



NCESP

COUNCIL

UNITING INSPIRING LEADING



Spring 2026

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NCESP Brief Bulletin!

A Masterclass in Care: Lessons from the Community School and Dream Center at Woodrow Wilson High School in Los Angeles, California



During the NEA ESP Conference in Anaheim, we had the privilege of participating in a powerful and inspiring site visit to the community school and Dream

Center at Woodrow Wilson High School in Los Angeles. This visit, made possible through the leadership and coordination of President Cecily Myart-Cruz, offered more than a glimpse into innovative school programming—it provided a lived example of what is possible when education is centered on care, dignity, and community.

As we walked through the school and Dream Center, we didn't just observe services—we witnessed care made visible. Every space told a story of intentional support and belonging. A clothing pantry restored dignity to students and families in need. An in-house medical center provided peace of mind, ensuring access to care for students, staff, and the broader community. A student-run bookstore reminded young people that they belong and that their contributions matter. In the cafeteria, staff worked alongside special needs students, modeling inclusion and empowerment in action.

At the heart of it all were Education Support Professionals (ESPs)—showing up each day as trusted adults, steady anchors, and essential pillars in students' lives.

This visit was more than a tour; it was a testament to what can be achieved when schools are deeply rooted in community, compassion, and collective determination. It was truly a masterclass in solidarity, courage, and imagination. The results speak volumes: graduation rates are increasing, absenteeism is decreasing, and dropout rates are nearly nonexistent. These outcomes are not accidental—they are the direct result of systems intentionally designed around care, not punishment, and built on the belief in possibility and hope.

What stood out most was the undeniable power of student voice, authentic parent engagement, and a culture grounded in compassion and dignity. This student- and community-led model demonstrates how schools can evolve into hubs of hope—places that provide not only education, but also mental health support and critical resources that uplift entire families. The equation is simple: when we care for the whole student, we strengthen the whole community.

We extend our deep gratitude to CAPE staff Rocio Inclan and Merwyn Scott for their dedication in making this work possible. We are also incredibly thankful for the grant funding that sustains the essential services of the Community School and Dream Center. This investment directly supports programs that provide stability, mental health resources, and community-based services that make a meaningful difference every day. It reflects a shared commitment to an education system rooted in equity, care, and opportunity.

Our time in Los Angeles concluded with an impactful panel discussion featuring members of ESP SEIU Local 99, organized by President Myart-Cruz. This session was more than a discussion—it was a celebration of the extraordinary work ESPs do every day. It created a meaningful space to pause, listen, and learn directly from those closest to the work.

NCESP EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



Lois Yukna
President



Kathy Meltsakos
Vice President



Vallerie Fisher
Secretary



Mary Parrish
Treasurer



Antoinette Felders
Pacific Region



Michael Glabere
Mid-West Region



Veronica Henderson
Mid-Atlantic Region



Audrey Nichols
Southeast Region



Mike Evans
Western Region



Bobby Travers
Northeast Region

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Hearing from ESPs grounded our advocacy in lived experience and reinforced an essential truth: meaningful change begins with listening. Their voices highlighted how their roles extend far beyond traditional support—they are leaders within community schools, champions for student well-being, and critical connectors between families and vital resources.

Their stories strengthened our resolve to continue building collective power alongside ESPs and to ensure their voices remain centered in our movement.

Because ultimately, the future of education depends not only on what we build—but on who we listen to along the way.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Representative Assembly in Denver!

In solidarity,

Lois Yukna
NCESP President

CANDIDATES *for* NEA OFFICE — 2026 NCESP Recommendations —



PRINCESS R. MOSS
for
President



NOEL CANDELARIA
for
Vice President



ROBERT V. RODRIGUEZ
for
Secretary-Treasurer



ANDREA BEEMAN
for
Executive Committee



SHANNON MCCANN
for
Executive Committee

NCESP Recommended Candidates for NEA Office!

NCESP is proud to announce our recommendations for NEA Officer and Executive Committee positions. We approach this responsibility with great care and integrity. Candidates participated in a thorough interview process conducted by the NCESP Interview Committee, which developed a slate of recommendations. These recommendations were then put before the full NCESP membership for a democratic vote. Only those candidates who received a majority of the votes cast received NCESP's official recommendation.

Announcements

NCESP General Membership Meeting at NEA RA 26

July 3, 2026

Colorado Convention Center

NCESP will hold its second General Membership Meeting (GMM) of the year during the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly in Denver, Colorado.

We invite you to join us on **Friday, July 3, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (MST) in Four Seasons 1**, located on the lower level of the Colorado Convention Center.

Registration will open at 9:00 a.m. and close promptly at 12:30 p.m. **Memberships will NOT be accepted after 12:30 pm (MST) on July 3.** Meeting participants must check in prior to the meeting beginning at 1:30 pm. In addition, organizational memberships need to designate a voter from their Association one week prior to the General Membership Meeting. Organizational designees will only vote on policy issues (Proposed Budget and Amendments to the NCESP Constitution). Please send your organizational designee to NEA Staff, Therman Evans at tevens@nea.org.

During this year's GMM, attendees will have the opportunity to hear directly from and vote to recommend candidates running for NEA ESP At-Large Board of Director positions.

In addition, members will vote on candidates for open seats on the NCESP Executive Committee. The following candidates have declared candidacy and met the eligibility requirements for the following positions.

NCESP Executive Committee Open Seats (*three-year terms*)

The following NCESP seats are open this year:

Position: NCESP Vice President

Candidate: Kathy Meltsakos

Position: NCESP Treasurer

Candidate: Mary Parrish

Position: NCESP Pacific Regional Director

Candidates: Debby Chandler and Antoinette Felder (ELECTION)

Position: NCESP Mid-Atlantic Regional Director

Candidates: Veronica Henderson and Gwendolyn Edwards (ELECTION)

This year we will have two NCESP elections:

Mid-Atlantic Regional Director and Pacific Regional Director for three-year terms.



Candidate Statements

NCESP Vice President

Kathy Meltstakos

I have been honored to serve NCESP as the vice president for the last 4 years. Prior to this I was the Northeast Region Director for six years. I am and have always been dedicated to the work of NCESP. I continue to put in the time and do the hard work to promote NCESP. I help the regional directors by providing them with monthly membership reports. I will represent us as we move forward making this Council as strong as it should be! I am committed to the growth of our Council and continue to promote this growth as your elected vice president. My promise is to continue dedicating my time and hard work to keep promoting all ESPs and NCESP across the country.

NCESP Treasurer

Mary Parrish

My name is Mary Parrish and Running for your Treasurer. I am currently the Treasurer and would love to continue my work with NCESP. I will work hard to serve you as your Treasurer. I look forward to seeing you at the NEA RA. Thank you, Mary.

NCESP Mid-Atlantic Regional Directors(s)

Veronica Henderson

"Osiyo!

My name is Veronica Henderson. I am seeking re-election to the position of NCESP Mid-Atlantic Regional Director. I am a voice for the voiceless! My voice is not silent when it comes to advocating for members rights, and for protecting and defending our jobs. I have had to defend and protect my own job!!!

I ask that you please take the time to review my qualifications which supports an extensive and varied vitae when it comes to member advocacy at all levels of the Association. I am a recognized local, state, and national trainer. Know that in me, you have a strong Education Support Professional (ESP) representing and advocating for our members, our profession, and the students we all serve. Re-elect Veronica Henderson. Wado!"

Gwendolyn Edwards

My name is Gwendolyn Edwards, candidate for NCESP Mid-Atlantic Director. I am a dedicated advocate for Education Support Professionals, bringing a strong record of leadership, service, and commitment to members across our region. With years of experience at the local and state levels, I understand the challenges ESPs face and the importance of building power through unity and engagement. I am passionate about elevating ESP voices, strengthening communication, and ensuring every member feels seen, valued, and supported. I believe in developing future leaders, expanding opportunities for involvement, and advancing equity across all affiliates. As your NCESP Mid-Atlantic Director, I will work tirelessly to represent your voice, fight for respect and fair treatment, and help build a stronger, more connected ESP community.

NCESP Pacific Regional Director(s) Debby Chandler

My name is Debby Chandler and I'm running for the NCESP Pacific region Director. I am a fearless advocate for ESP. I am not afraid to stand up speak out for all members. I see every day how hard our ESP's work and are committed to making the lives of our students better. We need to raise our voices and tell our stories so everyone understands the difference that we make. NCESP is our voice at the national level and I would be honored to be your voice for the pacific region.

Antoinette Felder

To continue increasing membership, ESP listening sessions, with ESP coordinators and VP of states. making sure our voice is heard and recognized as valued educators, pushing for living wages, safety and healthy for our members and students. Understand we are the essential educators in the schoolhouse.



ESP Bill of Rights Toolkit!

The ESP Bill of Rights Toolkit supplements NEA staff support by providing field informed resources you can use to start a Bill of Rights campaign. This new resource draws from state, local, and member experiences of those who built Bill of Rights campaigns. Their “lessons learned” are the heart of this toolkit, providing context on how the ESP Bill of Rights work emerged, laying out steps you can take to launch and implement a Bill of Rights campaign, and highlighting how these campaigns can transform the lives of ESP members across the country.

We encourage you to take a look and share it widely with those already engaged in ESP Bill of Rights campaigns and those interested in starting one.

- The direct link to the toolkit can be found here: nea.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/esp-bill-of-rights-toolkit.pdf
- It is also featured alongside other resources, on our NEA ESP Bill of Rights website here: nea.org/nea-esp-bill-rights



NCESP New Business Item for Discussion at NEA RA 26

NCESP New Business Item Form

DIRECTIONS: New Business Items must be submitted on this form for consideration by the NCESP Membership.

New Business Item(s) must be submitted at least 45 days prior to the NEA ESP Conference or NEA Representative Assembly for publishing to the membership. Mail to: NEA National Council for Education Support Professionals, 1201 16th St., NW, Suite 810, Washington, DC 20036-3290.

New Business Item(s) may be generated 24 hours prior to discussion of the issue at the NEA RA.

Date 3-27-26 State Iowa

Rebecca Marks / Iowa
Maker of the Motion: Name/State

STATE NEW BUSINESS ITEM:

NCESP Support for NEA ByLaw amendment

2-7 Membership dues

Add another category for membership dues for those employed 51-75% of a normal full time employee to pay 3/4 active dues.

See attached.

Submitted for consideration at the 2026 Representative Assembly in Denver

2-7. Membership Dues.

d. The membership fee for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed for **fifty-one (51) to seventy-five (75) percent of the normal schedule for a fulltime employee, who are not employed as substitutes, and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be three fourths (3/4) of the Active dues as appropriate. The membership fee for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed fifty (50) percent or less, but greater than twenty-five (25) percent, of the normal schedule for a fulltime employee, who are not employed as substitutes, and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be one half (1/2) of the Active dues, as appropriate.** The membership fee for persons eligible for Active membership who are regularly employed for twenty-five (25) percent or less of the normal schedule for a full-time employee, who are not employed as substitutes and who are not eligible for membership as a full-time or part-time employee through another local association (as verified by the local association) shall be one-quarter (1/4) of the Active dues, as appropriate.

Rationale:

Many individuals, especially Education Support Professionals, are limited to less than thirty hours per week to avoid benefit eligibility. Offering a more affordable membership level would make it more accessible for these individuals to join.



To Join or Renew Your Membership:

Please send an email to Khadija Kiruri at KKiruri@nea.org.

NCESP Council

Addressing the issues of education support professional members with one common voice. NCESP takes pride in advocating for the right of every ESP member, ensuring that ESP members are integrated into all NEA trainings and programs.

Send your ideas and stories to:

NCESP 1201 16th St., NW, Suite 518
Washington, DC 20036

nea.org/ncesp

