NEA ESP K-12 Career Families:  
A Closer Look

FAST FACTS
• 63% work full-time
• 94% female
• 67% work in school buildings;  
  28% work in central kitchen units
• Average age is 54
• NEA member for an average of 10 years
• 8% of the total K-12 NEA ESP membership

We nourish students
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. We know that students who are undernourished are not able to learn. Some of the more important aspects of food service careers include proper food handling, adapting recipes for children with special dietary needs, and nutrition education and practice. The meals that we provide meet recommended dietary guidelines and help students develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

Food services is one of the nine ESP career families. NEA ESPs make up nearly a half million of NEA’s 3 million members. As a critical part of the education workforce, NEA food service members meet the needs of the whole student, ensuring students and schools succeed.

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

FOOD SERVICE CAREERS:
COOKS AND FOOD AND PREPARATION WORKERS
DIETITIANS AND DIETARY TECHNICIANS
FOOD SERVICE WORKERS
CASHIERS
NON-MANAGERIAL SUPERVISORS

Committed to students and their career. On average, an NEA food service member has been working in the ESP field for over 13 years. 86% plan to stay in public education, and 74% plan to stay in their current position until retirement. 54% have spent their own money to purchase food or school supplies for students.

Well-trained and experienced. Two-thirds (66%) have special certificates and 80% have taken special classes or exams.

Active in the school community. A large majority (79%) live in the communities where they work. 58% have volunteered time to support a parent organization. 40% have coached or supported a sports program and 32% have volunteered to read books to students.

Focused on safety. A large majority (72%) have responsibilities that involve promoting school safety.