



A National Snapshot of ESP Earnings and How to Advocate for a Livable Wage



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Presented by:

Lisa Connor, NEA ESP Quality

Marcy Magid, NEA Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy

Dave Kamper, Economic Policy Institute

With Special Guests:

Saul Ramos, MA

Catina Taylor, MN

William Schwandt, MN

Who has joined us?

Before we start, please put your name and state in the chat.

Let's inspire each other!

While in the chat, please also share an ESP-specific win you've had!



Background: Educator Pay Data

Two important resources!

A view to everything!

<https://bit.ly/EducatorPay>



Quick link to ESP-specific data!

<https://bit.ly/ESPEarnings>





ESP Earnings: A National Snapshot

www.bit.ly/ESPearnings

Less than
\$25,000/
year

34.6% of *all* ESPs working full-time earn less than 25K

- For K-12 ESPs, it's 39.6%
- For higher ed ESPs, it's 16.4%

Less than
\$15,000/
year

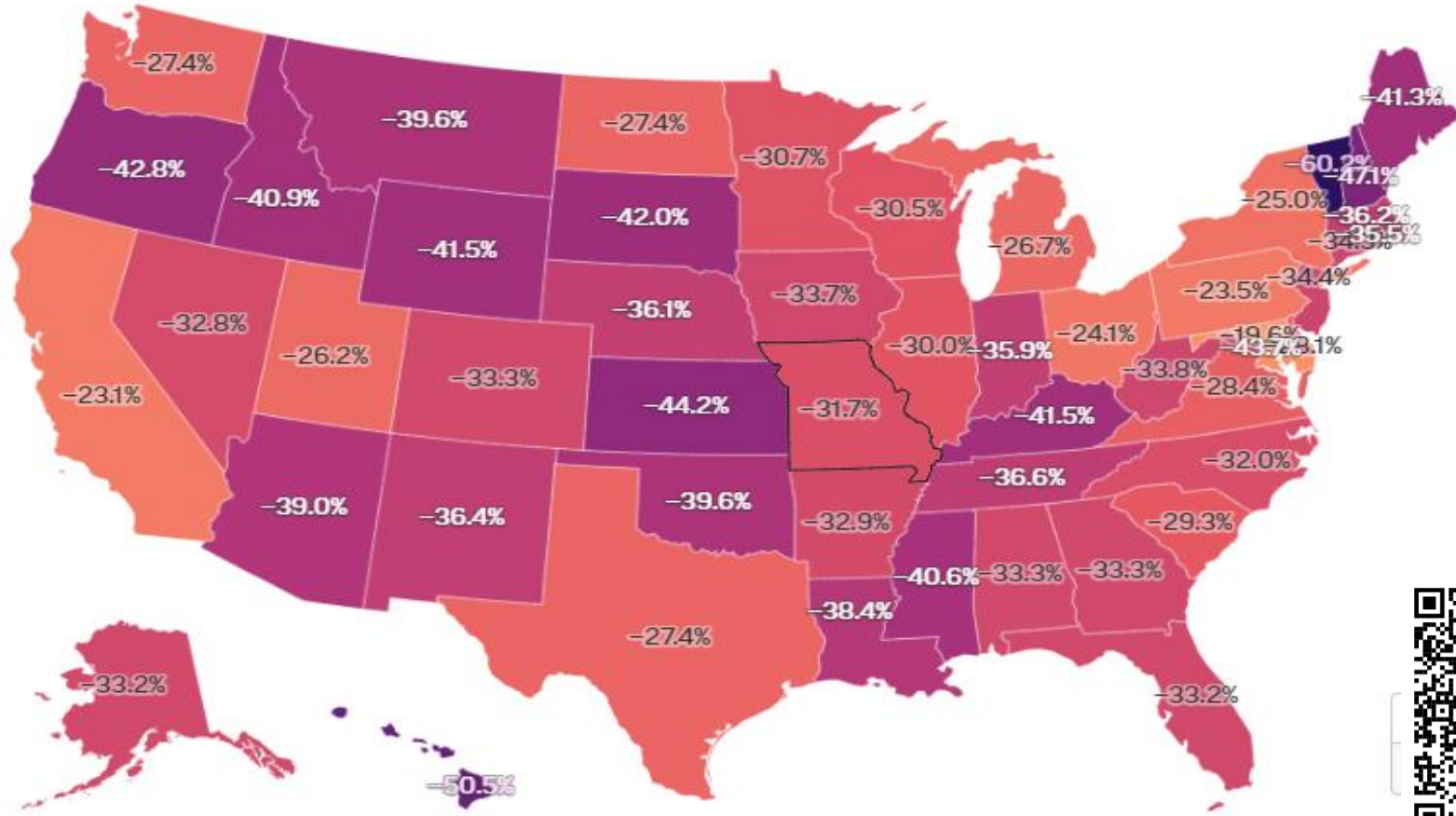
11.7% of *all* ESPs working full-time earn less than 15K

- For K-12 ESPs, it's 13%
- For higher ed, it's 6.9%



ESPs make below a living wage in all 50 states and DC

Percent gap between living wage and average earnings

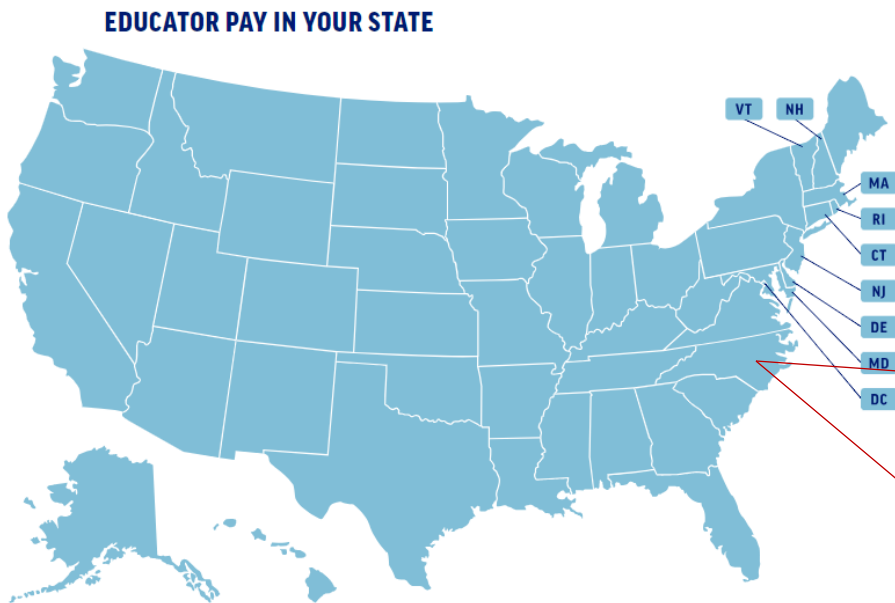


All education support professionals (ESPs), in K-12 public schools and higher education. Based on income needed for family of one adult and one child to have a modest but adequate standard of living in the most affordable metro area, 2020 dollars.

Source: NEA ESP Earnings Report, April 2023 & Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator, March 2022



Educator Earnings in Your State



North Carolina

AVERAGE TEACHER STARTING SALARY \$37,676 [Ⓢ] #46 <small>in the nation</small>	AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY \$54,863 [Ⓢ] #36 <small>in the nation</small>
TEACHER PAY GAP 76¢ [Ⓢ]	MINIMUM LIVING WAGE \$48,346 [Ⓢ]
PER STUDENT SPENDING \$11,627 [Ⓢ] #42 <small>in the nation</small>	AVERAGE K-12 ESP EARNINGS \$29,349 [Ⓢ] #39 <small>in the nation</small>
AVERAGE HE ESP EARNINGS \$42,338 [Ⓢ] #30 <small>in the nation</small>	AVERAGE HIGHER ED FACULTY SALARY \$87,011 [Ⓢ] #33

<https://bit.ly/EducatorPay>



ESP Earnings: A National Snapshot

In a recent survey, over two-thirds (69%) of PK-12 ESP are currently having an issue earning a living wage.

THIS IS NOT OKAY.

Living Wage: The Basics

Sufficient earnings to cover basic needs:

- Food
- Housing
- Clothing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Child care
- Health care
- Taxes





A Living Wage Campaign is...

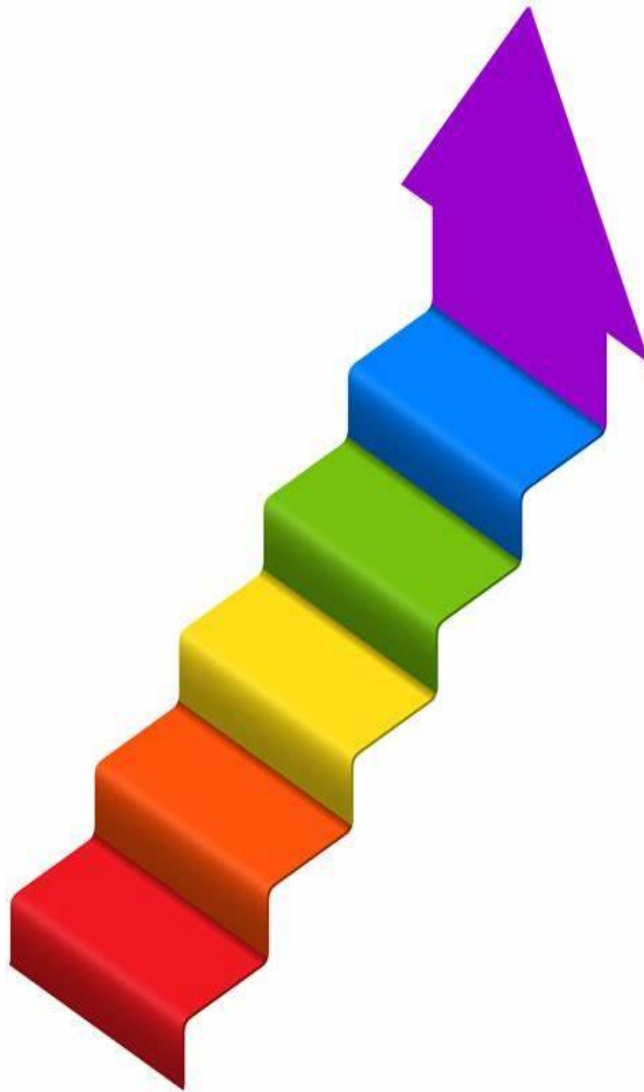
- About seeking more than a modest raise.
- As much about grassroots organizing, long term planning, and union building as it is about gathering salary data and developing economic arguments.
- About winning professional, competitive pay by “surrounding” the employer with members and community allies.
- Bargaining for the Common Good



It takes more than a "handful" of members



Elements of a Living Wage Campaign



- Local buy-in
- Action plan/goals
- Data
- Internal organizing
- External organizing
- Messaging
- Follow through
- Celebrate





#1 Ensure Buy-in

- Make sure the local has buy in from all the key parties including:
 - Members, UniServ, State Affiliate
- Rely on bargaining surveys and prior discussions/bargaining
- Build support within the local and statewide



im in

#2 Action Plan/Goals



- Conduct a SWOT analysis
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Develop a strategic plan
 - Estimate costs
 - Include assignments and responsibilities
 - Affirm your salary philosophy
 - Identify ambitious salary objectives
 - Create an initial timeline



#3 Gather Data/Information

Gather solid, reliable data

- Pay in comparable districts
- Inflation
- Housing and other costs
- Management spending

Develop strong arguments for professional pay

- Recruitment and retention/employer turnover costs
- Employer's "ability to pay"
- Local employees' spending power





Living Wage Websites

Economic Policy Institute

- www.epi.org

United for a Fair Economy

- www.faireconomy.org

Universal Living Wage

- www.universallivingwage.org

Federal Poverty Line

- <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

Jobs with Justice

- www.jwj.org

#4 Internal Organizing

Build a sense of solidarity:

- Within your local and within the district
- Among your neighboring districts
- State-wide



#5 External Organizing

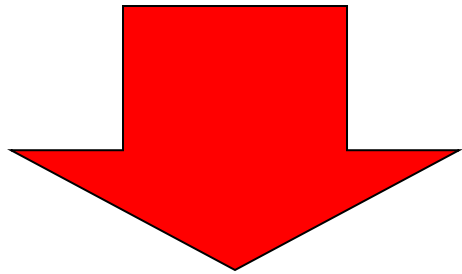
How do you build community partnerships?

- Assess your standing in the community and identify allies.
- Draw on existing coalitions such as with parents, other unions, community and faith partners or build new ones ahead of time.
- Survey members to identify their community connections.
- Identify “key communicators” in the community who are potential supporters.



Surround the Decision-Maker

External Organizing



**DECISION
MAKER**

Faith institutions

Other Unions

Media campaign

Board Actions

Legislative Agenda

**Civil Rights Style Tactics
and on the job actions**

Legal Strategies

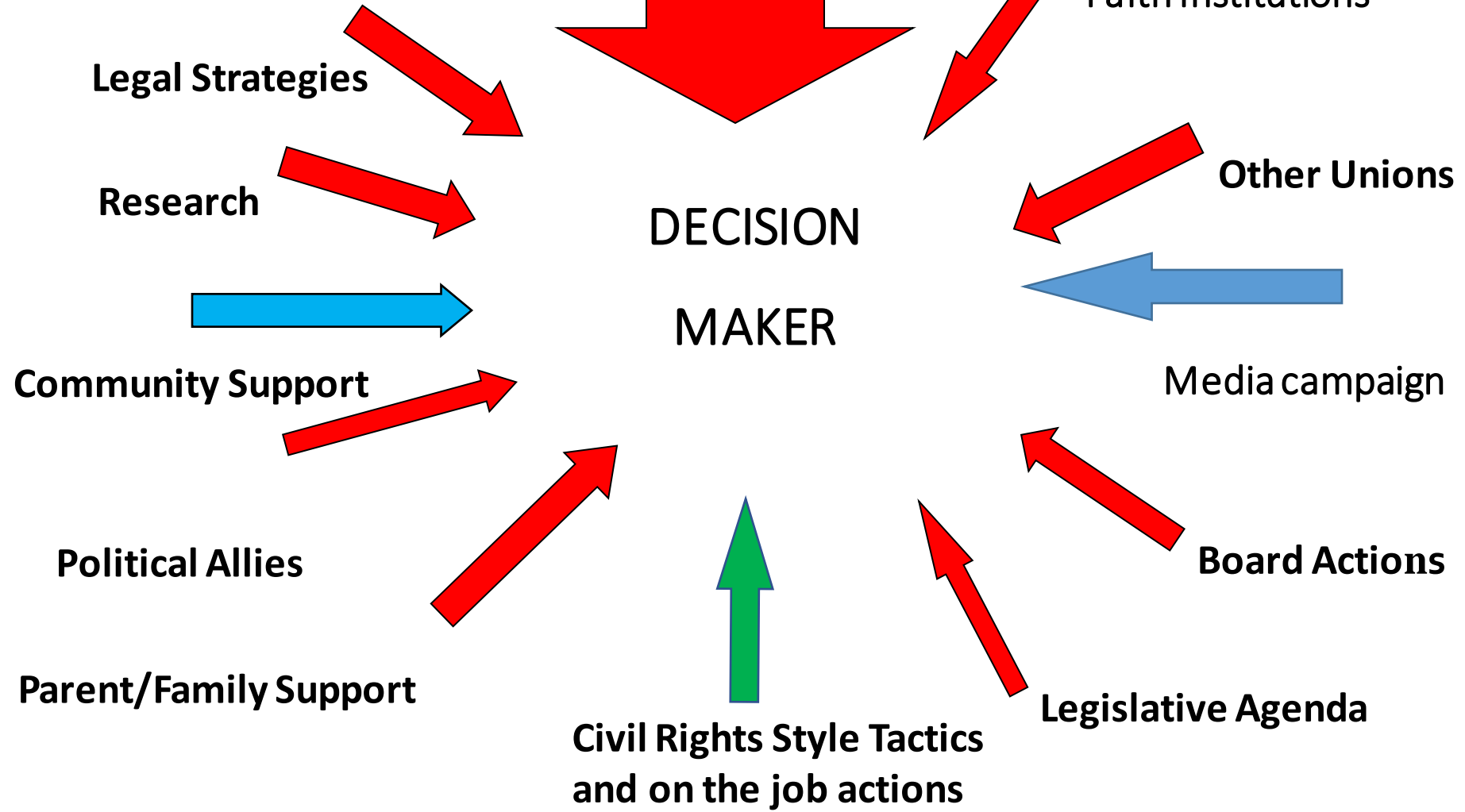
Research



Community Support

Political Allies

Parent/Family Support



#6 Messaging

Take control of communications and communicate constantly!

- Publicize your members' often unappreciated work.
- Develop a clear and simple salary message.
- Identify and train member spokespeople.
- Create a theme, message, and media "buzz."
- Work with your state communications unit for assistance on messaging and developing concise talking points.



Messaging – Creating a Theme

**got
living
wage?**



Ithaca
Paraprofessional
Association



#7 Follow Through

- Continue to apply incremental, strategic pressure on the employer.
- Approach and try to engage every member.
- Reach out to every likely supporter.
- Continue to “surround” and pressure decision makers.





#8 Celebrate!

- Celebrate small victories!
- Plan for the future and keep organizing!



What a win!

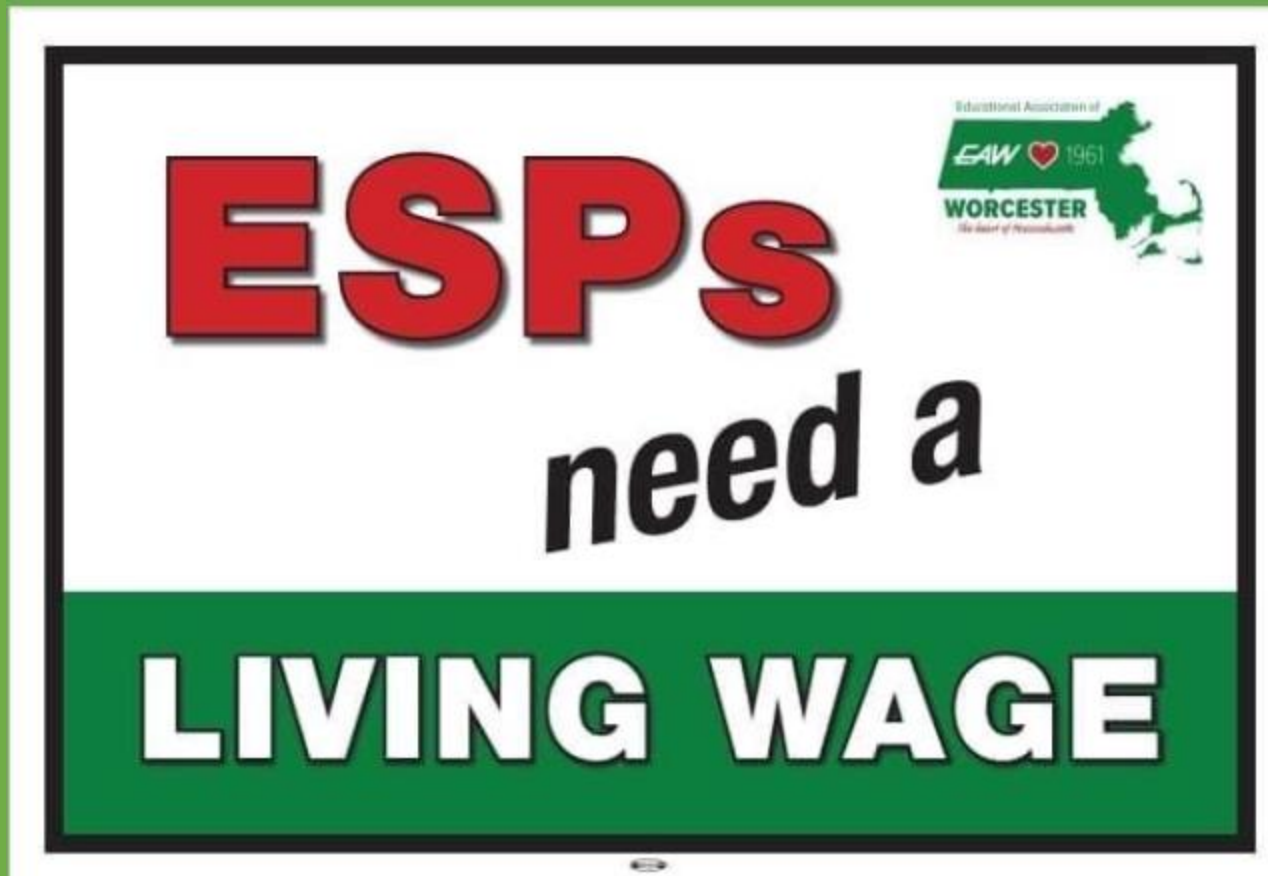
Worcester, MA

Saul Ramos

Worcester Education Association, 1st Vice-President
NEA Board of Directors, At-Large Director



Educational Association of Worcester (EAW) Paraeducator Contract 2022-2026





Platform & Advocacy

<https://massteacher.org/about-the-mta/who-we-are/esp/esp-bill-of-rights>

The **MTA** PreK-12 ESP

BILL OF Rights

The MTA's PreK-12 Education Support Professionals play critically important roles in our public schools, providing individual and small-group instruction to students with disabilities, assisting in early education classes, supporting English learners, driving buses, preparing meals, keeping schools clean and performing myriad administrative and education support functions.

A Living Wage. All Education Support Professionals should be paid a living wage. No job should require more than seven years to reach the top step.

Affordable Health Insurance. No ESP should be receiving the dreaded "zero-dollar check" in order to afford health insurance premiums. All checks for ESPs must reflect at least the state minimum wage for hours worked. The district should make up any difference between the actual amount of the check after insurance has been taken out and what the ESP would have received at the state private-sector minimum wage.

Health and Safety. ESPs continue to be victims of physical, verbal and emotional abuse and bullying in the workplace. In order to provide a safer environment in our schools, ESPs need adequate supplies, fully staffed programs, clear protocols, employer-provided trainings on OSHA rules, and whistleblower protections.

Paid Family and Medical Leave. Just like all Massachusetts residents, ESPs deserve access to paid Family and Medical Leave Act benefits, as well as access to other FMLA protections, no matter how many hours a week they work.

Job Security. Too many ESPs do not know if they will have a job from one year to the next. School districts need to eliminate this insecurity and commit to the importance of ESPs. ESPs need automatic-renewal language, a 90-day probation period, and strong just cause provisions.

Recognition as Educators. ESPs deserve a strong voice in their schools, resources to access training outside of the district, relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities, and a vote in every employee committee in every district.

Affordable Education to Strengthen Careers. The vast majority of ESPs earn less than \$30,000 a year despite the fact that nearly 80 percent have college degrees. Many ESPs carry significant amounts of student debt or are helping family members pay off student debt. Many ESPs want more education but cannot afford to pay for it. ESPs deserve an affordable way of climbing the education career ladder — as well as a way of paying off career-related debt.

www.massteacher.org/esp

The **MTA** PreK-12 ESP

BILL OF Rights

Living Wage Calculator

Annual amounts were determined using the MIT Living Wage Calculator and are based on the living wage for a single person. The numbers represent the lowest wage that an ESP should be making and should be used to help develop starting rates in MTA contracts.

Source: dlmapage@red.net

By County

County	Salary
Barnstable	\$41,498
Berkshire	\$36,982
Bristol	\$37,690
Dukes	\$49,483
Essex	\$48,214
Franklin	\$38,064
Hampden	\$35,818
Hampshire	\$35,818
Middlesex	\$49,774
Nantucket	\$45,261
Norfolk	\$51,376
Plymouth	\$45,864
Suffolk	\$51,792
Worcester	\$39,083

By City

City	Salary
Boston/Cambridge/Newton	\$46,005
Pittsfield	\$35,884
Springfield	\$35,800
Worcester	\$37,690

These are annual rates. To find your hourly rate, divide the annual rate by the number of days a full-time ESP is paid for, and then again by the number of hours a full-time ESP works in a day.

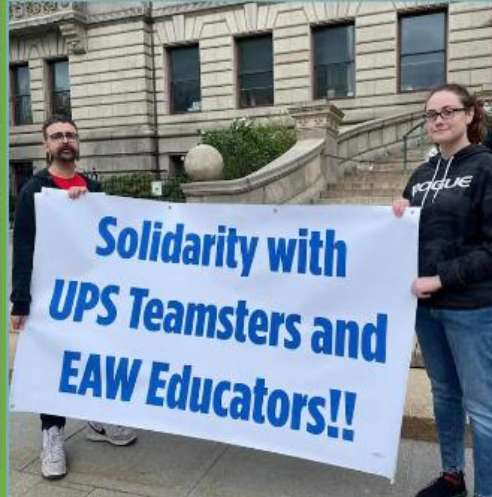
Go to www.massteacher.org/esp or contact MTAESP@massteacher.org for more information.

www.massteacher.org/esp

Rallies, Social Media, Actions, Testimony, and Solidarity

EAW Educational Association of Worcester is live.
 Posted by Lydia Wood
 May 5 · 🌐

Live from the EAW press conference announcing members overwhelming vote of NO CONFIDENCE in Worcester school committee, city council, WPS Superintendent, Mayor, and City Manager.



Join us this week for the Para Power week of action and help ensure Worcester Paraeducators get the contract they deserve!

Para Power Week of Action!

Paraeducators are still in negotiations and close to getting the historic contract they deserve! Show your solidarity and keep up the pressure by participating in the Para Power Week of Action!

- May 22 Bargaining standoff at Worcester Tech 1
 - May 23 Wear purple 2
 - May 24 Standouts before School 3
 - May 25 Call or write to school committee 4
 - May 26 Call or write to school committee 5
- Standout in solidarity with Paraeducators at 3:00 and sign up as a silent bargaining rep. Negotiations begin at 4:00pm at Worcester Technical High School.
- Wear purple for Para power to show solidarity with the fight for a fair contract. Post photos to social media with the hashtag #EAWcontractnow.
- Standout before school in solidarity with Paras. Wear green or your EAW shirt. Hold signs in support of a fair contract for Paras.
- Call or write the school committee asking for a fair contract now for Worcester Paras.
- Call or write the school committee asking for a fair contract now for Worcester Paras.



2021-2022

EAW Paraeducators Salary Schedule 2021-2022 (current pay)

STEP	base	9 credits	18 credits
1098 hrs/yr		\$.60/hour	\$1.00/hr
1	\$20,254.02	\$20,912.84	\$21,352.02
2	\$21,963.16	\$22,621.98	\$23,061.16
3	\$23,771.66	\$24,430.48	\$24,869.66
4	\$25,282.05	\$25,940.87	\$26,380.05
5	\$26,752.70	\$27,411.52	\$27,850.70
6	\$27,428.42	\$28,087.24	\$28,526.42
7	\$29,309.51	\$29,968.33	\$30,407.51
8	\$30,188.30	\$30,847.62	\$31,286.80
9	\$31,094.46	\$31,753.28	\$32,192.46



2022-2023

EAW Paraeducators Salary Schedule 3% retroactive to the first day of the 2022-2023 school year. Also one-time payment of \$1,600.

STEP	base	9 credits	18 credits	AA	BA	MA
		\$659/Annual	\$1,098/Annual	\$1,500/Annual	\$2,000/Annual	\$2,500/Annual
1	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	\$27,658	\$28,317	\$28,756	\$29,158	\$29,658	\$30,158
6	\$28,354	\$29,013	\$29,452	\$29,854	\$30,354	\$30,854
7	\$30,292	\$30,951	\$31,390	\$31,792	\$32,292	\$32,792
8	\$31,197	\$31,856	\$32,295	\$32,697	\$33,197	\$33,697
9	\$32,130	\$32,789	\$33,228	\$33,630	\$34,130	\$34,630



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- 2022-2023
 - 3% retro of this year (2022-2023)
 - New differential/columns on top of base for:
 - AA \$1,500
 - BA \$2,000
 - MA \$2,500
 - All paid this year as lump sum
 - Drop Steps 1-4 (a handful of staff on 4 move to 5)
 - \$1,600 one-time payment (2022-2023)
 - June 2023 Summer Pay jumps from \$17.50/hour to \$30/hour
 - Increase “6-hour meeting pay” from \$105 to \$205



2023-2024



EAW Paraeducators Salary Schedule: 3% plus reconfigured scale, effective the first day of the 2023-2024 school year

Complete Years of service	STEP	base	9 credits	18 credits	AA	BA	MA
			\$659/Annual	\$1,098/Annual	\$1,500/Annual	\$2,000/Annual	\$2,500/Annual
New Hires	New 1 (3% above old step 9)	\$33,094	\$33,753	\$34,192	\$34,594	\$35,094	\$35,594
1-4 yrs	New 2	\$33,922	\$34,581	\$35,020	\$35,422	\$35,922	\$36,422
5-10 yrs	New 3	\$34,770	\$35,429	\$35,868	\$36,270	\$36,770	\$37,270
11-19 yrs	New 4	\$35,639	\$36,298	\$36,737	\$37,139	\$37,639	\$38,139
20+ yrs	New 5	\$36,530	\$37,189	\$37,628	\$38,030	\$38,530	\$39,030
	New 6	\$37,443	\$38,102	\$38,541	\$38,943	\$39,443	\$39,943



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- 2023-2024
 - 3% increase on the base
 - Complete revision of scale
 - Former top step 9 becomes new step 1
 - 6 steps total, 2.5% between each step
 - Current staff placed on higher steps based n years of service
 - Annual salaries will range from \$33,094-\$39,943
 - \$1,000 stipends for:
 - Sub separate assignments
 - Bilingual titles
 - Alternative school assignment



2024-2025

EAW Paraeducators Salary Schedule 3% effective the first day of the 2024-2025 school year

STEP	base	9 credits	18 credits	AA	BA	MA
		\$659/Annual	\$1,098/Annual	\$1,500/Annual	\$2,000/Annual	\$2,500/Annual
New 1	\$34,087	\$34,746	\$35,185	\$35,587	\$36,087	\$36,587
New 2	\$34,939	\$35,598	\$36,037	\$36,439	\$36,939	\$37,439
New 3	\$35,813	\$36,472	\$36,911	\$37,313	\$37,813	\$38,313
New 4	\$36,708	\$37,367	\$37,806	\$38,208	\$38,708	\$39,208
New 5	\$37,626	\$38,285	\$38,724	\$39,126	\$39,626	\$40,126
New 6	\$38,566	\$39,225	\$39,664	\$40,066	\$40,566	\$41,066



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- 2024-2025
 - 3% increase on the base
 - Annual salaries will range from \$34,087-\$41,066
 - Summer pay increases to \$35/hour June 2025



2025-2026

EAW Paraeducators Salary Schedule 3.5% effective the first day of the 2025-2026 school year

STEP	base	9 credits	18 credits	AA	BA	MA
		\$659/Annual	\$1,098/Annual	\$1,500/Annual	\$2,000/Annual	\$2,500/Annual
New 1	\$35,280	\$35,939	\$36,378	\$36,780	\$37,280	\$37,780
New 2	\$36,162	\$36,821	\$37,260	\$37,662	\$38,162	\$38,662
New 3	\$37,066	\$37,725	\$38,164	\$38,566	\$39,066	\$39,566
New 4	\$37,993	\$38,652	\$39,091	\$39,493	\$39,993	\$40,493
New 5	\$38,943	\$39,602	\$40,041	\$40,443	\$40,943	\$41,443
New 6	\$39,916	\$40,575	\$41,014	\$41,416	\$41,916	\$42,416



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- 2025-2026
 - 3.5% increase on the base
 - Annual salaries will range from \$35,280-\$42,416



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- Update Title for Instructional Assistants (IAs) to Paraeducators
- Esp Sick Leave Bank
 - Open to ALL ESP UNITS (expanding from only Paras to include other ESP units)
 - Donate 5 days to join
- Change for sick leave in first 3 years of employment: won 15 days to start the school year



Major Paraeducator 2022-2026 Contract Highlights

- Paras can take a leave of absence to become a long-term teacher sub, preserving the rights and benefits upon return. We no longer have to resign and re-apply after sub-position ends.
- Bereavement leave expanded (will match AB)
- Updated language on Maternity/Paternity leave



ESPs

need a

LIVING WAGE



Economic Policy Institute Data Tools



- <https://www.epi.org/> - Organized labor's think tank!
- Use us for:
 - Employment and wages
 - The power of unions
 - State-level analysis through our EARN network - <https://earn.us/>
 - Connection to other kinds of data analysis



EPI's Family Budget Calculator

MONTHLY COSTS

2 adults *and* no children
Hennepin County, MN

HOUSING	\$1,083
FOOD	\$572
CHILD CARE	\$0
TRANSPORTATION	\$915
HEALTH CARE	\$614
OTHER NECESSITIES	\$600
TAXES	\$597
MONTHLY TOTAL	\$4,381
ANNUAL TOTAL	<u>\$52,571</u>

MONTHLY COSTS

2 adults *and* 2 children
Hennepin County, MN

HOUSING	\$1,344
FOOD	\$902
CHILD CARE	\$2,036
TRANSPORTATION	\$1,122
HEALTH CARE	\$1,041
OTHER NECESSITIES	\$814
TAXES	\$1,113
MONTHLY TOTAL	\$8,370
ANNUAL TOTAL	<u>\$100,445</u>



EPI's Family Budget Calculator



Try It Yourself!



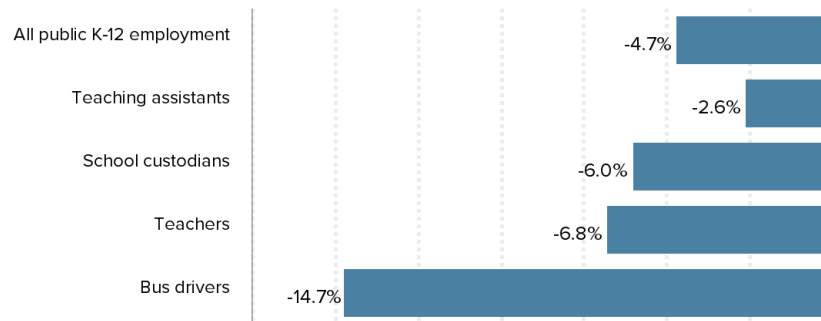
<https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>



Some of our work on ESPs and other educators

Bus drivers, teachers, and school custodians have experienced particularly large declines in employment during the pandemic

Percent change in employment levels from October 2019 to October 2021 for select K–12 public education occupations



Notes: Data reflect the 12-month average in employment ending in October 2021 relative to the 12-month average of employment ending in October 2019.

Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of BLS Current Employment Statistics series and Current Population Survey microdata.

Economic Policy Institute

- [School staffing shortages](#) (good for showing the School Board how hard it will be to replace you)
- [The state of public education funding](#) (might be useful for property tax referenda)
- The terribleness of [vouchers](#)



Summer unemployment insurance for ESPs – Victory in Minnesota!

Posted May 12, 2021 at 3:01 pm by **Julia Wolfe** and **Dave Kamper**

Illinois extended unemployment benefits to school workers in the summer, and Minnesota should follow suit



- We provided:
- Initial analysis of the costs/benefits
- Testimony at 7 legislative hearings
- Letters to legislators explaining the differences between our numbers and the state's
- Your state next?





Updated data on older reports

- Takes time
- As much as possible, go through NEA

Connection to our EARN network

- Best for state/local budget and tax work
- Best for state/local connections

Want something else? Ask for it!

- Dave Kamper, Senior State Policy Coordinator, dkamper@epi.org





What a win! Education Minnesota

Catina Taylor

President, ESP Chapter President, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers

William Schwandt

President, Bloomington Federation of Paraprofessionals



Contact Us!

Lisa Connor

Lconnor@nea.org

Marcy Magid

Mmagid@nea.org

Saul Ramos

saulramos613@gmail.com

Dave Kamper

dkamper@epi.net

Catina Taylor

ctaylor@mft.org

Bill Schwandt

bfppresident4399@gmail.com