

NEA K-12 Education Support Professionals (ESPs)

A Closer Look



NEA Education Support Professionals make up nearly a half million of NEA's 3 million members. As a critical part of the education workforce, ESPs meet the needs of the whole student, ensuring students and schools succeed. NEA ESP members work in public K-12 and higher education institutions.

ESP members working in K-12 institutions want greater awareness and appreciation of the ways they contribute to great public schools, increased wages, job security, and professional development opportunities. They've identified using technology and managing student behavior as areas of greatest need. They believe that in-person, practice-based, collaborative professional learning activities are most effective, including apprenticeships, mentoring, and specialized coursework.

FAST FACTS

- 40% work in a preschool, kindergarten, or elementary school
- 53% live in a small town or rural area
- 49% work as paraeducators
- 85% work full-time
- 61% receive an hourly wage
- 81% female
- Average age is 52
- 84% hold only one job at a time

78%

PROMOTE SAFETY

61%

WORK WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

71%

LIVE IN THE COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY WORK

Educated, well-trained, and experienced. K-12 ESPs have made significant personal accomplishments in education. More than one half (**57%**) have an Associate's or more advanced degree. **43%** are required to have a special certificate and licenses are mandatory for **29%**. College credits are compulsory for **32%**. On average, they have been employed as an ESP for 13 years. Nearly **80%** intend to stay in the ESP field and **67%** plan to stay in their current profession until retirement.

Committed to students and their success. A major source of job satisfaction is the personal fulfillment from working with students. Most (**61%**) are assigned activities involving special education students. **67%** have volunteered their time to support a wide range of education activities in the past two years that assist students and benefit the community, such as reading books to students or lobbying for the benefit of education. Two-thirds (**66%**) have given money out of their own pockets to help students with things such as classroom materials, field trips, and class projects, averaging **\$264** per year.

Active in the school community. The majority (**71%**) live in the school district in which they work and many volunteer in those communities. **37%** percent have supported activities of a parent organization and more than 1 out of 5 teach art/musical activities or coach a sports program.

Focused on safety. A large majority (**78%**) have responsibilities for promoting and ensuring student and staff safety.