

November 24, 2025

TO: Local Presidents

FROM: VEA Education Support Professionals Committee

**SUBJECT: 2026 Nominations for VEA Education Support Professional
of the Year**

We are pleased to provide you with the **VEA ESP of the Year Award** Nomination Package. If you have not already done so, now is the time to consider whom you will nominate for the award.

Enclosed is a copy of the flyer and guidelines for submitting the nomination package which contains the nomination and selection procedure, submission guidelines, and award requirement details for the award. The award will be presented at the 2026 VEA Delegate Assembly.

The nomination package must be received by electronic submission via this link, <https://vea.link/2026espaward>, by 4:30pm, Thursday, January 8, 2026. Paper applications are available upon request.

The ESP Committee will select a recipient based on the criteria described in the nomination package.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to call us at 1-800-552-9554 or (804) 648-5801, extension 335.

Enclosures

cc: VEA Board
UniServ Council Chairs
UniServ Directors
ESP Committee

8001 Franklin Farms Drive, Suite 200
Richmond, VA 23229
D 804.648.5801
D 800.552.9554
choward1@veanea.org

Virginia Education Association Education Support Professional of the Year Award

Calling all Local Affiliates to nominate an ESP member who is actively engaged in their profession, Association and community.

Purpose: The **VEA Education Support Professional of the Year Award** recognizes the contributions that Education Support Professionals make toward their schools, communities and professions. The award is presented to a member of the VEA who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and reflects the contributions of ESP to public education.

Award: Each year, one nominee receives the **VEA ESP of the Year Award**. The recipient would receive funding, to include travel and lodging, to attend the National ESP Conference. The winner will be recognized at the VEA Delegate Assembly. The winner will also receive a monetary gift of \$250. The VEA state winner may be required to submit additional information, including a digital headshot.

Deadline: The nomination package must be received by electronic submission via this link, <https://vea.link/2026espaward>, by 4:30pm, Thursday, January 8, 2026.

Questions: Contact Chastity Howard at choward@veanea.org or Dr. Carl Howard at choward1@veanea.org



Nomination and Selection Procedure

- Nominations:** Each local may submit only one nominee through an ESP award program. A local ESP award program is defined as one developed by the local that solicits nominations and selects one award recipient.
- Eligibility:** All Education Support Professional members of a local affiliate who have been VEA members for at least **three years** as of January 8th of the award year are eligible. **Nominees must be an “active” member at the time of selection. Individuals must be nominated by their local through an ESP award program.**
- Selection:** All nominations must comply with the nomination guidelines. The VEA ESP Committee will review all nominations to ensure that eligibility and submission requirements are met. The VEA ESP Committee will forward its recommendation to the VEA President/Board of Directors for presentation at the Virginia Education Association Delegate Assembly.
- The VEA ESP committee will review and score the nominations using the **Award Requirement Details** listed below 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 VEA ESP committee does not score the nominee’s Personal Information and Local Affiliate Acknowledgment. Select parts of the Nomination form (e.g., type of nomination, affiliate name, zone/local, name, career/worksite information) are reviewed by the selection committee to provide additional context to each nomination.
- 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
- Notification:** The VEA Education Support Professional Award will be presented at the 2026 VEA Delegate Assembly.

Submission Guidelines

1. **The nomination package must be received by electronic submission via this link, <https://vea.link/2026espaward>, by 4:30pm, Thursday, January 8, 2026.**
2. Include **ONLY** the materials requested in these guidelines.
3. Paper applications are available upon request.

Nominations that do not conform to deadlines and format specifications **will be disqualified**. All nomination applications will be saved in file at VEA for one (1) year.

*The ESP Committee and staff liaison will assist the VEA ESP of the Year award winner to apply to the NEA ESP of the Year nomination.

Award Requirement Details

A complete nomination package includes the following award requirements:

- Local Affiliate Acknowledgement
- Nominee Personal Information
- Nominee Worksite/Career Information
- Nominee Personal Statement
- Nominee Resume Questionnaire
- Three (3) Letters of Recommendation

Local Affiliate Acknowledgement

Before completing this section, the nominee should share this section with the Local President, obtain the appropriate approvals, and then complete it on their behalf. The form asks the nominee to type in the Local President's Name and email address.

The form asks the nominee to attest to the following on behalf of the Local President.

By checking the box below, you are attesting that:

- You have permission from the Local President to electronically sign and submit this nomination on their behalf, and
- The Local President recognizes the individual outlined in this nomination as the Local Education Association's nominee for the 2026 VEA ESP of the Year Award.

Nominee Personal Information

Nominees must provide contact and demographic information for this section of the form (e.g., name, mailing address, email address, phone number, age range, race, pronouns, social media handles, etc.)

Nominee Worksite/Career Information

Nominees must provide worksite/career information for this section of the form (e.g., local affiliate, local president, VEA member ID, UniServ Director, job title, career family, etc.).

Nominee Personal Statement

The nominee MUST write the Personal Statement. This section cannot be written by another individual (i.e., an individual who nominated the member as part of the affiliate's process). Nominations submitted with sections written by someone other than the nominee (i.e., from a third-person point of view) will not be accepted.

Nominees will demonstrate how they have met or exceeded the four criterion areas in the Personal Statement by providing specific examples of accomplishments and impact. **Nominees may respond with up to 4,000 characters (including spaces) per criterion area.** The four criterion areas are:

- **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.

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.?)

Nominee Resume Questionnaire

The nominee MUST write the Resume Questionnaire. This section cannot be written by another individual (i.e., an individual who nominated the member as part of the affiliate's process). Nominations submitted with sections written by someone other than the nominee (i.e., from a third-person point of view) will not be accepted.

Nominees will further demonstrate their accomplishments and impact related to the award criteria through the Resume Questionnaire. Nominees will outline past and present professional/work experience, school/district roles and appointments, education/training/certificates, external organization/stakeholder group positions, achievements/honors/awards, and local/state affiliate positions and appointments. **Nominees can respond in bullets or paragraphs with up to 4,000 characters (including spaces) per question.**

Letters of Recommendation

Nominees must **submit three (3) Letters of Recommendation (no more, no less).**

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. Letter writers should be from the nominee's school/worksite (e.g., fellow ESPs, teachers or other colleagues; principals, superintendents), local/state affiliate/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 affiliate/union, community) through which the writer is commenting on the nominee's accomplishments and impact.

What should letters address/include?

Letters of Recommendation should further demonstrate the nominee's accomplishments and impact in the following award criteria. Letters can address/include accomplishments and impact in more than one criterion area.

- **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.

Formatting Requirements

- Letters must be **typed, one page maximum, with one-inch margins and minimum 11-point font.** Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- Letters can be submitted as a **PDF or Word document.**
- Letters should include the **writer's signature (typed or handwritten), first and last name, title/position, and phone number or email address** if we have questions.
- Letters can be addressed to the selection committee or "to whom it may concern," but it is not required.

Instructions for Uploading Letters

- Change the filename of each letter to include the nominee's name and local.
- Upload each letter by clicking "choose/browse files", navigating to where the file is saved on your computer/device, selecting the file, and then clicking "open/upload."

Virginia Education Support Professional of The Year

Recognizing the contributions of Education Support Professionals to their schools, communities, and professions.



Calling all Local Affiliates to nominate an ESP member who is actively engaged in their profession, Association and community. The nominee should demonstrate involvement in each of the four (4) criteria:

- Impact on students
- Impact on families and the community
- Union engagement and activism, with a focus on ESP workforce issues
- Impact on colleagues

Nominees must be an “active” member for three years as of January 8 of the award year as well as at the time of selection as their local nominee. **The nomination package must be received by electronic submission via this link, <https://vea.link/2026espaward>, by 4:30pm, Thursday, January 8, 2026.**



For questions contact:

Chastity Howard
choward@veanea.org

Dr. Carl Howard
Choward1@veanea.org

