Successfully Implementing
NEA's Professional Growth Continuum
for Education Support Professionals

A GUIDE FOR AFFILIATE STAFF AND LEADERS

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The National Education Association (NEA), the nation's largest professional employee organization, is committed to advancing the cause of public education. NEA's 3 million members work at every level of education—from pre-school to university graduate programs. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States.

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Who Are Education Support Professionals (ESPs)?

ESPs are critical members of the education workforce. There are more than 2.7 million ESPs in our nation's public schools, universities, and colleges, and one out of every three public school employees is an ESP. ESPs meet the needs of the whole student, promoting quality education and fostering positive learning environments. ESPs make up nearly a half million of NEA's more than three million members and are represented by the following nine career families.

CLERICAL SERVICES: Secretarial, clerical, financial, and administrative support

CUSTODIAL AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES: Building and grounds maintenance and repair

FOOD SERVICES: Food services, planning, preparation, and delivery

HEALTH AND STUDENT SERVICES: Nursing, health and therapy support; community, family, parent, and welfare services

PARAEDUCATORS: Instructional and non-instructional support

SECURITY SERVICES: School guards and security resource personnel, security specialists

SKILLED TRADES: Electricians, carpenters, painters, heating and ventilation specialists, machine operations, and printing services

TECHNICAL SERVICES: Computer, audio-visual, and language technical support; media, public relations, writing, and art specialties

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES: Bus driving and delivery services and vehicle maintenance

Source: 2019 NEA ESP Data Book: A Workforce and Membership Profile of Education Support Professionals.

Your Plan for ESP Professional Development

WHY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ESPs?

Everyone who works in schools is contributing to student learning in some way. It takes a village to educate students. Learning occurs throughout the school day, in the cafeteria, the hallways, school playgrounds, athletic fields, and school buses. Education Support Professionals create experiences and conditions for healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged students.

In 2018, the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development issued a clarion call for whole-child based learning, citing growing research about the interdependency between social and emotional skills and academics for student success and how school communities, writ large, can play a powerful role in shaping student learning. After two decades of school reforms that had a myopic and largely punitive focus on teaching within classrooms, the report titled, "A Practice Agenda in Support of How Learning Happens," took a wider view, underscoring the critical role that *all* school staff play in building positive and nurturing school environments.[1] From school buses to cafeterias, playgrounds and the main office, classrooms and auditoriums, this includes Education Support Professionals (ESPs), dedicated but often overlooked staff who serve in various roles and capacities including clerical, custodial and maintenance, food, health and student services, paraeducators, security, skilled trades, technical, and transportation.

While the research base presented in the Aspen Commission's report was significant, even groundbreaking, its argument should not be controversial: To be effective for students, a whole-child approach must begin with the adults who interact with them on a daily basis. If our goal is to support students in becoming responsible, ethical, productive, and empathetic members of society, educators – both inside and outside of school classrooms – must exemplify what those behaviors look like within the learning community.

As this research becomes more widely recognized and accepted, school systems are looking more closely at the social and emotional factors that contribute to student's academic achievement. This holistic approach is a shift in how schools envision their approach to student achievement and has direct implications for the responsibilities of schools. How staff is supported becomes a primary consideration to ensure they have the training necessary to contribute to the creation of a supportive school culture in which every student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged – ready to pursue their academics. Behaviors and attitudes modeled by adults in positions of authority translate into learned behaviors and attitudes in students. This whole-child approach, originally developed by ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) is an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children.[2] This shift has many implications for rebuilding the professional culture within schools. First, it requires taking a look at who interacts with students and in what context. Second, we must take stock of what, if any, expectations or training may exist for ESPs in child development as well as how to effectively communicate, work with, and support students. Finally, we need to assess what needs to change to meet the new research-based expectations for students.

> While research shows that ESPs play an outsized role in student success, the reality is that most ESPs either don't see their impact on students or don't know that they have an impact.

While research shows that ESPs play an outsized role in student success, the reality is that most ESPs either don't see their impact on students or don't know that they have an impact. Instead, they report time and time again to the union that they do not feel valued professionally by the school community and district

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1   http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/aspen_practice_final_web_optimized.pdf

2   http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx

leadership. One way to address both perspectives and demonstrate that value is through investment in ESPs' professional growth and learning needs to support their students to the best and fullest extent possible. Without investment in the whole-child approach to student learning, the full potential of ESPs will be

> The Aspen Commission's report affirms that there are a variety of skills, attitudes, and character traits that are embedded in and support learning. Skills and competencies inform one's ability to focus and pay attention, read social cues, negotiate and resolve conflicts, understand emotions of others, and work cooperatively on a team.

underutilized. A recent NEA trend report of K-12 ESPs tells us that 30 percent do not receive professional development (PD) and 40 percent say that employer-provided PD is not relevant, leaving them ill-prepared and lacking the support needed to learn, reflect, and grow.[3] This needs to change, both for ESPs and for the students they serve.

This sense of urgency leads us to ask, what are the things that matter and contribute to how students learn? The Aspen Commission's report affirms that there are a variety of skills, attitudes, and character traits that are embedded in and support learning. Skills and competencies inform one's ability to focus and pay attention, read social cues, negotiate and resolve conflicts, understand emotions of others, and work cooperatively on a team. Attitudes shape what students believe about themselves, others, and their circumstances and then inform how they respond to events and interactions throughout their day. Character traits are the ways of thinking and habits that are developed over time and determine one's values, ethics, sense of responsibility, and integrity.[4] When students are taught the skills, attitudes, and values that support their intellectual health and well-being, and have interactions with all adults who work in schools that validate and reinforce these learnings in physically and emotionally safe environments, the result is clear: They are better prepared to learn.

To ensure that school staff have the training they need to support students in these ways, one of the key recommendations of the report advocates for building "all adult" capacity. Specifically, the commission argues that all adults in schools and youth development organizations should receive professional training and support in understanding and modeling social and emotional competencies themselves, in teaching them to students and providing opportunities to apply them. First and foremost, this calls for helping all staff members develop these competencies themselves, which in turn requires maintaining a strong and positive adult learning community that promotes mutual trust, respect, and growth among staff. The commission also underscores that professional learning should be designed and facilitated with a focus on equity, diversity, and cultural responsiveness.

TIME FOR CHANGE

Developing a plan for new professional development opportunities is about being clear on:

1. how ESPs contribute to healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged students;

2. the skills they need to develop to create those conditions; and

3. how investment in their growth should be recognized.

Now that we've established the correlation between student success and the training of adults with whom they interact, it's time to think about how your state, district, or school professionally supports ESPs given their contributions to school and student success.

As you start to assess the ways in which ESPs' professional learning can and should be supported, you can reference and leverage:

➤ national awareness of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)[5] model developed by ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which combines the healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged tenets of the whole-child approach with the components of a coordinated school health and wellness plan to improve student learning;[6]

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3 NEA Research. "Findings from the 2016-2017 PK-12 ESP Professional Supports Survey." Survey. 2018.

4 http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/aspen_practice_final_web_optimized.pdf

5 http://www2.nea.org/NEA/ESP_Digibook/files/inc/aab8deb437.pdf

6 https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm

➤ research from the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development bolstering the case for professional learning covering social and emotional competencies for all school staff;[7]

➤ NEA's Center for Great Public Schools State & Local Project Grants for Affiliates, which can be used to help create and sustain a system of professional supports; and

➤ feedback from stakeholders in your district and state (e.g., ESPs, ESP managers and supervisors, school administrators, and district professional development staff) about what training might be most relevant.

To strengthen your position, the information above should be accompanied by an articulation of the practical and important contributions of ESPs in your context. For example, ESPs:

➤ interact daily and share information with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community;

➤ are often the first and last impression one has about a school and district;

➤ keep students safe and schools clean;

➤ ensure students have access to healthy and nutritious meals that influence behavior, energy levels, physical health, and overall well-being;

➤ assist with classroom instruction and intervention, supporting students with special needs and those for whom English is not their primary language; and

➤ perform a variety of other duties such as preparing materials, recordkeeping, and monitoring students and related data in non–classroom settings.

This guide is designed to complement NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum (PGC),[8] a document that articulates eight Universal Standards that apply to all ESPs. (The PGC can be accessed online at nea.org/esppgc). The Standards connect professional competencies to job functions, interaction and academic support of students, and the knowledge and skills required in each area. In doing so, they illuminate the many connections between career family functions, school operations, and student-family-community education experiences. Available in English and Spanish, the PGC also shows how ESPs are central to NEA's vision for a great public school for every student.[9]

GETTING STARTED

What is your Why?[10] Before creating an implementation plan for your school community, it's important to get clarity on your purpose. Why are you investing in the professional development of ESPs? Are your ESP members asking for relevant training? Are ESPs dissatisfied with what the district is providing? Does your association want to strengthen the relationship it has with ESP members? Are your investments in ESPs an approach to create greater equity of opportunity, a part of your efforts to promote racial and social justice? If you answered a hearty "yes" to any or all of these, therein lies your purpose. Your "why" should drive your efforts to improve the support ESPs receive, help ESPs find and use their voice, take ownership of the Universal Standards, and better advocate for themselves, their students, and school communities. Articulating your "why" will boost the association's credibility among ESP members, demonstrating an understanding that they are essential members of the school community, worthy of investment and integral to student success.[11]

This guide is designed to help you, as state and local association staff and leaders, understand and fully leverage the ESP Professional Growth Continuum to:

1. empower ESPs to use the Universal Standards to articulate their value and contributions to the school community;
2. secure commitment from stakeholders to invest in professional supports for ESPs;
3. start using the PGC Standards with ESPs; and
4. use your plan for ESP professional development to grow and strengthen your association.

This guide has been developed with significant input from the NEA's ESP Careers Committee, NEA staff and members at the local, state, and national level. It is meant to serve as an entry point into understanding what the ESP Professional Growth Continuum is, how it can be used to expand professional learning opportunities in the competency areas that matter for comprehensive student learning and school success, and as an organizer of ideas for your professional development planning purposes. At the end of each section of the guide, Action Steps prompt you to reflect on the content you've read and direct you to complete a section of the planning document that can be found in Appendix A.

7 http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/aspen_practice_final_web_optimized.pdf
8 http://www.nea.org/esppgc
9 http://www.nea.org/home/19583.htm
10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ytFB8TrkTo
11 http://www.ascd.org/programs/The-Whole-Child/Healthy.aspx

ACTION STEP 1:
Your plan for ESP Professional Development: Start with "Why"

▶ Take a few minutes to consider your "Why." This can be done alone or with a group. Write it down.

▶ Read your "Why" aloud and ask yourself whether you need to provide more description to get your statement as clear as possible. You want someone who doesn't know your work to easily understand you.

▶ Consider whether or not your "Why" supports students, staff (ESPs), and the association.

▶ Revise your "Why," if needed.

Complete Action Step 1 of the planning document in Appendix A.

What is the ESP Professional Growth Continuum?

THE NEED FOR AN ESP PROFESSIONAL GROWTH CONTINUUM

> **A continuum is a series of events or changes with phases of growth in between.**

There is a great need for all education stakeholders to better understand the role that ESPs have in schools and worksites. We must support all school staff in professional learning and create school environments that are responsive to the research-based connections between health, community, and the social-emotional learning needs of students for their academic success, the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum contains Universal Standards that outline the professional abilities that all ESPs must continuously develop and use in their work to pursue the vision of a holistic and supported, school community.

> Every education professional – a teacher, a librarian, a counselor, a paraeducator, an administrator, a bus driver, etc. – should have a set of clear and meaningful Standards of practice and career growth opportunities allowing them to continually improve their practice and contribute to students, schools, and the education professions.

NEA's 2015 Accountability Task Force Report, "A New Vision for Student Success,"[12] called for the creation of a professional continuum that facilitates growth and development throughout an educator's career. Every education professional – a teacher, a librarian, a counselor, a paraeducator, an administrator, a bus driver, etc. – should have a set of clear and meaningful Standards of practice and career growth opportunities allowing them to continually improve their practice and contribute to students, schools, and the education professions. An educator growth continuum is neither linear nor hierarchical. Educators grow and improve on various dimensions of practice at different rates and in different ways. An educator may be very accomplished in some Standards of practice and still developing in others; growth, learning, and improvement are career-long endeavors.

The Accountability Task Force's recommendations resulted in the adoption of a new business item at the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly directing the NEA to engage members and other experts in the field to design ESP professional continuum models,[13] created for ESPs by ESPs. This work was to be undertaken in collaboration with the NEA ESP Quality Department in the Center for Great Public Schools. A participatory action research group composed of ESPs from diverse geographic areas and representing all career families, NEA's ESP Careers Committee, and other stakeholders, identified eight Universal Standards of professionalism that were determined to be critical to ESPs' work with students, peers, administration, the community, and teachers.

WHAT ARE THE PGC UNIVERSAL STANDARDS?

The eight Universal Standards provided in the PGC are broken out by career family and level of practice. Each Standard offers ESPs an opportunity to reflect on current levels of skills and knowledge, and map out the areas(s) that can be strengthened or improved upon in order to move along the continuum of professional growth. The PGC is not intended to be used for accountability or punitive evaluation.

As previously mentioned, we hear frequently from ESPs who say the professional development they receive is not relevant to their jobs and is often repetitive from year to year. One of many positive aspects of the PGC is that the Standards, though common across all career families, are broken out and explained within the context of each career family. Through their career family-specific explication, the Standards help describe how ESPs contribute to the creation of a great public school for every student.

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12   https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/122096_NEA_V01_LowRes.pdf

13   http://www.nea.org/esppgc

THE UNIVERSAL STANDARDS

focus on the knowledge and skills in the following areas: Communication, Cultural Competence, Organization, Reporting, Ethics, Health and Safety, Technology, and Professionalism. The Standards provide ESPs with:

1. A way to keep track of and grow the skills, knowledge, experience, and responsibility they bring to the job.

2. The language to describe their value and contributions to the school, district, or worksite with peers, supervisors, and school leadership.

   a. How you do your work.

   b. Why you do your work.

   c. Who benefits from what you do.

3. Guidance on how to advance their skill set to expand professional goals through opportunities to lead, mentor peers, and serve as a role model.

4. A reference to identify skills they want to strengthen, or additional training they might need to better serve their community, students, and school.

5. A Standards-based demonstration of skills and knowledge that can be used to bargain for:

   a. Time, space, and money for professional development;

   b. Paid professional development;

   c. Continuing education credits; and

   d. Movement on a salary scale (e.g., increased pay or stipends).

THE UNIVERSAL STANDARDS

This section provides a brief glimpse of the content available within the full PGC document. Each Standard is defined and a career family-specific example, in practice at various stages of the continuum (foundational, proficient, and advanced/mastery), is given. The full PGC, accessible at nea.org/esppgc, provides a much more detailed view of the Standards for each career family.

1) Communication Standard: Ability to effectively listen and communicate (written and verbal) with a diverse audience including students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community

Examples of the Communication Standard on the Job *(Excerpts Pulled from Clerical Services)*

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Know expectations and guidelines for communicating in routine, sensitive, and confidential matters.	**Act as a liaison** between school and community when **interacting** with and **assisting** students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community.	**Be responsible for** critical worksite/district communications.
Example Action: Report factually and promptly any unusual situations or events to administration or designee	Example Action: Know when and how to intervene in escalating situations (e.g., tone of voice, proximity, stance, etc.)	Example Action: Maintain positive internal communication system, ensuring instructional, probation, and support staff are kept informed of needed information.

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Collect and share information in a professional and efficient manner;
➤ Engage students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community politely and positively;
➤ Manage information important to creating a safe learning environment;
➤ Mentor/coach others in role-alike positions on effective, professional, and culturally responsible communication; and
➤ Recommend areas for improvement in communications.

2) Cultural Competence Standard: Ability to examine one's own cultural context, understand cultural context of others, and interact across cultural contexts with sensitivity to differences (e.g., economic, race, gender, and disability)

Examples of the Cultural Competence Standard on the Job *(Excerpts Pulled from Paraeducators)*

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Acknowledge the value of speaking multiple languages.	**Understand the value of diversity** in a learning environment in order to create opportunities that will include and maximize students' strengths.	**Identify and address the consequences of inequities** based on racial, socioeconomic, gender, disability or other aspects of identity or group membership.
Example Action: Locate worksite/district documents available in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors and community	Example Action: Acknowledge power imbalance occurs when one group's identity is established as the norm (e.g., individual can be bullied when another feels empowered to do so)	Example Action: Lead racial justice and equity conversations and learning opportunities with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Recognize differences among and across groups of people;
➤ Recognize one's reaction to individuals or groups who are different from oneself;
➤ Build relationships of mutual respect and seek to understand diverse perspectives;
➤ Understand how one's own culture – all experiences, background, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and interests – shapes sense of self, fits into family, school, community, and society, and impacts interaction with others;
➤ Work collaboratively with members of racially and culturally diverse groups;
➤ Understand the impact of racial and cultural differences in educational and work environments;
➤ Model cultural competence in interactions with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community;
➤ Use one's own cultural experiences, background, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values to mentor/coach students and applicable staff in racial justice and cross-cultural experiences; and
➤ Identify the need for additional cultural competence training and seek those resources.

3) Organization Standard: Ability to prioritize, plan, and execute tasks efficiently and effectively

Examples of the Organization Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Food Services*)

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Follow directions and recommended operating procedures for job-related duties.	**Model** efficient and effective workload management.	**Manage or lead** complex, multifaceted projects related to job duties.
Example Action: Hygienic handling and correct storage of all food items (e.g., first in/first out, shelf life, maintaining clear and clean work area, etc.)	Example Action: Activities that can be accomplished in-between starting and ending cook/reheat times	Example Action: Nutrition education with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community involvement (e.g., Garden Club, Farm to School, Wellness Committee, etc.)

Additional Examples of the Organization Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Skilled Trades*)

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Follow directions and recommended operating procedures for job-related equipment.	**Perform maintenance tasks** for equipment and information systems to ensure readiness to complete job duties.	**Manage or lead** complex, multifaceted projects related to job duties.
Example Action: Tracking measurements and materials during job; Maintain clear and clean work area (e.g., return tools to tool storage, sweep/mop work area at end of day, etc.)	Example Action: Hand and power tools; work order updates	Example Action: Crisis management of maintenance emergency; facilities; renovations

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Follow procedures for collecting, managing, and maintaining information needed for job duties;
➤ Manage work duties effectively within time allotted/allocated;
➤ Maintain ready access to information and equipment necessary for job duties, including notification and updates;
➤ Model efficient and effective workload management;
➤ Work cooperatively with other staff on emergencies and/or the completion of large, complex or time-sensitive projects;
➤ Use management tools to prioritize tasks and workload in advance for efficiency in daily and long-term project completion;
➤ Analyze systems and procedures for efficiency and effectiveness, and suggest or implement improvements;
➤ Manage administrative, fiscal, and facility functions responsively; and
➤ Mentor/coach others in developing or maintaining organization skills related to job duties.

4) Reporting Standard: Ability to understand the responsibilities of a mandated reporter and what, when, how, and to whom reports should be filed

Examples of the Reporting Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Custodial and Maintenance Services*)

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Know and follow child safety/welfare laws, reporting policies and procedures, and repercussions of noncompliance (i.e., district, Board, state, federal).	**Recognize** signs of neglect/abuse, substance abuse, or self-injury behavior involving students or staff.	**Mentor/coach** others on safety policies, procedures, documentation, and reporting protocols.
Example Action: Mandated reporting	Example Action: Observe student demeanor and attitude changes over time based on knowledge of student	Example Action: Accident or incidences at the worksite or during sponsored activities

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Know and report breaches in student and staff codes of conduct, bullying, harassment, and other policies (e.g., acceptable use);

➤ Maintain the necessary documentation for required agency and individual reports;

➤ Clarify reporting procedures for others and assist in notifying proper authorities;

➤ Represent the school/district in a professional manner when reporting all incidents;

➤ Participate with administrators and other stakeholders in creating and implementing professional development on reporting requirements for custodial staff; and

➤ Prepare required agency and individual reports and maintain all appropriate records.

5) Ethics Standard: Ability to maintain a high level of ethical behavior, confidentiality, and privacy of any information regarding students, staff, and all job-related matters

Examples of the Ethics Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Security Services*)

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Contribute to the learning environment by nurturing positive ethical and moral practices.	**Exercise confidentiality** and privacy of any information regarding students and staff in all job-related matters by following all rules, regulations, and policies.	**Lead** others in ethical behavior.
Example Action: Exercise self-control, discipline, and integrity	Example Action: Conduct conversations about students or other confidential matters privately	Example Action: Observe, identify, and explain proper ethical conduct to students and staff

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Know the laws, district policies, and procedures related to ethical behavior and confidentiality;
➤ Develop relationships with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community based on mutual respect both in and outside the worksite;
➤ Display ethical and professional behavior in working with everyone who communicates – or is associated – with the worksite;
➤ Maintain professional relationships with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community both in and outside the worksite;
➤ Mentor/coach others in ethical conduct.

6) Health & Safety Standard: Ability to protect the health and safety of oneself and others by knowing and executing health, safety, and emergency protocols/procedures with fidelity

Examples of the Health & Safety Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Health and Student Services)*

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Know basic safety, first aid, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) **information as required by job duties**.	**Recognize behaviors** that students may exhibit **during emergency situations**.	**Mentor/coach** others regarding emergency policies and procedures.
Example Action: First aid certification, AED training, and blood-borne pathogen training	Example Action: Implement protocol for students with a history of unpredictable or violent behavior	Example Action: Procedure for managing outbreaks of contagious illness

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Know and fulfill assigned and designated functions during practice and active emergency/evacuation procedures;
➤ Know worksite rules and policies for student and staff codes of conduct related to safety;
➤ Make quick and accurate decisions in difficult situations;
➤ Maintain security and safety with regard to visitors in the building;
➤ Understand medical needs of students and staff;
➤ Maintain valid safety and first aid/CPR/AED certificates as required by job duties;
➤ Remain current with any new policies/procedures that ensure the health and safety of students and staff;
➤ Display confidence and poise when making judgement calls during emergency drills or events;
➤ Honor privacy and exercise confidentiality of all personal information regarding students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community;
➤ Participate on safety committees at the school, district, community, and/or state level;
➤ Advocate for positive changes that will improve the health and safety of students and staff;
➤ Know terms and acronyms used by public safety officials, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and local and state emergency preparedness agencies.
➤ Respond to and coordinate emergency and disaster drills/incidents;
➤ Recognize when a student or colleague is experiencing problems (e.g., educational, behavioral, developmental, health, or safety related) in order to prevent escalation/emergency; and
➤ Assist in assigned health-related classes as designed by certified school nurse (CSN).

7) Technology Standard: Ability to use electronic devices to problem solve and complete work-related duties

Examples of the Technology Standard on the Job (*Excerpts Pulled from Technical Services*)

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	PROFICIENT	ADVANCED/MASTERY
Know terminology in order **to solve** common technology **issues**.	**Know how to contact** Information Technology (IT) department and **report specific issues.**	**Mentor/coach** other staff **to use** internet/software **applications safely and independently.**
Example Action: Dialogue box, error message window, etc.	Example Action: Understand the reporting procedure for misuse of technology, cyberbullying, inappropriate images, etc. and who to refer the situation to	Example Action: Schedule time with mentee to review worksite/district Acceptable Use Policy

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Operate computer and/or other digital devices and platforms required for job duties;
➤ Operate standard office equipment;
➤ Input data, as needed, for accurate data management;
➤ Know worksite's Acceptable Use Policy;
➤ Learn and adopt new technology methods;
➤ Monitor job-related emails routinely;
➤ Operate advanced settings of digital equipment needed to perform job duties;
➤ Use appropriate job-related programs;
➤ Model safe internet and technology use;
➤ Research trends/issues pertaining to the job;
➤ Download specific programs for maintaining equipment as directed by supervisor;
➤ Apply advanced understanding;
➤ Review and manage data, as needed, for accurate data analysis;
➤ Lead a technical team;
➤ Conduct training and provide in-service as required to keep staff aware of current and new procedures, methods, and trends; and
➤ Manage social media presence.

8) Professionalism Standard: Ability to present and conduct oneself in a professional manner in all job settings

Examples of the Professionalism Standard on the Job *(Excerpts Pulled from Transportation Services)*

LEVELS OF PRACTICE		
FOUNDATIONAL	**PROFICIENT**	**ADVANCED/MASTERY**
Conduct oneself as an ambassador for school or agency.	**Respond appropriately** to instruction and feedback.	**Demonstrate initiative** in identifying areas of need and opportunities for improvement.
Example Action: Greet students, parents/guardians, staff visitors, and community in a dignified, positive manner	Example Action: Seek to understand specifics of corrective feedback and how to change behavior or processes to improve	Example Action: Recognize opportunities to improve bus routes, loading and unloading procedures

ESPs can demonstrate this Standard in a variety of ways. Additional examples in the PGC document include:

➤ Align appearance appropriately to job duties and professional expectations as outlined in handbook or job descriptions;
➤ Know the roles and responsibilities of your career field;
➤ Work collaboratively with a team;
➤ Project a positive image to the community through communication, involvement, and personal conduct;
➤ Maintain emotional control in stressful situations;
➤ Establish and maintain effective working relationships with others both in and outside of the worksite;
➤ Maintain current knowledge of procedures, policies, and laws;
➤ Shift tasks and priorities when necessary;
➤ Seek or maintain connections with the larger community;
➤ Engage in the improvement of the profession through active participation in professional organizations;
➤ Seek additional certifications; and
➤ Mentor/coach others in role-alike positions on professionalism standards.

ESPs' competencies in each Standard vary from the foundational level, to proficient, and finally to advanced/mastery. Individuals can progress along the continuum by pursuing additional knowledge, skills, and dispositions, providing evidence from their work of the indicators within the Standards, and by taking on leadership roles with peers such as a role model, mentor, or leader.

ACTION STEP 2:

How can the PGC support needs and have a positive impact?

▶ Consider which of the Standards are of particular relevance or need to your state or district's context and priorities;

▶ Come up with concrete ways your association can help ESPs (either as individuals or in groups) use the PGC Standards to enhance their professional learning; and

▶ Collaborate with others to articulate and document the positive impact a focus on the PGC and its Standards can have for your school community(ies).

Complete Action Step 2 of the planning document in Appendix A.

The Local Context

THE KEY TO YOUR PLAN

Understanding your local context is imperative to informing the goal you set and the plans created to achieve that goal.

As you formulate a plan to incorporate the PGC in your professional development offerings for ESPs, you will want to identify a goal that states the change you're seeking to accomplish. Sample goals might be: use the Universal Standards to expand or develop professional learning opportunities for ESPs to support both student and educator success; acknowledge ESP value through paid professional development; or create the opportunity for lateral, salary scale movement through attainment of a micro-credential as a means of evidence of ESP expertise in the PGC Standards.

When developing your goal, you'll need to assess your context. What comprises your context? Many things, for example: the state of the relationship between your association and the district (or state, if applicable); the district's level of commitment to continuous learning for its staff; ESPs' desire and/or expectation for quality professional development; an understanding of the greatest areas of need for professional development; available resources, including a budget and funding to support professional development; the strength and support of district and association leaders; access to trainers who understand adult learning theory; etc. All of these things and more inform what makes up your local context. Everyone's context is different, so plans will vary accordingly.

As you assess your local context in pursuit of your desire to use the PGC to support ESPs professional development, short-term goals will emerge that are necessary to achieving your primary goal. These short-term or nested goals will become the strategic tactics required for success of your goal. For example, if your ultimate goal is to create a schedule of professional development offerings for your ESPs membership, then you'll want to identify any barriers that exist and actions needed to create the conditions for it to occur. If your goal is dependent on finding space and money, then you'll need tactics to secure buy-in from people responsible for managing facilities and budgets. If your goal includes movement on a salary scale, then what steps must be taken for that to be incorporated? All these tactics might seem ancillary to a goal to use the PGC to support ESP professional learning, but they should be considered fundamental, for there will likely be a correlation between your success and the degree to which you create and enact a comprehensive plan. It should also be noted that sorting through your local context and the nested goals will likely take more time than originally anticipated but should create greater stability for your initiative over time.

LEVERAGING YOUR NETWORKS

Your plan will be stronger if you are able to engage interested ESPs in your state or district in its development. Remember that the more you actively engage your base in this work, the greater the value of your association to your members.

Examples for how you might leverage the expertise and perspective of your members include:

➤ Ask ESPs to take the lead in identifying professional learning needs with additional stakeholders such as their ESP colleagues, district PD staff, and school administrators to ensure their needs are heard and understood.

➤ Ask ESPs to identify district, school, or career family-specific practices or procedures that are a setback, problem, or opportunity for growth. Focus on the change you think needs to occur within existing practices or procedures that will better support the needs of students, staff, and/or the broader school community. Ask your ESP stakeholders to specifically identify what the change should look like, what related professional learning is needed, and the steps they think should be taken.

➤ Ask ESPs to brainstorm ideas for the broad awareness and celebration of their successes and accomplishments.

Do your ESPs have opportunities to learn on the job and receive training on topics that are relevant to their job functions and specifically their interactions with students? ESP careers involve some or all of the following: the need to stay current with new and changing information, procedures, and policies/guidelines; licensure/certifications needs; community engagement; and collaboration with stakeholders within the school community. When thinking about these needs in light of existing trainings, draw on stakeholder feedback (from ESPs, from district strategic plans, etc.) to identify what is missing and incorporate that into your plans for using the PGC for professional development.

Think also about the kinds of learning experiences your ESPs have been exposed to and what they have been asked to do. In their book, *A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults: Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*, authors Raymond Wlodkowski and Margery Ginsberg observed the following:

> "*Sometimes, instructors and trainers encounter adults who seem dependent, lacking in self-confidence, or reluctant to take responsibility for their learning [or engagement]. Three of the most common reasons are that (1) learners have been socialized in their families or faith communities to be deferent to others, (2) their experience in school or in the particular domain of learning has been generally negative or unsuccessful, and (3) they do not believe they have an authentic choice as to whether or not they engage in the learning or training experience.*"[14]

What is your experience as a staffer providing support to ESPs? Are these learner/engagement characteristics familiar, and if so, how do you plan to address them as part of your consideration of local context and identification of your goal?

ACTION STEP 3:
Consider Your Local Context

▶ Consider your local context and identify its impact for your plan;

▶ Explore ways to engage your ESPs as you create a PD plan; and

▶ Draw on your context and feedback from ESPs to develop and articulate your goal for use of the PGC.

Complete Action Step 3 of the planning document in Appendix A.

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14 Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. (2017) A Comprehensive guide for teaching all adults: Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Securing Buy-In

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO KNOW

Communicating how ESPs help create the experiences and conditions for healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged students[15] will be critical to making your case for investment in their professional learning. Demonstrating this value can be done by using any (or all) of the Universal Standards in the PGC. For example, take a look at the Health & Safety Standard below and notice how it encompasses technical job functions while also considering the needs of students.

EXCERPT FROM FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL OF THE HEALTH & SAFETY STANDARD FOR HEALTH AND STUDENT SERVICES

Know worksite rules and policies for student and staff codes of conduct related to safety.

▶ rules and regulations for dispensing medicine on campus

▶ areas of refuge

▶ fire drill, evacuations, and lockdown procedures

▶ plan for students with a history of unpredictable or violent behavior

Make quick and accurate decisions in difficult situations.

▶ know procedures for person with a knife or firearm

▶ activate emergency response team based on guidance from administration

▶ call for ambulance/emergency support make appropriate staff aware of the situation.

In addition to drawing from language in the Standards, you can also draw from NEA surveys that reflect direct feedback from ESPs. In a recent NEA survey, Pre-K – 12 ESP members were most likely to say that they needed professional support to help with managing student behavior (58% had a "strong" or "extreme" need), working

with students with special needs (52%), using technology (44%), and managing work stress (43%). Paraeducators were more likely to express a need for support around issues related to working with students.[16] These results are particularly relevant because we know working in schools requires effective interaction and communication with students and fellow educators.

Many ESPs come to the job with industry-specific certifications or licenses, but lack the training, experience, and understanding of what it takes to carry out the technical functions of their career family in a school environment with students. The adaptation of their knowledge and skills for school environments is critical to student and staff success and should be deliberately tended to through quality training and professional development. (Note: This assertion can also be leveraged when education stakeholders try to make the case for privatization.) For reference, see below examples of ESPs' mandated certifications and potential professional development topics. It's clear that the ESP Universal Standards are critical competencies to the work of each career family. Examples of certifications mandated by some states are included in **bold** and suggested professional development will be in regular text. (Note this list is intended as a discussion starter, and not a complete list.)

Clerical Services

Various computer software programs; office/project management courses; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Care; student mentoring; cultural competency; de-escalation training (e.g., Crisis Prevention Institute certification); mandatory abuse reporting; and bully prevention.

Custodial and Maintenance Services

Asbestos Accreditation; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; blood borne pathogens; Integrated Pest Management certification; custodian technical certification; mandatory abuse reporting; bully prevention; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; and student mentoring.

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15 https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/18248_ESPQ_Whole_Child_v2.pdf

16 NEA Research. "Findings from the 2016-2017 PK-12 ESP Professional Supports Survey" Survey. 2018.

Food Services

USDA Food Safety Performance Standards; ServSafe certification; mandatory abuse reporting; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; Integrated Pest Management certificate; school nutrition certificate; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; and bully prevention.

Health and Student Services

LPN License; Dietician License; Nurse's Aide Certification; Physical Therapy Assistant License; Occupational Therapy Assistant License; Speech Audiology Aide Certification; Athletic Coaching Certificate; mandatory abuse reporting; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; and cultural competency.

Paraeducators

Paraeducator Certification; behavior management, instructional strategies, mandatory abuse reporting; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; Paraeducator-Teacher team building; communication skills, cultural competency; bully prevention; and Crisis Prevention Institute certification.

Security Services

First aid/CPR/AED; mandatory abuse reporting; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; cultural competency; de-escalation training (e.g., Crisis Prevention Institute certification); and Student mentoring.

Skilled Trades

Electrician License; Plumber License; Boiler Certification; Lead Abatement Certification; Asbestos Accreditation; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; mandatory abuse reporting; and ACEs and Trauma Informed Care.

Technical Services

Various software and technical certificates and certifications; coding and programs management courses; first aid/CPR/AED certifications; mandatory abuse reporting; cultural competency; and ACEs and Trauma Informed Care.

Transportation

CDL with Special School Endorsement; first aid/CPR/AED; mandatory abuse reporting; ACEs and Trauma Informed Care; cultural competency; and bully prevention.

Bolstering awareness of ESP jobs, including the specific skills and knowledge required for success in schools, will help secure commitments and resources to invest in their professional growth. It's just as important to see what key decision makers see as priorities. To secure their buy-in, your communications should include justifications that show how your proposal will also help address their needs. For example, might providing relevant professional development show ESPs that they are valued while also helping better prepare them for their roles and responsibilities? If the answer is yes, might that sense of value and preparedness reduce employee turnover, thereby reducing the time and money spent on hiring practices? Might it also help prevent issues in the workplace before they arise? This could resonate with the finance and human resources offices in ways that result in their support of your goal. These are just a couple examples, but this kind of thinking should extend to all stakeholders you wish to bring on board with your plan.

ACTION STEP 4:
Securing Buy–In from Important Stakeholders

▶ Identify the inputs needed to implement your plan (e.g., time, space, supplies, funding, etc.) and the people who make decisions about those inputs. Consider how your plan can help meet a need they have.

▶ Allies and Advocates: Identify who these people are and how they can support your efforts.

▶ Who are the key partners you need to collaborate with to implement new PD? How can they help advance your PD goals?

▶ With all stakeholders, give thought to how you maintain these relationships.

Complete Action Step 4 of the planning document in Appendix A.

Sample Exercises for Implementation

Appendix B contains five sample professional development session exercises to use with ESPs, each designed to take 90–180 minutes. Sessions can be combined and delivered in succession depending on how much time you have allotted. They are intended for mixed or single career family groups of up to twenty individuals with one facilitator; larger groups can also be accommodated with more than one facilitator. The exercises build off of one another, and address how to use the PGC with ESPs to help them understand and articulate their value and importance to the school community and identify how they currently use (or can use) the Standards to articulate the contributions that matter to their local context. A description of each exercise follows:

Exercise 1: Valuing ESP Support for the Whole School and Whole Student

This is a focused discussion about the ways ESPs support the whole school and whole student. Participants will identify how they support their school and students in their jobs and will consider what they need to strengthen their skills in a particular area of their day-to-day work.

Exercise 2: What are the ESP Standards and how can we use them?

In this exercise, participants will learn about the purpose of the ESP Universal Standards, discuss what the Standards look like in their job, and choose one or two Standards to inform the development or strengthening of a particular area of knowledge and skills.

Exercise 3: What is a Professional Growth Continuum?

Participants will begin to more deeply focus on the Standard(s) of their choosing and begin to create a professional growth plan using one Standard.

Exercise 4: Creating Your Professional Growth Plan

Participants are guided through the further development of their growth plan, identifying where they are on the continuum, their growth goal, how they will pursue the growth they are seeking, and identifying the resources, supports, and mentoring they need.

Exercise 5: Reviewing Evidence and Celebrating Progress

This exercise provides an opportunity for participants to discuss evidence of progress, celebrate their successes, and identify a next step.

ACTION STEP 5:
Capture and Share Feedback

▶ As these exercises are implemented, capture the reflections and progress of participants. Gather their feedback to inform continuous review and improvement of your program. Please also share your feedback with us, kbertocci@nea.org. Your ideas will help inform improvements and new iterations of these and future exercises.

Complete Action Step 5 of the planning document in Appendix A.

Connecting to Growth and Strength of the Union

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The NEA exists to serve its members. Effective member engagement strategies are essential to member recruitment and retention, and they are essential to your work implementing the PGC. The PGC is a tool that can be used to advance the interests of your members. You can do this by soliciting ESPs' feedback to determine needs, partnering with ESP leaders to identify and implement programming, asking their suggestions for improvement along the way, and repeating that process continually over time. You can also use the language in the Standards to advocate for interest-based needs, including bargaining for the common good. This level of engagement can instill pride and ownership in ESPs. This cycle of engagement keeps members feeling heard, valued, and dedicated to their association.

There are other ways the PGC can be used as an engagement strategy, some of which have been previously discussed in this guide but bear repeating. The association can:

➤ Share the PGC with members as a tool for reflection and growth.
➤ Engage members in bargaining for time, space, and funding for ESP professional development.
➤ Train members how to use the PGC as a tool to protect against privatization of their jobs.

Additional issues, causes, or ways to use the PGC Universal Standards are:

➤ In discussions with a board committee dedicated to ESP careers;
➤ Increasing awareness and promoting the Standards;
➤ Integrating skill development tied to the Universal Standards in bargaining/policy language;
➤ Develop and offer training on topics of relevance and use the Standards to focus on the skills necessary for comprehension and application of the job knowledge;
➤ Becoming better advocates for racial justice and cultural competency within our schools;
➤ Through skill development with a student-centered focus;

➤ Identifying and training ESP members to be member leaders in this work, facilitating workshops and working 1:1 with members as mentors;
➤ Creating professional learning opportunities to function as an education team (teachers and ESPs) to educate the whole student with special emphasis on the needs of at-risk students;
➤ Designation and training, using the Universal Standards, of ESP Member Liaisons who will advocate, promote, and organize professional development including mentorship programs;
➤ By helping defend against privatization by demonstrating standards-based expertise, through attainment of a PGC micro-credential as one option for multiple measure evaluation systems at the district level; and
➤ Hosting professional learning communities to support pursuit of the PGC micro-credentials.

The NEA's PGC micro-credentials[17] are an opportunity for ESPs to obtain affirmation of their knowledge and skill in any or all of the ESP Universal Standards. A micro-credential is a competency-based recognition issued when an educator submits evidence of their skills and knowledge with respect to a particular Standard or practice.[18] Micro-credentials are a valuable resource that can be used to grow and strengthen the union's value proposition and member satisfaction. Partnerships your association can establish with professional learning and continuing education departments at the state and local level can create a new pathway for your members' professional growth through public recognition of their knowledge and expertise.

The following is an example[19] of what this can look like:

In 2018, the review board for continuing education at the University of North Dakota College of Education and Human Development examined and verified all 93 micro-credentials developed by NEA using Digital Promise's protocols, approving them as "professional development equivalency"

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17 https://nea.certificationbank.com/NEA/CandidatePortal/CategoryDetail.aspx?Stack=PGC
18 http://www.nea.org/home/microcredentials.html
19 https://digitalpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/researchanded-ucatormicrocredentials-v1r2.pdf

credits that can count toward educator licensure renewal, salary advancement, and in some cases graduate credit. The review board's acknowledgment of the micro-credentials' rigor and research base sends a signal to the field about the micro-credentials' quality as it opens up opportunities for educators across the state to engage in relevant, empowering professional learning.

STATE EXAMPLES

As you think about ways to use the PGC to support your membership, consider demonstrating your commitment in official ways, as these states have done:

In January of 2019, the NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly passed three NBIs related to use of the ESP PGC:

▶ 19-23: Promoting of the ESP Professional Growth Continuum: NEA-Alaska shall ensure that staff directly working with ESP local associations, or associations representing ESPs, will be fully knowledgeable of the NEA ESP Professional Growth Continuum (NEA ESP PGC) www.nea.org/assets/docs/ESP_PGC_digital. pdf. NEA-Alaska will provide at least one (1) hard copy of the NEA ESP PGC to a representative of each of the aforementioned local associations. NEA-Alaska shall provide a report consisting of the process and completion status of these actions to the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors prior to the Delegate Assembly 2020.

▶ 19-82: Expand Micro-credential Program: NEA-Alaska shall investigate the micro-credentials needed by Alaska ESPs and work with NEA to ensure that are courses relevant for all ESP career families. This investigation will include surveying the ESP membership and utilizing the ESP Professional Growth Continuum.

▶ 19-86: Micro-credential Training: NEA-Alaska shall promote the NEA Micro-credential Program to Alaska ESPs and train Uniserv Directors on the program including how to use the tools and resources available to support members on their professional learning journey.

The following is an example of how one state association is working with districts to incorporate the PGC in professional development.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between the Wyoming Education Association (WEA)
and
Park County School District #1 (PCSD1) in Powell, Wyoming

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets for the terms and understanding between the WEA and PCSD1 for implementing the NEA Professional Growth Continuum in support of ESP Professional Development.

Background

Education Support Professionals (ESP) are represented across nine Career Families. All support student growth and ensure student achievement. ESPs play a key role in creating safe, caring, and connected learning communities in our nation's public schools and colleges. One out of every three public school employees is an ESP, and a large majority work full time and live in the community in which they work. The positive impact that ESPs have on students, schools, and communities is enhanced when there are clear expectations, when the work put forth is valued, and when options for professional growth are available.

National Education Association (NEA) has developed a Professional Growth Continuum (PGC), designed through participatory action research (PAR) and with the active involvement of ESP and other stakeholders. The PGC provides state and local associations, school districts, and individuals the ability to choose different routes that meet the specific needs and interests of their school community. In this way, the full benefit of the time and skills of ESPs can be realized for the students and educators with whom they serve.

The goal of the PGC is to provide clear pathways for ESP professional growth through various professional learning opportunities.

Purpose

ESP PGC – The Wyoming Education Association (WEA) is partnering with local education associations, school districts and community groups across Wyoming to engage ESP employees – bus drivers, custodians, food service workers, clerical workers, security personnel, technology professionals, mechanical trades employees, paramedical staff, and paraeducators – in meaningful professional development and professional growth opportunities. The WEA in collaboration with PCSD1 will endeavor to specifically support Early Career Education Support Professionals in order to build a stronger professional pipeline of Education Support Professionals statewide. Through this work, the WEA and PCSD1 will further their mission to not only guarantee high-quality learning environments for all students, but also promote empowered educator voices for the schools our students need.

Given WEA's and PCSD1's commitment to execute this important ESP professional development opportunity, the project will take place from February 2020 through June 2020 and include the following:

1. Provide PGC training for ESPs in the following categories:
    a. Paraeducators
    b. Clerical
    c. Technology
2. Training sessions will address the following PGC Standards:
    a. Ethics
    b. Professionalism
    c. Communication
    d. Health & Safety
3. Training sessions will also include:
    a. Understanding the PGC
    b. Accessing PGC Micro-credentials Online
    c. Collaboration anchored in the PGC
    d. Pre-Training Self-Evaluation and Post-Training Self-Evaluation
4. All materials will be branded by the National Education Association and the Wyoming Education Association.

Reporting

In order to evaluate effectiveness and adhere to the agreement:

1. WEA in collaboration with PCSD1 will meet in June 2020 to assess the effectiveness of the training and plan for next steps.

2. WEA will issue a debrief evaluation report no later than
July 31, 2020.

3. WEA in collaboration with _____ will issue an accounting report detailing income and all expenses (see Funding)

Funding

1. WEA will provide:
   a. Trainers
   b. Training resources
   c. Access to online PGC learning tools
   d. Food and beverages for training sessions and PGC meetings
   e. Ongoing support for PGC implementation

2. PCSD1 will provide:
   a. Technology and technology support for training sessions
   b. Meeting spaces
   c. Release time and/or compensation to ESPs for PGC training
   d. Schedules for training sessions
   e. In-district credit to ESPs for participation in and completion of PGC training
   f. Recognition of ESP participants in PGC training

ACTION STEP 6:
Connecting to Growth and Strength of the Union

▶ Identify at least one strategy for ESP engagement that will support your plan and encourage a regular communication channel, allowing your members to be authentically connected to the work of strengthening the collective voice and practice of ESPs in your community.

Complete Action Step 6 of the planning document in Appendix A.

Case Studies

EXAMPLES OF EARLY USE IN STATE AND LOCAL AFFILIATES

The following examples come from state and local associations that were among the early adopters of the PGC. NEA staff will update this section of the guide as more affiliates share their experiences and build upon their current work.

Phoenix Union Classified Employee Association (PXUCEA), AZ

In the fall of 2019, PXUCEA received an NEA Center for Great Public Schools (CGPS) grant to create meaningful professional development opportunities for their 502 ESP members from three career families (security, transportation, and clerical services), using the Universal Standards.

In the last several years, the association realized that very few employees used professional growth opportunities that were available because they were not seen as relevant to career families. For this reason, the entire professional growth program was placed on hold in the hopes of developing new offerings that are aligned with job family duties as well as progression through a career ladder.

With the help of the NEA CGPS grant, working groups composed of ESPs studied individuals within their respective career families. They compared the levels of practice within the continuum to what they observe their peers doing day-to-day in their jobs. Through this work, they have been able to adapt the Standards to make them relevant, inclusive, and practical for their local context and job functions.

The professional development for these three career families will be implemented at the start of the 2020-2021 academic year and will continue to be adapted for the rest of the ESP career families following the fall launch. The professional development will be designed to be intentionally inclusive of ESPs for whom proficiency in English and technology is a challenge.

Lyons Township, IL

In 2019, Lyons Township received a small grant to launch a professional development day to focus on the ESP PGC. The training was designed to *"bridge the gap between current practices and a vision of support that recognizes and will continue to enhance the vital role a paraeducator plays in student success."* In addition, Mary Ann Rivera, a paraeducator in Lyons Township and member of NEA's ESP Careers Committee, worked with a team of paraeducators, teachers, and school district leaders to revise their paraeducator evaluation based on the ESP PGC, thereby making it relevant to their practice and focused on professional growth (not accountability).

East Orange Maintenance Association, NJ

Excerpt from April 2019 NEA Today article:

In New Jersey, Kimberly Scott-Hayden led the development of trainings for East Orange Maintenance Association (EOMA) members using PGC Standards. The program started after Scott-Hayden approached Dr. Kevin West, East Orange School District Superintendent.

"Before anything, you need to effectively communicate a message, a perception, or a theory," says Scott-Hayden, who first enticed Dr. West with an idea about training ESPs to communicate more effectively at work.

In East Orange, EOMA's original 32 members were the first to join the training sessions. Scott-Hayden and Dr. West decided to begin with this question: How can I grow professionally to become more culturally aware and effective in communicating with students and colleagues?

Scott-Hayden and the team found that discussing culturally sensitive issues can be difficult. Still, they asked participants how they collaborate with members from culturally diverse groups, how they evaluate their ability to recognize reactions in individuals different from themselves, and how they address the consequences of inequities based on identity or group membership.

Once educators saw the passion of Scott-Hayden and her team, the New Jersey program quickly expanded across East Orange. The team was awarded one of NEA's Great Public Schools Fund Grants for $90,000 over three years starting in the 2018-2019 school year. She says she could not have predicted the spike in membership after the grant was issued, which reached 370 members to now include teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, and security guards along with the original maintenance workers.

"Just based on the work they are seeing, people have said, 'I'm buying into this.' It builds capacity," says Scott-Hayden. "It gives you an opportunity to show your district that you are an important stakeholder in your career development. You can use PGC to bargain, as leverage to increase your salary, or for career advancement. It will cultivate leaders."

Wyoming Education Association

Wyoming Education Association (WYOEA) has entered into agreements with two school districts to offer PGC-based professional development for ESPs, and other districts are showing interest. At the beginning of this work, the WYOEA will focus on a subset of career families (paraeducators, clerical, and technology) and a few targeted PGC Standards (Ethics, Professionalism, Communication, Health & Safety).

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Using NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum to Offer Relevant and Impactful Professional Development for ESPs

This action planning document is designed to organize the development of your plan for use of the PGC with ESP members and potential members. Following each section of the PGC Implementation Guide, the reader is directed to complete the corresponding Action Step of this planning document.

ACTION STEP 1: Your plan for ESP PD: Start with "Why"	
Answer the questions, below, after reviewing Chapter 1 of the Guide and the following resources: National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development: A Practice Agenda in Support of How Learning Happens, p.35; ASCD: Whole Child framework; Education Support Professionals Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Framework; NEA's Mission, Vision, and Values; and Michael Jr.: Know Your Why.	
Name of your local(s) (if applicable) and state	
Which career families are represented in your membership?	
What grade levels, worksite type do your members support, i.e., PK–12, higher ed, specialized school site?	
What is your "Why"?	
How does your "Why" support students, staff (ESPs), and the association? (Note that it's perfectly reasonable to revise your "Why," if needed, over time as you engage more stakeholders and gather additional insight.)	

ACTION STEP 2: HOW CAN THE PGC SUPPORT NEEDS AND HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT?	
Answer the questions, below, after reviewing Chapter II of the Guide and the following resources: A New Vision for Student Success: A Report from NEA's Accountability Task Force; and ESP PGC document and resources.	
What are concrete ways your Association can help ESPs (either as individuals or in groups) use the PGC Standards to enhance their professional learning? List the trainings and supports you wish to offer.	
How will you articulate and document the positive impact a focus on the PGC and its Standards can have for school communities? Who should know about those positive outcomes? School/district partners? ESP membership? Potential members? What are the most relevant points you hope to convey?	

ACTION STEP 3: Consider Your Local Context	
Answer the questions, below, after reviewing Chapter III of the Guide.	
Describe your local PD context. What professional development offerings are available to your ESPs? What does the district provide? What does the local association provide? Are these opportunities paid? Are there requirements connected to them? How does your plan to use the PGC connect to existing PD offerings? Would it replace what is currently offered? Would it complement what is currently offered? Would it meet a need that is currently unaddressed?	
What training or professional development do you think your ESPs need? How did you determine that? Do you plan to confirm your thinking?	
How can you engage your ESPs in designing and delivering PD focused on the PGC?	
What goal do you want to accomplish by using the PGC? Draw on your context and feedback from ESPs to develop and articulate your goal.	

ACTION STEP 4: Securing Buy–In from Important Stakeholders	
Answer the questions, below, after reviewing Chapter IV of the Guide and the following resource: Education Support Professionals Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student: Tenets	
Answer the following: What inputs are needed to implement your plan (e.g., time, space, supplies, funding, etc.)? Who makes decisions about those inputs? How can your plan help meet a need they have?	
Who are your allies and advocates? List these people and how they can support your efforts.	
Who are key partners you need to collaborate with to create and implement PD focused on the PGC?	
Do issues exist that complicate the partnerships you need to advance your goal? If so, what are they? What can you do to address the issues or move beyond them?	

ACTION STEP 5: Capture and Share Feedback

Capture feedback throughout the process to reflect on and make improvements. Consider the breadth of feedback you collect and share with appropriate stakeholders. Think about what your various stakeholders might be interested in, especially your ESP leaders and membership, association leadership, and district partners. Also consider sharing your feedback to NEA's ESP Quality department, to the attention of Kimberly Bertocci, senior program specialist/policy analyst: kbertocci@nea.org.	

ACTION STEP 6: Connecting to Growth and Strength of the Union

Answer the following questions after reviewing Chapter VI of the Guide.

Identify one strategy for ESP engagement that will support your plan to leverage the PGC for ESPs.	
How does this strategy encourage regular communication between the association and ESP members? Does this strategy include potential members?	
How will your plan enable ESPs to strengthen and use their collective voice?	

OPTIONAL NEXT STEP: Your Feedback

NEA's ESP Quality team wants to hear from you! After reviewing the contents of the PGC Implementation Guide and completing the Action Steps in this document, please consider sharing your feedback with us by completing this survey. Thank you!

Sample Exercises for Implementation

Exercises can be accessed within NEA's edCommunities ESP PGC Implementation Group. Visit www.nea.org/home/edcommunities.html and search for ESP PGC Implementation to join the group, access the exercises, and share your use experience with NEA staff and your peers.