2024 NEA ESP OF THE YEAR AWARD
OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

NOMINATION DEADLINE: 11:59 p.m. EDT on Monday, September 18, 2023
All award materials can be downloaded from www.nea.org/espoty-nomination.

Changes to the ESPOTY Process
The ESP of the Year nomination and selection process has been updated to ensure that it remains strong, unbiased, defensible, and fair, and meets or exceeds the caliber of similar high-stakes national awards. Changes include **updated scoring criteria, a revised timeline for the submission of nominations**, and the **identification of semi-finalists**. It is important to review this document carefully for an overview of these and other changes to the process.

OVERVIEW
Purpose
The National Education Association (NEA) Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Award recognizes the contributions that Education Support Professionals make toward their schools, communities, and professions. The award is presented annually to an NEA member who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and reflects the contributions of ESPs to public education. The award is presented by the NEA and NEA Member Benefits.

Award
Each spring, one nominee is presented with the NEA ESP of the Year Award at the annual NEA ESP National Conference. The 2024 NEA ESP of the Year will receive a $10,000 personal cash prize courtesy of NEA Member Benefits and will be funded by NEA to attend the following year's NEA ESP National Conference. The winner may also be invited to address the NEA Representative Assembly and will serve as an ambassador for ESPs across the country, elevating the voice of ESPs at local, state, and national events.

Eligibility
All active ESP members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit who have been NEA members for at least three years as of December 31, 2023, are eligible. Retired members are not eligible for the award. Individuals must be nominated by their state affiliate through a state ESP award program or by their local affiliate if a state program does not exist.

Nomination Types
State Affiliate Nomination: Each state affiliate may submit only **one nominee through its state ESP award program**. A state ESP award program solicits nominations from local affiliates and then selects one statewide award nominee. Criteria for the state award may be designed by the state affiliate but must not conflict with the national award's criteria and purpose. A submission by a state affiliate requires the acknowledgment of the state president.

Local Affiliate Nomination: If a state affiliate does not have an ESP award program or nominee, they may ask local affiliates to submit nominations **(one per local) directly to NEA**. Criteria for the local award may be designed by the local affiliate but must not conflict with the national award's criteria and purpose. A submission by a local affiliate requires the acknowledgment of the state and local president. Local affiliate nominations are only permissible if the state affiliate does not have an ESP award program or nominee.

Affiliate Points of Contact (POCs)

POCs are individuals appointed by the state affiliate executive director to liaise with NEA staff and coordinate the compilation and submission of their state's ESP of the Year nomination to NEA. POCs work directly with nominees to collect the award requirements and then enter them into the online system on their behalf. Nominees cannot submit their own nominations.

The state affiliate executive director should identify a POC unless the nomination is a local affiliate nomination, at which time the local affiliate would do so.

Online Nomination System

Like last year, all nominations must be submitted online using Blackbaud, the system through which NEA affiliates currently apply for grants. Hard copy nominations will NOT be accepted.

Affiliate POCs should create an **Applicant ID** and **Password** if using Blackbaud on behalf of their affiliate for the first time. New users can create a unique **Applicant ID** and **Password** from the sign-in page by clicking "**New Applicant?"** which can be found under the e-mail input box. See page 7 for links to the sign-in page.

Note: POCs who have submitted an NEA grant application or ESP of the year nomination in the past are already in the system and do not need to register again. They can log in using their existing **Applicant ID** and **Password**.

Process Change: Updated Criteria

Scoring/Selection Process & Award Criteria

The NEA ESP of the Year selection committee will review and score the nominations using the updated ESP of the Year award criteria outlined below.

- **Impact on students.** Describe specific actions you have taken and how those actions positively impacted student learning, social-emotional well-being, health and/or safety.

- **Impact on families and the community.** Describe specific actions you have taken and how those actions have positively impacted families and/or the local community.

- **Union engagement and activism, with a focus on ESP workforce issues.** Describe how your engagement and activism with the local or state union/association have positively impacted ESPs' professional stature (e.g., importance and reputation), stability (e.g., wages, benefits, and job security), and/or effectiveness (e.g., professional practice).

- **Impact on colleagues.** Describe specific actions you have taken and how those actions have positively impacted colleagues at your school campus, school district, or worksite.

To help the nominee better tell their story and focus on their impact (instead of simply submitting a list of accomplishments), each criterion follows the same cadence: "What action was taken, and what impact did that action have?"

The following three questions will be applied to each of the criteria during scoring:
1. What is the **degree of impact?** (Was the impact transactional or transformational? Were systems changed? What was the breadth and/or depth of impact?)
2. How did the actions advance **racial and social justice** in education? (Did the actions address issues of inequity? If yes, how? How were the actions inclusive and/or responsive to marginalized communities?)
3. To what degree did the nominee **collaborate or partner** with others? (e.g., individuals, organizations, etc.?)

The selection committee will review and score the nominations using the above award criteria for a combined maximum of 17 points. The committee will review and score the nominee's Personal Statement, Resume Questionnaire, and Letters of Recommendation for up to 4.25 points per criterion.

The selection committee does not score the Nomination/POC Information, Data Sheet, and State President Acknowledgment. Select parts of the Nomination/POC Information (e.g., type of nomination, affiliate name, zone/state) and Data Sheet (e.g., name, career/worksite information) are reviewed by the selection committee to provide additional context to each nomination. The digital head shot is not viewed or scored by the committee. NEA ESP Quality staff review all nominations to ensure that submission and eligibility requirements are met.

A **strong nomination package** will demonstrate how the nominee meets and/or exceeds each criterion. It will demonstrate the nominee's impact in each criterion area by describing what action was taken and what impact the action had. Strong nominations tell how the nominee has effected change using specific examples. Nominees should ask themselves, "What is the story I want to tell about my work and impact in each of the criterion areas? A strong nomination is more than simply a list of accomplishments. It is the story of how those accomplishments made an impact.

When the scoring and selection process is complete, the committee will forward its recommendation to the NEA president, who will present it to the NEA Executive Committee for consideration and action.

Process Change: Identification of Semi-finalists
The process will now include the identification of semi-finalists in advance of the announcement of the finalist at the NEA ESP National Conference. More information will be available at a later date.

Notification
The NEA ESP of the Year Award recipient will remain confidential until the announcement at the 2024 NEA ESP National Conference.

Questions and Technical Support
- For general questions about the NEA ESP of the Year Award program, email jyoung@nea.org.
- For technical support with the online system or help with Applicant IDs and Passwords, email ESPOTY@nea.org.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING A NOMINATION
Note: If the following requirements are not met, the nomination will not be considered for review and selection.

Process Change: Resubmission Feature
NEA ESP Quality staff will review nominations to ensure that all eligibility and submission requirements are met. If there are any issues that need attention, POCs will be asked to make the necessary corrections and resubmit the nomination.

Deadline
Nominations must be submitted **by 11:59 p.m. EDT on Monday, September 18, 2023**. Nominations submitted after this date will not be considered for the award.

A complete nomination package includes the following award requirements:
- A completed **Nomination Form**, including the:
    - **Nomination/POC Information**
    - **the nominee's Data Sheet**
    - **the nominee's Personal Statement**

- o **the nominee's Resume Questionnaire**
- o **State President Acknowledgment**
- **Three (3) Letters of Recommendation (no more, no less)**
- **A high-resolution digital head shot of the nominee**

Nomination Form

Nomination/POC Information

Affiliate POCs will complete the Nomination/POC Information section (e.g., date of nomination, nomination type, affiliate name, nomination zone/state, POC contact information) in the online system. See page 1 of the *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* to view the "Nomination/POC Information" tab as it appears in the system.

Note: The *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* is a copy of the nomination form as it appears in the system. It will help the POC become familiar with how the nomination requirements are organized in the system.

Data Sheet / Personal Statement / Resume Questionnaire

Nominees are required to complete and submit a Data Sheet, Personal Statement, and Resume Questionnaire. Once completed, POCs will copy and paste (or type) the nominee's responses into the system on the nominee's behalf. These requirements allow the nominee to share relevant personal and career information and demonstrate how they have met or exceeded the four criterion areas.

IMPORTANT! The nominee must write the responses for these sections. They cannot be written by another individual (i.e., an individual who nominated the member as part of the affiliate's process). Nominations submitted with any sections written from a third-person point of view will not be accepted. POCs will be required to revise these sections and resubmit the nomination.

Data Sheet: Each nominee must provide personal contact, worksite/career, and demographic information in the Data Sheet.

Personal Statement: Nominees must also complete and submit a Personal Statement that provides specific examples of impact in each of the four award criteria. Nominees may respond with up to 750 words per criterion. **Reminder:** The award criteria have been updated (see page 2).

Resume Questionnaire: Nominees must further demonstrate their accomplishments and impact related to the award criteria through the Resume Questionnaire. It should outline the work and professional experiences of the nominee through brief bullets or paragraphs. Nominees will outline past and present professional and Association positions, school or district roles, and positions with external organizations, community groups, or other stakeholders. Nominees will also list education, training, and/or certificates and licenses, and honors or awards received. Nominees may respond with up to 750 words per question.

See pages 1-6 of the *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* to view the "Data Sheet," "Personal Statement," and "Resume Questionnaire" tabs as they appear in the system.

> **2024 ESPOTY Data Sheet / Personal Statement / Resume Template – Helpful Resource!**
> An optional template to help POCs collect the Data Sheet, Personal Statement, and Resume Questionnaire responses from the nominee is available. The template is a Microsoft Word fillable form that reflects what is asked in the system for these sections. Once the nominee completes the template, the POC will copy and paste (or type) the responses into the system on their behalf.
>
> **Note:** Long answer text fields in the Personal Statement and Resume Questionnaire template do not truncate responses or flag for the nominee if they have exceeded the 750-word count limits. However, the online system will flag when responses have exceeded word count limits and require adjustments before proceeding to another section of the nomination.
>
> Download the *2024 ESPOTY Data Sheet, Personal Statement, Resume Template* here.

State President Acknowledgement

Affiliate POCs must complete the State President Acknowledgement section in the system on behalf of their State President. The POC should share this section with the State President, obtain the appropriate approvals, and then complete it on their behalf. If this is a local affiliate nomination, the local and state president will acknowledge the nomination. See page 6 of the *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* to view the "State President Acknowledgement" tab as it appears in the system.

==**Process Change: Letters of Recommendation Requirements and Formatting**==
Letters of Recommendation

Paired with the Personal Statement and Resume Questionnaire, three (3) Letters of Recommendation (no more, no less) should further demonstrate the nominee's accomplishments and impact related to the award criteria.

Nominees should seek letters of recommendation from individuals who can cite specific examples of how the nominee has impacted one or more of the four criterion areas. ==**Process Update**== We no longer require that a letter from an individual at the nominee's school/worksite, union, and community be submitted. However, we recommend that letter writers should be from the nominee's school/worksite (e.g., fellow ESPs, teachers or other colleagues; principals, superintendents), local/state union (e.g., elected leaders, fellow members, staff), and community (e.g., current or former students; parents/families/guardians of students; representatives of charitable, faith-based, non-profit or other community-based organizations) as these capacities align with the award criteria.

Letters should note how long the writer has known the nominee and describe the capacity (e.g., school/worksite, local/state union, community) through which the writer is commenting on the nominee's accomplishments and impact. Nominations that don't include three (3) letters of recommendation will not be accepted. POCs will be asked to upload any additional letter(s) needed and resubmit the nomination.

> **FORMATTING OF LETTERS**
>
> - <mark>**Process Update:** Letters must be **typed**, **one-page maximum,** with **one-inch margins** and **minimum 11-point font** and uploaded as PDFs.</mark> Letters that do adhere to these requirements will not be accepted. Formatting issues will be flagged and POCs will be required to upload new letters and resubmit the nomination.
> - Letters can be addressed to the selection committee or "to whom it may concern."
> - The signature line of each letter should include the writer's signature (typed or handwritten), first and last name (typed), title/position, and phone number or email address should we need to reach them with questions.

POC Instructions for Uploading Letters

1. Double check the formatting of each letter to ensure they are **typed, one-page maximum, with one-inch margins and minimum 11-point font**.
2. Change the filename of each letter to include the nominee's first and last name and state (e.g., two-letter state abbreviation).
3. Save the file as an Adobe PDF (if needed).
4. Upload each letter into the online system as an attachment (from the "Attachments" tab). To upload a letter:
   - Click on the dropdown arrow in the "Title" box and select the letter you want to upload (e.g., Letter of Recommendation 1, Letter of Recommendation 2, or Letter of Recommendation 3)
   - Select "Choose file" to find and select the file saved on your computer/device
   - Click "Upload"

Be sure to select the correct letter you want to upload from the dropdown menu each time you upload a letter. You can view or delete the attachments you have uploaded at the top of the "Attachments" tab. See page 7 of the *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* to view the "Attachments" tab as it appears in the system.

Note: The system requires you to upload a letter for each of the attachments listed in the dropdown box (e.g., Letter of Recommendation 1, Letter of Recommendation 2, Letter of Recommendation 3), but also allows you to upload more than one file for each. If more than three (3) letters are submitted, POCs will be asked to make the necessary revisions and resubmit the nomination.

> **2024 ESPOTY LOR Requirements – Helpful Resource for Letter Writers!**
> This document summarizes the requirements for letters of recommendation (LORs). POCs or nominees should share this with letters writers to help ensure that all requirements are met.
> Download the *2024 ESPOTY Letter of Recommendation Requirements* here.

Digital Head Shot

Nominees must also submit a **high-resolution** digital head shot that will be used in communications and promotional materials (e.g., nominee webpage, signage, award ceremony slideshow at the ESP conference, and printed materials). The photo must be **1200 x 1200 pixels or 1.4Mb in size and 300 dpi** and submitted as a JPEG file.

- Photos taken with a good quality smartphone or professional quality photos taken by affiliate staff are recommended.
- Professional or business casual attire, please.
- No selfies, pictures of pictures, or screenshots from Facebook or other social media platforms.

Tips: A high-quality photo will have good lighting and headroom. Photos can be taken indoors or outdoors but should be taken with the light pointing in the direction of the nominee's face. Frame the shot so there is enough space around the nominee's head.

The POC will upload the head shot into the system as an attachment (under the "Attachments" tab). See page 7 of the *2024 ESPOTY Sample Nomination Form* to view the "Attachments" tab as it appears in the system.

NEA ESPQ staff will check the quality of the photo and email the POC and nominee if a new photo is needed. POCs will be asked to upload a new photo and resubmit the nomination if needed.

Reviewing and Submitting a Nomination

- Use the *2024 ESPOTY Nomination Checklist* before submitting the nomination to ensure that award requirements have been met. The checklist is a Microsoft Word fillable form.
- We strongly encourage POCs to share the draft nomination with the nominee before it is submitted so that any changes can be made before the deadline. At any time before submitting, the POC can print or email a draft of the nomination to themselves or the nominee for review. The **"Printer Friendly Version"** and **"E-mail Draft"** features can be found in the top right corner of the system.
- When you click "**Review My Application**" (top right tab in the system), missing information will be flagged, and you will be required to provide it before you can proceed. Click "Update" at the bottom of the nomination to save your changes.
- Click "**Review and Submit**" once your nomination is ready to be submitted. You can scroll through the nomination to ensure everything is correct. Missing information will be flagged, and you will be required to provide it before you can proceed. "Review and Submit" can be found at the bottom middle of the "Attachments" tab.
- **Once a nomination is submitted**, the POC will receive a confirmation email that includes a copy of the nomination. NEA ESP Quality staff will review the nomination to ensure that all eligibility and submission requirements are met. If any issues are identified, POCs will be asked to make the necessary corrections and resubmit the nomination. Nominees will also receive a confirmation email and a copy of the nomination after the nomination is reviewed and it is confirmed that there are no issues that require attention.

> ❖ Click here to **start a new** ESP of the Year Nomination.
> ❖ Return to a **saved** ESP of the Year Nomination here.

Online System (Blackbaud) Tips!

- You can access the award requirements, contact ESPQ staff, or exit the system using the menu features in the top right corner of the system.
- You can navigate from one section of the nomination to another using the tabs at the top of the screen or the "Next" feature (bottom middle of each tab).
- POCs can save in-progress nominations by clicking "Save and Finish Later" (bottom middle of each tab). POCs will receive a confirmation email that includes the draft nomination each time the nomination is saved.
- All responses/text will be automatically formatted to the font size and type the system requires.
- Spell check has been enabled for long text fields (indicated by red check marks).

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