

Privatization

WHAT IS PRIVATIZATION?

For many OEA/NEA ESP members, privatization is another word for FIRED! Privatization, or "contracting out," is part of a broad campaign that seeks to transfer many parts of our community life, including the delivery of education services, into the hands of private, for-profit corporations. In many ways, the pushes for school vouchers and charter schools are parts of this same movement. While all of education is targeted by the privateers, ESP jobs are particularly at risk. Privatization is a threat to public education, and more broadly, to our democracy itself.

ESP PRIVATIZATION TODAY

The current deep recession has created huge budget deficits for state and local governments, and widespread layoffs across the country. Governments are looking to privatize in the belief that this will create short-term cost savings. In addition to proposals to privatize government services as diverse as zoos, libraries, and parking services, there has been an upsurge across the country of attempts to privatize ESP jobs. While most of the attention has been on the traditionally contracted-out job categories of transportation, custodial, and food services, no ESP jobs are safe. Fortunately, privatization still remains the exception, not the rule, and most school districts continue to recognize that the needs of their students are best met by a skilled, committed, and experienced ESP workforce.

YOU CAN'T GET THE SAME FOR LESS

Although private contractors nearly always promise cost savings, these savings are often illusory. Bids often do not take into account all the costs involved, and contractors may "low-ball" initial bids to win a contract, with costs rising significantly as time goes on. And there is more to the work of ESP than just costs, and much more at stake when jobs are contracted out - the quality of education and even the safety of our children can be at risk! Private contractors may bring in strangers from outside the community with no connection to the students and families they serve, and cost-cutting can threaten student and employee health and safety.

More than 77% of ESPs live within their school district. On average, they have been employed more than 12 years. 82% plan to stay in their profession, and 67% plan to stay with their current jobs until they retire. 61% give money out of their own pockets to help students with things such as classroom materials, field trips, and class projects. ESPs know the students and their families, and are committed to their communities. They are essential members of a unified education workforce that educates the whole child.

In short, you can't get the same for less. Privatization = a cut in services for the school, a cut in benefits and wages for employees, and a risk to safety for students and families.

HOW WE CAN FIGHT PRIVATIZATION

Privatization is a bad idea, and it can and should be stopped in its tracks. Defeating privatization begins with educating school board, parents and our communities about the vital roles ESPs play in our students' educations and lives. There is no magic wand to wave - beating privatization takes hard work. NEA's ESP Quality Department has resources to help, including training sessions, materials, technical assistance for state and local Association leaders, and data on privatization incidents and contractors around the country. For more information, [contact Jonathan Falk](#) at NEA ESP Quality.