, make them feel like they are an important part of YOUR school team.
- 🍏 Promote the event to your local newspaper and take plenty of pictures to share afterwards. Provide all participants with a certificate of appreciation and follow up with a thank you note.



Keep in mind that this is a great Pride in Public Education activity, so you can apply for a Pride grant to cover the costs.

