

Education Minnesota

St. Peter paraprofessional named 2018 Education Support Professional of the Year

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ST. PAUL, Minn., Nov. 14, 2018 – Education Minnesota is celebrating American Education Week by honoring Melissa Terpstra, a middle school thinking room supervisor, as the 2018 Education Minnesota Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year.

Terpstra has worked in St. Peter Public Schools since 2003, first as a special education paraprofessional at South Elementary and then as a thinking room supervisor at South Elementary and now at St. Peter Middle School. She also serves as the local president of the Education Minnesota Paraprofessional Educators of Saint Peter union.

As a thinking room supervisor, Terpstra is the first point of contact for students experiencing behavior issues in the classroom, lunchroom, hallways or during recess. In her award nomination materials, Terpstra's colleagues describe her as authentic, impressive, dedicated and award-worthy.

"I love what I do and I do what I love," said Terpstra. "I'm not sure what our school would look like without ESPs. We go hand-in-hand with the teachers."

Terpstra also works tirelessly to make sure ESPs are supported and valued members of the district. As local union president, she makes sure all ESPs know the value of the union. She advocates for ESPs to receive professional development, attend conferences and be a part of the larger labor movement.

St. Peter Superintendent Paul Peterson summarized what all her colleagues shared about Terpstra in his recommendation letter for her award nomination, "What I have found is the key ingredient to success within schools and working with students is authenticity, and this is something that Missy brings to her job every single day and every single year."

As the new Minnesota ESP of the Year, Terpstra will receive a new Apple iPad and a \$1,000 honorarium. She will also be nominated for the National Education Association's ESP of the Year and will receive an all-expenses paid trip to Las Vegas for the awards ceremony in March.

"ESP's are often the first people that interact with our students each day and the last ones to say goodbye," said Education Minnesota Vice President Paul Mueller, who presented Terpstra with her award. "A big piece of our student's successes is the personal interaction that ESPs can give them in and out of the classroom. I don't think anyone knows that more than our 2018 Education Support Professional of the Year Melissa Terpstra."



American Education Week, a national celebration of public education, runs from Nov. 12 through Nov. 16. Wednesday had been designated as Education Support Professionals Day to honor the people who keep schools running and students safe, healthy and ready to learn.

The winner of the Education Support Professional of the Year award is selected by a five-member selection committee that includes three leaders of Education Minnesota, the winner in the previous year and a representative of an external organization, which was United Educators Credit Union this year.

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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