

Great Public Schools: YOU Make the Difference!

American Education Week is here! This week we celebrate education in America as well as in our schools right here in west central Wisconsin. You, the teachers and support staff in our schools provide essential services to the children, families, and communities. We all know that many children come to school eager and ready to learn, with supportive families and adults backing them up as they head off to school. We also know that many students come to school hungry and tired, without the support and preparation they need to begin the school day.

The complex mix of students in any school can only be dimly seen in crude statistics such as test scores, "free lunch" counts, attendance, truancy, and grades. The only way to really know and understand a school is to get right in there and work with the students face to face. You have to talk with them and interact every day. Meet them at the door, teach them in the classroom, spend time with them on the playground or lunchroom, or take them home on the bus. Who does these things? The teachers and the support staff who work with the students: you! You know your students better than any crude statistic can ever tell. And you know what to do to help them succeed.

The challenges faced by teachers and ESP are numerous and sometimes overwhelming, but the rewards are even greater. You know that every day you go to work you have the chance to shape a life for the better. You know that your words, your kindness, your competence, and your energy can make a difference in a child's life.

Forget about everything for a few minutes, forget how busy and stressed you are for a few hours, and forget the endless

criticism from taxpayers and attacks on public schools for a few days. Breathe deep and take some time this week to appreciate and celebrate the profession you have chosen: You are an educator! You make a difference one child at a time.