

ESP Talking Points



Professional Respect

The right to be acknowledged, respected, and valued for expertise, training, and dedication, in great public schools and their communities.

- Education Support Professionals are essential to student success, and their voices must be heard and respected in all local, district, and state decisions. They have the right to be included in IEP/504 meetings when their work is focused on a specific student or when their expertise is required.
- ESPs have the right to relevant and meaningful professional development, as well as the opportunity to earn certifications and credentials necessary for career advancement.
- ESPs with certifications have a right to appropriate placement (steps and lanes) on the salary schedule. They also deserve a reasonable expectation of annual employment renewal, a fair probationary period, and strong Just Cause provisions in their contract.



Manageable Workload

The right to do their jobs within the workday, including regularly scheduled time to manage workload, preparation, collaboration, break time, duty-free lunch, and other essential and professional tasks. This also includes limiting class size or total student load to ensure staff can plan, assess student learning, and build strong relationships with their students and families.

- Education Support Professionals have the right to manageable class loads and caseloads, limiting the number of students assigned to an individual paraprofessional, especially those who support students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- ESPs have the right to a reasonable time provided to accomplish expected responsibilities. Overloaded caseloads prevent the provision of the mandated one-on-one or small group support necessary for students to meet their goals.
- Education Support Professionals deserve a voice in establishing fully staffed shifts, clear work protocols, and resources that support their careers.



Fair Compensation.

The right to bargain for a competitive, comprehensive agreement encompassing many issues, including competitive and living wages, paid leave, affordable health insurance, benefits, working conditions, and limiting class size. One job should be enough.

- Education Support Professionals must receive livable wages that reflect their essential roles. One job should be enough to support a family, meaning classified staff should not have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. This includes comparable hourly wages with similar-sized school districts, and the implementation of differential pay that accurately recognizes their education, years of experience, and credentials.
- Every ESP who desires it should have the opportunity to work full-time and receive accompanying health benefits. For too long, benefits have been unaffordable—no ESP should ever receive a “zero-dollar” paycheck because their health insurance premiums consume their entire salary. We must ensure comprehensive, affordable health benefits for all who want them.
- ESPs deserve the same stability and security afforded to other professionals. This includes guaranteed paid leave, such as personal and sick days, as well as comprehensive parental/caregiver/FMLA benefits. Furthermore, those without a full 12-month contract must be eligible for unemployment benefits during the summer or whenever they are laid off, recognizing their lack of year-round employment.



Safe and Healthy Work Environment.

The right to a safe, healthy, and secure working and learning environment with administrative support for clear, consistent, and up-to-date processes for addressing disruptive behavior and intentionally violent acts.

- Education Support Professionals deserve a safe and healthy workplace environment free from all forms of violence, including physical, verbal, and emotional abuse, and free from exposure to hazardous materials.
- ESPs have the right to clear safety protocols, appropriate supplies, and equipment that are safely maintained for all staff. This must be backed by comprehensive training on workplace regulations and strong whistleblower protections to ensure concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation.
- To ensure both student and staff safety, there must be adequate staffing to guarantee students with severe needs receive the specialized care and attention they deserve. This must be coupled with sufficient continuous training for all staff working with these students.



Secure Retirement.

The right to a secure retirement with IPERS, a well-managed, gold-standard defined-benefit retirement system.

- Education Support Professionals have the right to a secure retirement through IPERS, a well-managed, gold-standard defined-benefit system. Crucially, all years of service, whether full-time or part-time, must count toward the complete pension calculation.
- All ESPs, regardless of their employment status (full-time or part-time), must be allowed to retire with the district. Retirement benefits can be adjusted for part-time status, but eligibility must be universal.
- To provide essential flexibility and acknowledge long-term service, school districts should offer voluntary early retirement packages to Education Support Professionals.



Quality Resources.

The right to select and use high-quality resources, supplies, tools, and equipment needed to effectively and productively execute jobs and duties. This includes ensuring that all curriculum is credible, research-based, and developmentally appropriate.

- Education Support Professionals deserve the right to select and use high-quality resources, supplies, tools, and equipment necessary to effectively and productively execute their jobs and duties.
- All ESPs must be provided with adequate tools to perform their jobs effectively, ensuring they can contribute fully to student support and school operations.
- ESPs require guaranteed access to necessary district-provided technology (such as iPads, Chromebooks, or cellular devices) to support communication, documentation, and instructional tasks.



Community Support.

The right to a school environment that reinforces student learning and school goals, with support from administrators, board members, parents, and the community.

- Education is a community-wide effort, not just the responsibility of school staff. When staff, administrators, board members, and parents collaborate, they establish a robust and consistent support system that enables students to succeed. This community support is crucial in reinforcing student learning and school goals.
- Providing students with a consistent message about the importance of their education and the value of their school requires community support for success. It requires positive action from administrators, school board members, and the community.
- Strong community support fosters a positive and healthy school environment. It helps build trust and communication between families and staff, which is essential for addressing challenges and celebrating successes. Support is a two-way street that requires all parties to be engaged and active in student success.



Collaborative Leadership.

The right to a Labor Management Committee (LMC) in every workplace, utilizing local association members to foster collaborative problem solving, improve working conditions, and enhance student learning.

- Education Support Professionals deserve a strong voice in their workplace, which includes the fundamental right to join their union and advocate for the rights and protections they deserve without fear of reprisal.
- A Labor Management Committee (LMC) comprising ESP members should be established in every workplace to foster collaborative problem-solving and drive improvements in working conditions.
- Opportunities for regular Teacher/Paraprofessional Learning Community (PLC) meetings must be provided to develop high-functioning, integrated teacher/para teams that enhance instructional support and student outcomes.



Professional Growth.

The right to shape and access job-related growth opportunities. This includes professional development tailored to specific needs, interests, and experiences, as well as quality onboarding, training, and mentoring for new employees.

- Education Support Professionals deserve high-quality, job-related, and rigorous professional development (PD) that is relevant to their specific roles and is provided during paid contract time.
- Professional Development should be offered in conjunction with certificated staff to foster teamwork. Furthermore, ESPs must have accessible opportunities for credential-based training and certifications to support career advancement.
- When ESPs pursue promotions or request transfers, and during layoffs or furloughs, their seniority rights must be protected to ensure a fair and secure path to growth.



Professional Collaboration.

The right to collaboration and input, which recognizes staff as experts in their field, and the value in exchanging and sharing practices, lessons learned, methods used, and general experiences with each other.

- Education Support Professionals must have dedicated paid time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), organized by classification (e.g., all custodians, all special education aids, etc.). This provides essential time to work together, exchange ideas, collaborate, and solve common workplace challenges.
- ESPs have the right to collaboration and input, which recognizes them as experts in their field. These values facilitate the exchange and sharing of best practices, lessons learned, methods used, and general experiences among us.
- Every ESP should have access to a quality, paid peer mentoring program. This ensures new staff are effectively onboarded, and all staff benefit from the expertise and support of experienced colleagues.