



2021 NEA ESP OF THE YEAR AWARD OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES

Additional award materials and guidance is available at www.nea.org/espoty-nomination
NOMINATION DEADLINE: 5:00 p.m. EST Monday, December 14, 2020

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 state nominee is presented with the NEA ESP of the Year Award at the annual NEA ESP National Conference. The winner of the 2021 NEA ESP of the Year Award will receive a \$10,000 personal cash prize courtesy of NEA Member Benefits. 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, 2020**, are eligible. Individuals must be nominated by their state affiliate through a state ESP award program or by their local association 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 individual 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, they may ask local affiliates to submit nominations (**one per local**) **directly to NEA**. A submission by a local affiliate requires the acknowledgment of the state and local president. Local affiliates are encouraged to provide a copy of their nomination to the state affiliate.

Submission Process **(NEW ONLINE SYSTEM!)**

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.

Under the new system, affiliates will identify a point of contact (POC) who will work with the nominee to collect the award requirements and then enter them into the system on their behalf. This individual does not have to be someone who has submitted grant applications in the past.

Award Requirements and Guidelines

- A completed **Nomination Form**, including the:
 - **Nomination Information**
 - the nominee's **Data Sheet**
 - the nominee's **Personal Statement**
 - the nominee's **Resume Questionnaire**
 - **State President Acknowledgment**
- **Three (3) Letters of Recommendation**, one each from an individual in the nominee's:
 - school/worksite
 - local/state affiliate
 - community
- **A high-resolution digital head shot of the nominee**

Nomination Form

Each nominee is required to provide personal contact, worksite/career and demographic information in the **Data Sheet**. Staff review the Data Sheet to ensure that submission and eligibility requirements are met. The selection committee does not score the Data Sheet and only view select parts that are critical to providing context to the nomination (e.g., name, type of nomination, career/worksite information).

Nominees must also submit a **Personal Statement** that provides specific examples of achievement in each of the five award criterion and examples of how they go beyond the roles and responsibilities of their job description. Nominees may submit statements of up to 750 words per criterion.

Nominees should further demonstrate their accomplishments 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 as well as honors or awards received. Nominees may respond with up to 750 words per question.

- **Note:** A Microsoft Word fillable form template is available at www.nea.org/espoty-nomination to help POCs collect the Data Sheet, Personal Statement, and Resume Questionnaire requirements from nominees. Once provided by the nominee, the POC will copy and paste (or type) the nominee's responses into the system.

Affiliate POCs will complete the **State President Acknowledgment** on behalf of their State President and they will provide **Nomination Information** (e.g., whether it is a local or state affiliate nomination, nomination zone/state, POC contact information). The selection committee does not score the State President Acknowledgment or Nomination Information. These sections are reviewed by staff only to ensure that eligibility and submission requirements are met.

Blackbaud System Tricks & Tips

- The POC does not need to worry about font type or size when inputting information into the system.
- The system will spell check the nomination.

- The system will notify the POC if they are over the word count limit so they can make adjustments. If not shortened before submission, the system will truncate the text.
- The POC can save their progress and come back later to finish by clicking on **Save and Finish Later**. At any time, the POC can print or email a draft of the in-progress nomination to themselves.
- When you click on the **Review My Application** tab or **Review and Submit**, the system will flag any missing information for the POC. The POC will be required to provide the information before they can submit the nomination.
- Upon submission of the nomination, the POC will receive an email confirming that it was submitted successfully. A copy of the nomination will be included.
- For technical support with the online nomination system, email ESPOTY@nea.org.

Letters of Recommendation

Paired with the Personal Statement and Resume Questionnaire, the **Letters of Recommendation** should further demonstrate the nominee's accomplishments related to the award criterion. The letters must answer the question, "Why does this nominee deserve the NEA ESP of the Year Award?" through specific examples of accomplishments and it must describe the capacity through which the referee is commenting on the nominee's accomplishments (e.g., school/worksite, local/state affiliate, community). The letters must also provide examples of how the nominee goes beyond the roles and responsibilities of their job description (when possible). Referees may respond with up to 4,000 characters per question. The individual writing the letter (i.e., the referee) will also note how long they have known the nominee.

Important! One letter must come from an individual at the nominee's school/worksite, an individual at the nominee's state/local affiliate (such as elected leaders, members or staff), and an individual in the nominee's community (such as current or former students, parents of students, community members, etc.) Failure to do so may result in a deduction of points.

Note: The Letter of Recommendation forms have been created in Adobe Acrobat as fillable forms. They are separate files that the POC will upload into the system once completed by the referees. The POC should work with the nominee to identify the three (3) referees and the capacity in which each will write their letter, and share the appropriate form with each of them. Each form has been labeled with the capacity through which the referee is writing. Referees should save the form to their device, fill it out, and then email it to either the POC or nominee.

Adobe Fillable Form Tricks & Tips

- Referees can type directly into the fillable form fields or copy and paste text into those fields.
- Referees do not need to worry about font type or size.
- Character limits are used in Adobe fillable forms. Questions 4-6 have character limits of 4,000 per question. Adobe will truncate the text if character limits are exceeded. Referees should check their responses especially if they copy and paste into the form.
- We suggest that referees answer questions 4-6 in Microsoft Word first and then copy and paste their responses into the form.
- The spell check feature has been enabled in all of the forms.
- You can print the form and/or save it to your device at any time.

Digital Head Shot

Nominees must also submit a **high-resolution digital head shot** that will be used for promotional purposes only. The photo must be 1200 x 1200 pixels or 1.4Mb in size and 300 dpi. The photo must be submitted as a JPEG file. The POC will upload the digital head shot into the system as an attachment. The selection committee does not view or score the photo.

Selection Process & Award Criteria

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

- **Professional Practice:** Worksite responsibilities and professional achievements the nominee has made in their field; must include at least one example of how the nominee has directly impacted student success in their school or worksite.
- **Community Engagement:** Details on how the nominee is involved in promoting public education within the community through charitable projects and activities and examples of how that involvement has benefited students, families and other members.
- **Enhancement of ESP Image:** Details of how the nominee's activities have enhanced the image of ESPs at the worksite, in the Association and in the community.
- **Personal Achievement:** A description of the nominee's personal and/or professional goals; what they have done or are doing to meet these goals; how their growth and goals benefit students, members, families and/or the larger community; and advice they would give to a colleague entering the profession.
- **Member Advocacy and Association Involvement:** Evidence of leadership, creativity and innovation in advocating for members, for the profession and for public education; evidence of involvement in NEA or the local/state affiliate and how that involvement contributes to professional success; evidence that the nominee engages in member recruitment activities and encourages fellow members to be more active.

The selection committee will review and score the nominations using the award criteria outlined above for a combined maximum of 26.25 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. They will also complete a technical review during which they will award "1" point for each of the following award requirements submitted (e.g., Personal Statement, Resume Questionnaire, three (3) Letters of Recommendation). As a reminder, the selection committee does not score the Nomination Information, Data Sheet, State President Acknowledgement, or Digital Head Shot.

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

Disqualification

Nominations will be disqualified if a complete nomination is not submitted electronically using the new online system on or before 5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, December 14.

Notification

The NEA ESP of the Year Award recipient will remain confidential until it is announced as part of the 2021 virtual NEA ESP National Conference. Conference and award ceremony details will be shared when available.

Questions and Technical Support

Updated 11/24/2020

- For questions about the NEA ESPOTY Award program, email jyoung@nea.org.
- For technical support with the online nomination system, email ESPOTY@nea.org.