

History and Background

Education Support Professionals: An essential part of One Education Workforce

<http://www.nea.org/home/41393.htm>

In early 2009, Education Support Professional (ESP) membership in the National Education Association topped half a million, reflecting a **3200% growth** since we gained full membership status in 1980.

Education Support Professionals were first recognized as Association members in 1967, when “Educational Secretaries” received membership. A category for “Auxiliary Personnel,” or paraprofessionals, was added in 1972. “Educational Support Personnel”—encompassing all non-teaching education employees— was established as a separate membership category in 1980. ESP won a position on the NEA Board of Directors in 1983, and we continued to expand our representation in governance throughout the 1980s.

In 1988, Education Support Personnel were included as active members rather than a separate membership category. ESP were recognized as “professionals” in 2001, and in 2002, we gained our own NEA department, Education Support Professionals Quality, charged with promoting professional quality for ESP.

Currently, there are more than 3 million education support staff in the nation’s school systems. Because nearly one half of the employees of any given school district are support professionals, we represent the biggest opportunity for NEA membership growth.

Our power can only increase as our numbers grow.

Issues of Importance for Education Support Professionals

To attract a skilled, dedicated and experienced Education Support Professionals workforce, and to be a full partner in a strong Association, ESPs need:

Respect

ESPs need to have our importance acknowledged by school districts, administrators, teachers, parents, and our Association.

Inclusion

ESP want to be treated as full partners in the education team at the school level and within the local, state and national Association.

Job Security

ESP need protection from layoffs and privatization.

Pay and Benefits

ESP need pay commensurate with the skills and responsibilities of our positions—no less than a living wage.

Training and Professional Development

ESP need opportunities and meaningful education that provides both for career path development (e.g. paras becoming teachers) and for continual improvement within our current jobs. We want training to bring our skills up to date with 21st century changes.

History of Education Support Professionals in NEA

mid-1960s Employment of auxiliary personnel in schools rises sharply in response to increases in the availability of federal funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Office of Education, and the Labor Department as part of the congressional War on Poverty.

1965 The Elementary and Secondary Education School Act (ESEA) is signed in to law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Title I of the ESEA grants funding to schools to improve the academic performance of low-income or disadvantaged children. The focus on raising student achievement requires additional resources in the educational setting, such as those provided by para-professionals and auxiliary personnel.

1967 The Representative Assembly (RA) adopts the new membership category, “Educational Secretary,” into the NEA Bylaws.

1972-1973 A membership category for “Auxiliary Personnel” is established at the 1972 RA. The membership categories adopted into the NEA Bylaws at the 1973 RA are Active, Life, Reserve, Associate, Educational Secretary, Auxiliary Personnel, Retired, Student, and Survivor.

1974 A task force is appointed at the 1974 RA to study the problems related to organizing and servicing substitute, part-time, and paraprofessional personnel, including examination of their “proper” professional and legal relationships with full-time teachers. As part of the motion, the RA also adopts the statement supporting the right of paraprofessionals to bargain collectively with their employers.

1975 At the 1975 RA, the membership category of “Auxiliary Personnel” is changed to “Paraprofessionals.” “Educational Secretary” remains as a separate membership category.

1979 NEA faces federal pressure to comply with the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act, which requires that minority groups within an organization be granted rights of majority groups, including representation and voting. Amendments to the NEA Bylaws are passed at the 1979 RA to grant certain constituency groups, including ESP, the right to participate in governance, including the right to vote and to seek and hold elected and appointive offices. These rights were previously restricted to Active Members.

The 1979 RA also votes to collapse the membership categories for “Paraprofessionals” and “Educational Secretary” into a single membership category of “Educational Support Personnel,” which expands the membership category to include other non-teaching education employees.

1980 ESPs are voted full membership rights by the RA.

1982 A Special Committee on Educational Support Personnel (often referred to as the “ESP Committee”) is established at the RA. The ESP Committee is authorized to advise the Board of Directors and recommend policies related to educational support personnel.

1983 The RA establishes a number of at-large positions for ESP on the Board of Directors proportional to the number of NEA ESP members during election years. ESP members immediately

run for the new at-large positions at the Representative Assembly and Nancy Marrone from Maine is elected as the first ESP at-large member of the NEA Board of Directors.

1984-present ESP members increase their representation in governance through elected positions in both at-large and state-affiliate positions on the Board of Directors. ESP are also increasingly appointed to key policy committees, including the Resolutions Committee, the Committee on Women's Issues, and the Program and Budget Committee.

1986 The first annual NEA ESP Conference is held in Washington, D.C.

1987 NEA establishes National Educational Support Personnel Day

1988 The "Active" membership definition is expanded to include educational support personnel and the separate membership category for ESP is eliminated.

1990-1991 Resolutions are passed at the 1990 and 1991 RAs that highlight the essential role of ESP in enhancing the learning environment and education process and recognizes their contribution as positive role models.

1992 NEA ESP of the Year is established.

1993 NEA's entire committee structure is revamped at the 1993 RA to represent the diverse segments of the membership. The Special Committee on ESP is dissolved and replaced with the 7-7-7 structure of the Membership Advisory Committee, in which 7 members are teachers, 7 are ESPs, and 7 are Higher Education.

1995 The National Council for Educational Support Personnel (NCESP) is established, with an operational budget, a part-time staff member, and official observer status at Executive Committee, Board and budget meetings.

1997 Iona Holloway, an elementary school paraeducator from Louisiana, becomes the first ESP elected to the nine-member NEA Executive Committee.

1998 The 1998 RA adopts a resolution endorsing the professional development of ESP and recognizes a need for the ESP voice to be represented in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their professional development programs.

2001-2002 A resolution is passed at the 2001 RA to officially change to the term "Educational Support Professional" to "Education Support Professional." The 2002 RA votes to adopt a new Education Support Professional Quality Department—separate from its original parent department, Affiliate Capacity Building—with an operational and staffing budget.

2007 Paula Monroe, a high school secretary in Redlands, Calif., was elected to the National Education Association's (NEA) Executive Committee in July 2007 for a three-year term.

2008 Four ESP are serving as vice presidents of their state Associations: Steve Cook (MI), Mike Hoffman (DE), Marty Meyer (ID), and Gail Rasmussen (OR).

2009 ESP membership tops 500,000 in February 2009. Gail Rasmussen is elected President of the Oregon Education Association. She is the first ESP to hold the top state affiliate position.