

RESPECT

TALKING POINTS



ONE

We are working to improve the economic conditions for non-certified staff (Education Support Personnel or ESPs) – nurses, secretaries, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, mechanics, cooks, custodians, library aides and others – in schools across Illinois, pre-K through higher education, and to help dispense with the high turnover rates in the job classifications represented by IEA ESPs. These are the people who make our schools work.

TWO

What does RESPECT mean? Elevating ESPs' profession by advocating for higher wages, improving working and living conditions, providing affordable health insurance for all, fixing the Tier 2 pension and providing opportunities to grow the ESP profession

THREE

Wages: We are working legislatively to establish a minimum salary for ESPs so we can live off our wages, to enable support staff to be fairly compensated for our substitute teaching and to guarantee unemployment insurance.

FOUR

Health insurance: We are working to make sure health insurance is available, both while we are working and when we retire, and that it is affordable.

FIVE

Pensions: In 2011, the state legislature passed changes that led to a second tier within the IMRF pension system that requires anyone hired since then to work longer and have a diminished benefit. We are working to fix Tier 2 pensions.

SIX

Retention and recruitment: We are seeking ways to get tuition reimbursement, to establish a "Grow Your Own" program from ESP to certified teacher, to set standards for quality professional development, to ensure paid family leave and to alleviate licensing fees.

SEVEN

Job protections: We are seeking the use of state and federal funds to improve working conditions. We are also pushing for "hold harmless" language for assigning duties, for access to Individual Education Plans and establishing appropriate job duties for support staff.

EIGHT

Many ESPs work with educational employers' struggling learners, including the most vulnerable students, those with disabilities and behavioral problems. Safe working conditions and quality job-related professional development is essential.

NINE

ESPs are often the lowest paid staff in their workplaces; we have ESPs who work two and three jobs to make ends meet. Their kids typically go to school in the districts they work in, and as a result of low wages, their kids qualify for free and reduced school lunches.

TEN

Our ESPs clearly are not doing their jobs for the money. They do it because they love to make a difference in the lives of the students they work with and serve. They are extremely dedicated, but school districts, colleges and universities across the state continually undervalue them and flat out disrespect them.

ELEVEN

ESPs, as with all educators, are continually asked to do more with less and their wages certainly don't reflect their workload.

TWELVE

ESPs are some of the first people to greet students when they get on the bus in the morning and the last to see them before they go home. They help bring individualized instruction to our students. They play a critical role in the lives of our students and our schools. They help students get one-on-one instruction and we know that improves learning. They are some of the most valuable people in a building and their value is so often overlooked when districts are looking at their budgets.