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Dispatch

P E N N S Y L V A N I A S T A T E E D U C A T I O N A S S O C I A T I O N - E S P

Spring 2024

A publication for education support professionals of PSEA

Message from your president

Advocating for a Living Wage

Imagine a school where the parents' calls go unanswered, the phones ring and ring, but there is no one to pick up, no one to listen to the worried voices on the other end. The classrooms are dirty, the desks and hallways unclean. The cafeteria can't serve hot and nutritious meals. The computers are down, the technology is unavailable. Students with disabilities are left unattended, their needs ignored. The classrooms are chaotic, the teachers overwhelmed, the students confused and scared. School, once a place of learning and growth, had become a place of despair and hopelessness.

You get the picture. We hope these scenarios never take place in our schools. But thousands of dedicated and hardworking education support professionals are often underpaid and struggle to make ends meet, despite their critical role in providing care and support to students both inside and outside the classrooms.

Our members play a vital part in ensuring the academic success and well-being of students, yet they are often compensated at

levels that fall below what is considered a living wage. This is and has always been unacceptable and highlights the need for greater recognition and compensation for our members. For too many years, the wages of more than half of ESPs have been under a living wage. A constant reminder of the inequity and the struggles that continue to persist. But no more! This year, and for as long as it will take, addressing this issue will be the top priority for our members.

The passion and dedication of our members have been remarkable, and their resolve unwavering. They know that fair wages are not just a nicety, but a necessity. A basic human right, and a crucial component of a healthy and functioning society.

PSEA is actively addressing this issue through both internal and external communications. We are urging legislators to establish a living wage for ESPs of at least \$20 per hour to ensure that these dedicated professionals are fairly compensated for their valuable contributions to the education system. Moreover, at the December 2023 House of



Rudy Burruss
ESP Region President

Delegates, PSEA delegates passed two New Business Items pertaining to ESP wages. One item focuses on legislative advocacy to provide at least a living wage for education support professionals, and the other directs our Association to publicize the results of the 2023 ESP wage survey that concludes that education support professionals need higher pay.

This is not just about wages, but also about respect. Let's stand together in solidarity to continue advocating for higher wages through collective bargaining.

Help us educate elected officials about the fact that voters agree with us on raising wages for education support professionals.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Name: Marc Howshall

Candidate for Committee/Term: Vice President

Term: 2024-2026

Association Positions held:

- **Local:** President, Vice President, Chief Negotiator, Grievance Chair
- **Region:** ESP Region Vice President and Officer At Large
- **State:** Collective Bargaining Committee, PSEA Policy Committee, ESP Policy Committee Chair, PSEA Audit Committee, PSEA Oversight Committee, NEA-RA New Business Committee also PSEA Interview Committee in DC for NEA Executive Committee Candidates.

Statement of Candidacy:

Presently I'm your ESP Region Vice President and PSEA Board Member. I also serve as a PSEA Mediator for Member to Member Conflicts, and serve on PSEA Audit Committee, PSEA Policy Committee, PSEA Property Committee, ESP Policy Committee Chair, and ESP Member of the Year Committee Chair.

I have been an ESP Member for over 28 years, during these years serving in leadership positions at the Local and State levels as well as serving on Local, PSEA and ESP State Committee's. It is very gratifying representing our ESP Region and Members over the years. As your ESP region Vice President my dedication, resilience and years of knowledge and experience will continue to bring strong leadership to our ESP Region to serve hard working Members like you.

As Vice President, I will give all Members the continued opportunity to have a Voice and be heard. I will continue working hard to navigate through these troubling and uncertain times to continue to fight back the challenges we face every day. As your Vice President along with your officers and board we will always keep in mind what is best for our ESP Region and the Members we serve. WE need to continue to increase Membership, Member involvement and Community involvement to insure a viable and bright future for our Members.

It would be a privilege and an honor to continue to be a part of our great ESP Leadership Team as your ESP Region Vice President and to continue to represent you, the members of the ESP Region.

Thank You

Marc C. Howshall

"Strength In Numbers"

Name: Margaret (Peg) Rockwell

Candidate for Committee/Term: Officer-at-Large

Term: 2024-2026

Association Positions held:

- ESP Region Officer-at-Large
- Southwestern ESP Division President, Vice President, Sec/Tres
- PSEA Member Affiliate Committee
- Local President
- Local Chief Negotiator
- PSEA Leadership Development Committee (LDC), Policy Committee
- ESP Region Constitution and Bylaws Committee, Budget Committee, Policy Committee
- PSEA-ACE member, along with numerous other committees

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CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

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Statement of Candidacy:

I have been serving as your Region Officer-at-Large for the past eight (10) years. Before that, I also served as the Southwestern ESP Division President and have been a member of the ESP Region Board of Directors since 2006. In addition, I have served as a member of the PSEA Leadership Development Committee (LDC) as well as a member of the ESP Region Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

My wish is to continue to assist our members in facing the difficult challenges of providing a sound education plan for the children of Pennsylvania, along with having secured working conditions for all of our members. Each and every one of you deserves not only to have a living wage but pension benefits you have worked so very hard to secure.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve as your Officer-at-Large and to be a part of the ESP Region Executive Committee.

In solidarity,
Peggy Rockwell

Dates to Remember

April 12-13

Special Education Conference, Hershey Lodge

May 17-18

PSEA House of Delegates, Pittsburgh

April 19-20

ESP Region Leadership Conference and House of Delegates,
DoubleTree Hilton, Cranberry/Mars

July 21-25

Summer Leadership Conference, Gettysburg College

Learning Opportunities – 2024 ESP Core School

We are thrilled to invite you to the 2024 PSEA Summer Leadership Conference, where you will have the opportunity to attend the ESP Core School. This comprehensive training program is specifically designed for education support professionals like you, and it is guaranteed to leave you feeling empowered, inspired, and ready to take on any challenge that comes your way.

At the ESP Core School, you will learn the essential skills that will help you excel in your leadership roles. But the benefits of attending the ESP Core School

go far beyond just the skills and knowledge you will gain. You will also connect with other education support professionals from across the state to share best practices and learn from each other's experiences. This is a unique chance to build a network of like-minded professionals who understand the challenges and rewards that we all face each day.

So why not take advantage of this incredible opportunity?

We urge you to join us at the 2024 PSEA Summer Leadership Conference and attend the ESP Core School. We promise that you will leave feeling refreshed,

revitalized, and ready to make a real difference in the lives of students and schools.

If you would like to be considered for an ESP Core School scholarship and have never attended this school, please contact Nate Greenawalt at PSEA Headquarters at ngreenawalt@psea.org for more information.

Registration materials will be sent to local presidents at the beginning of April.

Please contact your local president to register for other classes. We look forward to seeing you there!

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Pennsylvania State Education Association
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Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-1724*

Aaron F. Chapin - PSEA President
Jeffrey D. Ney - PSEA Vice President
Rachael M. West - PSEA Treasurer
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Rudy Burruss - PSEA ESP Region President
Marc Howshall - PSEA ESP Region Vice President
Deneen Dry - PSEA ESP Region Secretary
Adam Lanza - PSEA ESP Region Treasurer
Peg Rockwell - PSEA ESP Region Officer-at-Large



Extensions and Reauthorizations through Act 33 – Fixing the Continued Substitute Teacher Shortage

The state Legislature recently reauthorized the use of ESPs as classroom monitors for substitute teaching. Act 33 extends the Classroom Monitor Pilot Program through the 2025-26 school year. A classroom monitor may deliver student assignments that are pre-planned by the classroom teacher but cannot plan lessons or create or grade student work. Classroom monitors must meet clearance and citizenship requirements, be at least 25 years old, and complete classroom management training provided by an

Intermediate Unit. In addition, classroom monitors must meet one of two criteria:

- 1.** Must have attained at least 60 college credits from an accredited Pennsylvania college or university; OR
- 2.** Must currently be employed by a public school entity as a paraprofessional and have at least three years of experience as a paraprofessional. In this case, compensation for service as a classroom monitor must reflect the higher of the paraprofessional's existing contractual compensation or

that established by the school (or third-party agency) for day-to-day substitute teachers.

However, this program can pull education support professionals from the valuable work they do in our schools. PSEA is working with state legislators to address this problem. PSEA is also advocating for more state funding in this year's budget to help address this shortage and backfill those jobs that become vacant due to ESP members becoming teachers.