



MESSAGING FRAMEWORK: ESP RECRUITMENT

TOGETHER. A STRONGER VOICE.
Together We're Stronger. Together We're Heard.



Thank you for the work you do each day to support students and grow our union. This document will help guide conversations as you recruit support staff. Support staff are valued members of our union and our school communities, and your work to recruit them is vital.

OUR PITCH TO JOIN THE UNION

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING STATES

Short Pitch

We are a union that **has a legally protected right to negotiate** on behalf of support staff like you, so we can all get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives. When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. Our union has already collectively secured wins, and it's only a start. With more members like you, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Longer Pitch

We are a union that **has a legally protected right to negotiate** on behalf of support staff including para-professionals, transportation workers, librarians, food service workers [BE SURE TO LIST THE JOB OF THE PERSON YOU ARE RECRUITING] and teachers, so we can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Without a union, support staff like us are underappreciated and often unheard. When more members join the union, administrators listen to us—giving us a stronger voice to negotiate.

We do this work because we want to help students. We're not expecting to get rich, but far too often our work is undervalued. Banding together is the best way to get paid what we deserve.

Our union has already collectively won increases in salaries and benefits, but it's only a start because support staff deserve so much more. With more members, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

NON-COLLECTIVE BARGAINING STATES

Short Pitch

Did you know you could be part of the union and that unions are allowed in [STATE]? We are a union that **regularly advocates** on behalf of support staff like you, so we can all get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives. When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. Our union has already collectively secured wins, but it's only a start. With more members like you, we'll have an even stronger voice and collectively be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Longer Pitch

You may have been told that unions aren't allowed in [STATE,] but that isn't true. We are a union that **regularly advocates** on behalf of support staff, including paraprofessionals, transportation workers, librarians, food service workers, [BE SURE TO LIST THE JOB OF THE PERSON YOU ARE RECRUITING] and teachers, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Without a union, support staff like us are underappreciated and often unheard. When members join the union and band together, administrators listen to us – giving us a stronger voice to advocate.

We do this work because we want to help kids. We're not expecting to get rich, but far too often our work is undervalued. Banding together is the best way to get paid what we deserve.

Our union has already collectively won increases in salaries and benefits, but it's only a start because support staff deserve so much more. With more members, we'll have an even stronger voice and be able to secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

TALKING POINTS

These are the safest messages to use among any audience, regardless of the state's collective bargaining status or the ESP's job title.

- **We are a union** that regularly advocates on behalf of education support staff.
- We advocate for **higher wages, better benefits**, and improvements to our daily lives.
- Our **voice is stronger** and more effective when we band together.
- Our union has a **proven track record of success**, but we need more members to amplify our voice so we can win higher salaries for support staff like us.

TAILORED MESSAGING

[non-collective bargaining states/collective bargaining states]

PARAEDUCATORS

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [regularly advocates/has a legally protected right to negotiate] on behalf of paraeducators, so we all can get higher wages, safety from physical abuse, and improvements to our daily lives.

When more people join the union, administrators listen to us. As paraeducators, we're always looking out for others, but at a time when schools are overwhelmed, who is looking out for us?

Our union has already collectively secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Messaging Guidance

- Focus even more heavily on wages relative to other messages.
- Safety from physical abuse and other forms of bodily harm is complementary message that resonates.
- Use teachers as a validator, along with other paraeducators.



CLERICAL, TECHNICAL, AND HEALTH SERVICES

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [**regularly advocates**/has a legally protected right to negotiate] on behalf of support staff like you, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and professional development opportunities to support your career and improve your daily life.

Workers like us are rarely asked for our opinions or included when big decisions are made. But when more people join our union, administrators listen to us.

Our union has already collectively secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

Messaging Guidance

- Place a large emphasis on how the union can convince administrators to listen to workers like them.
- Highlight the union's work to provide professional development opportunities as a complementary message.
- It is even more important than with other classifications, to refer to these groups as “support staff.” Do not use the term “ESP” when talking to potential members.



CUSTODIAL, TRANSPORTATION, SKILLED TRADES, SECURITY, AND FOOD SERVICE

Elevator Pitch

We are a union that [**regularly advocates/has a legally protected right to negotiate**] on behalf of support staff like you, so we all can get higher wages, better benefits, and improvements to our daily lives.

Our union has already collectively secured wins, but we need more members so we can amplify our voice and secure real pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and increases in retirement and health care benefits.

School boards across the country are trying to privatize our jobs, but when we have a strong union, we are able to get communities, parents, and teachers on our side to help save our jobs.

Messaging Guidance

- Emphasize your work as a union to stop privatization.
- Educate them on their right to join your union, because many support staff don't know they can join.
- Emphasize your local affiliate is a union, not an association.
- Do not use the term "ESP" and be intentional about using teachers as validators.



GUIDANCE ON CUSTOMIZATION

Do	Don't
Say "support staff" or the specific job title of the person you are recruiting	Don't Say "ESPs" or "educators"
Demonstrate that the union is a good investment by lifting up the value and benefits of membership	Don't proactively bring up the cost of dues
Respond to questions about dues by talking about the monthly cost	Don't respond to questions about dues by talking about the annual cost
Make the argument that the union will be more powerful and better able to win higher wages and benefits with more members	Don't accuse people of "freeloading" or proactively bring it up

CB vs. Non-CB States

In States with Collective Bargaining:

- Emphasize you have a legally protected right to negotiate on their behalf.

In States without Collective Bargaining:

- As needed, make it clear that, yes, unions are legal.
- Emphasize you regularly advocate on their behalf.

Localizing Your Message

- Learn the issues facing support staff in your district and be prepared to showcase how the union will help address those issues.
- Highlight the union's past wins in your district / state.
- Use people's specific roles / classifications when you talk to them.

Universal Messages

- Start by educating them about the fact there is a union they can join that will advocate on their behalf.
- Focus on your work as a union to collectively secure wage increases and better benefits through collective power.



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ORGANIZING NOTES

The 3 million members of the National Education Association, our nation's largest professional organization, work at every level of education—from pre-school to university graduate programs. Our members also include retired educators, students preparing to become educators, and other public employees. NEA has affiliates in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States.

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