Food Services

We nourish students. We help children grow and stay healthy.
We keep prep and serving areas safe and clean.

Education support professionals (ESPs) ensure students and schools succeed. We ensure that students have access to safe and nutritious meals. Food service ESPs provide a fundamental component of student success — nutrition — which influences students’ behavior, energy levels, thinking, physical health, and overall wellbeing. Food service ESPs know that students who are undernourished are less able to learn. Some of the more important aspects of food service jobs include proper food handling, adapting recipes for children with special dietary needs, and nutrition education and practice. The meals that food service ESPs provide meet recommended dietary guidelines and help students develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

FAST FACTS:
• 60% work full-time
• 67% work in school buildings, and 32% work in central food facilities
• 97% are female
• 83% are married
• The average age is 54
• We have been NEA members for an average of 9 years
• We are 8% of the total NEA ESP membership

OUR JOBS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:
• Cooks and Food Preparation Workers
• Dietitians and Dietary Technicians
• Food Service Workers
• Cashiers
• Non-managerial Supervisors

NEA’S FOOD SERVICE ESPs ARE:
Well-trained and experienced. Thirty-seven percent have special certificates and 41 percent have taken special classes or exams.

Committed to students and our careers. Fifty-six percent have spent their own money to purchase food or school supplies for children. On average, food service ESPs have been working in the ESP field for 12 years. Ninety-two percent plan to stay in public education, and 81 percent plan to stay in their current jobs until retirement.

Active in the school community. Eighty-three percent live in the communities where they work. Twenty-six percent have volunteered time to support a parent education association. Seventeen percent have coached or supported a sports program and 16 percent have volunteered to read books to students.

Focused on safety. Sixty-four percent have job responsibilities that involve promoting school safety. Eighty-five percent believe bullying is a problem in their schools. Eighty-seven percent believe that it is their job to intervene when bullying occurs and 78 percent feel they have effective strategies for handling bullying situations.