



Education Support Professionals (ESPs): Professional Growth Continuum (PGC) Communication: Effective Communication *Proficient Level*

Competency

The ESP demonstrates effective communication with diverse audiences that may include students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, coworkers/colleagues, supervisors, and community members at their worksite.

Key Method

The ESP demonstrates how effective communication shapes their experiences and effectiveness at work.

Method Components

This micro-credential is based on the Universal Standard of Communication from the [NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum \(PGC\)](#), which defines communication as the ability to effectively listen and communicate (written and verbal) with a diverse audience including students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community.

Communication for education support professionals can be broken into two skill areas:

- Responsible Communication
- Effective Communication

This micro-credential focuses on *effective communication*.

Words to Know

Appropriate: suitable or right for a particular situation or occasion

Context: the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it

Effective: successful or achieving the result you want or the result you hoped for

Efficient: working or operating quickly and effectively in an organized way; or working in a way that does not waste a resource (something valuable such as fuel, water, or money)

Escalate: to increase or be increased in extent, intensity, or magnitude

Essential: necessary or needed

Expectation: what you believe or hope will happen in the future

Facilitate: to make easier; to help bring about

Guideline: information intended to advise people on how something should be done or what something should be

Intervene: to become involved intentionally in a difficult situation in order to change it or improve it, or prevent it from getting worse

Liaison: someone who helps groups to work effectively with each other; communication between people or groups who work with each other

Paraphrase: to state something written or spoken in different words, especially in a shorter and simpler form to make the meaning clearer

Proficient: skilled and experienced; good at doing something because of practice

Reinforce: to make something stronger; if something reinforces an idea or opinion, it provides more proof or support for it and makes it seem true

NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum

Let's look at examples of proficient-level effective communication in the NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum. There are many ways for ESPs to demonstrate effective communication at a proficient level. Demonstrating skills and knowledge in this standard may look different depending on one's unique role, worksite, community, and experience. The following language, adapted from the PGC, provides examples (indicators are bold, descriptors are sub-bullets):

- **Collect and share information in a professional and efficient manner.**

(For All Career Families)

- understand and follow oral and written directions
- share accurate information in a timely fashion
- provide requested general information to students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

(For Food Services)

- understand and follow oral and written directions necessary for the functioning of the cafeteria (e.g., cooking/warming procedures, serving guidelines, cashier duties, etc.)
- provide requested general information to students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community regarding National School Nutrition requirements
- share accurate information in a timely fashion (e.g., changes in breakfast options, monthly menu via school newsletter, daily menu via morning announcements, etc.)

(For Health and Student Services)

- inform parents/guardians of required medical documents (e.g., immunizations, physicals, release for participation in sports, etc.)
- provide requested and necessary information to students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community regarding community resources and available services to address student and parent/guardian needs

(For Paraeducators)

- understand and follow directions; share information with students, families, teachers, and specialists to provide student support (e.g., directions for learning tasks, student goals and objectives, schedule of services, etc.)
- understand and follow oral and written directions (e.g., work orders, materials application, safety sheets, etc.)

(For Skilled Trades)

- Understand and follow oral and written directions (e.g., work orders, materials application, safety sheets, etc.)

(For Technical Services)

- understand and follow oral and written directions necessary for maintaining and providing technology services
- provide requested general information to students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community about acceptable use policies and technology regulations
- share accurate information in a timely fashion (e.g., inform staff of potential assistive technologies to support students' needs.)

(For Transportation Services)

- understand and follow oral and written directions (e.g., road construction updates, route changes, safe bus expectations, etc.)
- provide requested general information about transportation rules, procedures, and expectations to students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

- **Engage students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community politely and positively.**

(For All Career Families)

- seek to understand the needs of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community by asking clarifying questions and paraphrasing responses to confirm understanding of requests
- use professional language in all communications (e.g., conversations, emails, written correspondence, and public meetings)

- greet students, staff, parents/guardians, and visitors in person or via phone with a smile and pleasant tone
- listen with empathy to the concerns of coworkers, supervisors, administration, and staff

(For Clerical Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe, be responsible, be respectful)

(For Custodial and Maintenance)

- share and reinforce expectations for the use of physical space (e.g., restricted areas, proper use of equipment or furniture, room capacity limits, etc.)
- identify escalating situations with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

(For Food Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe in the cafeteria by sitting while eating; be responsible by clearing your table, be respectful by not talking with food in your mouth; etc.)

(For Health and Student Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe by washing your hands frequently; be responsible by coming to the nurse for daily medication at scheduled times; be respectful by covering your mouth when you cough, etc.)

(For Paraeducators)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe by walking in the halls; be responsible by doing your work; be respectful by using an inside voice in the classroom; etc.)
- identify escalating situations with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- listen for and discern critical information necessary to support student learning during team meetings and in consultation with your supervisor; when working with students: monitor progress, collect, and share data in areas of focus

(For Security Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe by walking in the halls; be responsible by arriving at school on time; be respectful by using an inside voice in the halls while classes are in session, etc.)
- follow rules and regulations of engagement determined by the law, district, and school policies when interacting with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- identify escalating situations with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

(For Skilled Trades)

- share and reinforce expectations for the use of physical space (e.g., restricted areas, proper use of equipment, cleanup, etc.)

(For Technical Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe when you're on the internet; be responsible by reporting cyberbullying; be respectful of yourself and others when posting on social media, etc.)
- listen for and discern critical information necessary to support student learning during team meetings and in consultation with your supervisor; when working with students: monitor progress, collect, and share data in areas of focus

(For Transportation Services)

- share and reinforce expectations for positive school-wide behavior (e.g., be safe by staying in your seat when the bus is moving; be responsible by taking everything with you; be respectful by following the driver's directions, etc.)

- **Act as a liaison between the school and community when interacting with and assisting students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community.**

(For all Career Families)

- explain and reinforce school/district expectations for a positive learning environment
- research and provide comprehensive and accurate information

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- facilitate the transfer of information between school site/program and outside agencies and districts
- know when and how to intervene in escalating situations (e.g., tone of voice, proximity, stance, etc.)
- use language that reinforces the positive academic and social expectations to increase appropriate school behavior
- use corrective feedback to discourage inappropriate behavior and respect the individual

(For Custodial and Maintenance)

- facilitate the transfer of information between the school site/program and external stakeholders (e.g., district building and grounds, municipal zoning department, town fire/ police department, etc.)

(For Food Services)

- explain and reinforce school/district expectations for a positive learning environment in the cafeteria
- facilitate the transfer of information between the school site/program and outside agencies and districts (i.e., health department)

(For Health and Student Services)

- research and provide comprehensive and accurate information pertaining to school/community health
- reach out and meet community service providers
- facilitate the transfer of information between the school site/program and outside agencies and districts, observing procedures for sharing medical data

(For Paraeducators)

- participate in a reciprocal feedback process with parents/guardians and staff in order to adjust academic and behavioral instruction and reinforcement; be aware of social and cultural dynamics, adjusting your communication style to respond in a culturally relevant manner

(For Security Services)

- research and provide comprehensive and accurate information concerning rules, regulations, policies, and laws

- facilitate the transfer of information between the school site/program and outside agencies and districts (e.g., community support agencies, municipal law enforcement, juvenile courts, etc.)

(For Skilled Trades)

- facilitate the transfer of information between school site/program and outside agencies (e.g., municipal building and zoning department, district office, and state inspectors)

(For Technical Services)

- participate in a reciprocal feedback process with parents/guardians and staff in order to adjust academic and behavioral instruction and reinforcement; be aware of social and cultural dynamics, adjusting your communication style to respond in a culturally relevant manner

(For Transportation Services)

- facilitate the transfer of information between transportation services, school site/program and districts

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential you must receive a proficient score in Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3.

If any Part of the micro-credential is incomplete or left blank, the submission will be scored “Incomplete,” and you will receive an email with a note of encouragement to complete all Parts of the micro-credential and resubmit your work to NEA.

Please read the “How to earn a proficient score” section at the end of each Part below to make sure your micro-credential submission is complete and meets the requirements.

For each Part, you may choose to submit your response:

- in WRITING (created in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or another word processing software; acceptable file formats are .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf); OR
- through an AUDIO RECORDING (created on a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet, or on audio recording equipment; acceptable file formats are .mp3, .wav, .aiff); OR
- through a VIDEO RECORDING (created on a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet, or on audio recording equipment; acceptable file formats are .mp4, .mov, .wmv, .avi)

Video or audio recordings for each Part should be one single file. You may complete all of the responses in one clip, or you may edit multiple clips together as one file to submit per Part.

IMPORTANT:

ESPs are strongly encouraged to take time to explore the links in the Supporting Rationale and Research and Resources section at the end of this document.

Do this before working on Part 1 of your micro-credential submission.

Part 1: Skill Area Learning – Effective Communication at your Worksite

Directions:

1. Locate a copy of your job description or think about the tasks/job responsibilities you do on a daily basis in your job.
2. Select two specific examples of tasks you do on a regular basis that are dependent on your effective communication skills and list them below.

Task #1: _____

Task #2: _____

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3. Based on what you selected above for Task #1, check the box or boxes of all the PGC indicators of effective communication skills you think are related to the task. (There are no wrong answers).
- Collect and share information in a professional and efficient manner
 - Engage students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community politely and positively
 - Act as a liaison between the school and community when interacting with and assisting students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
4. Based on what you selected above for Task #2, check the box or boxes of all the PGC indicators of effective communication skills you think are related to the task. (There are no wrong answers).
- Collect and share information in a professional and efficient manner
 - Engage students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community politely and positively
 - Act as a liaison between school and the community when interacting with and assisting students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
5. Explain how effective communication is essential to how you complete Task #1 and #2 using the skill(s) you identified above. As you explain, be sure to include the following:
- a. Tell us:
 - your career family title;
 - your worksite type (elementary, middle, high school, district, or institution of higher education); and
 - the PGC indicator that best connects to each task.
 - b. How is effective communication essential to how you complete these tasks?
 - c. What could happen if you were unable to communicate effectively? What impact(s) could it have on students, schools, etc.?
 - d. How do your effective communication skills help you help the people you interact with during the workday (e.g., students,

co-workers, colleagues, administrators, supervisors, family and community members, etc.)?

- e. Describe a time when communicating effectively was a challenge for you and what you did to address the challenge.

You may choose to submit a written response for Part 1. If you do this:

- Create a new Word document.
- Copy and paste your responses to items #2 – 5. This should include responses to all of the above questions and prompts. Save the document.
- Upload the document file to the NEA Certification Bank submission page section for Part 1.

OR

You may choose to submit an audio or video response for Part 1. If you do this:

- Use a mobile device (e.g., smartphone or tablet) to make an audio or video recording of yourself answering all of the questions, and prompts for items #2 – 5 above. Feel free to refer to any notes you have made during your exploration of the topic. Save your recording.
- Upload the file of the recording to the NEA Certification Bank submission page section for Part 1.
- The audio or video recording should be no more than 7 minutes in length. If a submitted recording for Part 1 is longer than 7 minutes, only the first 7 minutes will be reviewed.

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your written, audio, or video recording to Part 1.
- Completely answer each question/prompt; and
- If you submit an audio or video recording: make sure the total length of your responses for Part 1 is no longer than 7 minutes.
- If you submit a written response: make sure the total length of your response for Part 1 is 350 words minimum and no longer than 1000 words.
- *If you have a job description, please upload a copy of it along with the rest of your files in Part 1 of the NEA Certification Bank

submission page for this micro-credential. This will help NEA learn more about how employers view ESP roles, and will not affect your score. Submitting your employer-created job description is not required to earn a proficient score on this micro-credential.

How to earn a passing and proficient score in Part 1:

Part 1 Passing: Responses to directions #2 – 4 identify the work tasks that are dependent upon the PGC indicators for the skill area in this micro-credential. At least three terms from the “Words to Know” section must be integrated accurately into your responses.

Part 1 Rubric: Responses to direction #5 including sub-bullets

Score:	Developing	Proficient
Direction #5: Explain how effective communication is essential to how you complete work tasks #1 and #2 using the PGC skills identified.	Provides answers to some or all questions but little to no detail illustrating the points shared.	Provides answers to all questions describing, with examples from work experiences, how effective communication is essential to the completion of work tasks. Examples describe positive and negative impacts as well as challenges.

Part 2: Interview

Directions: Follow the steps below, make an audio or video recording or written transcription of the interview, and save it to upload as part of your submission.

Identify one person from your ESP career family with whom you feel comfortable having a conversation about effective communication. Do not have the interviewee share any personal information that could be used to identify them (e.g., name, school, district, etc.) as they should remain anonymous.

Before the interview, provide the interviewee with a copy of the questions and the PGC indicators and descriptors listed above.

The recording should be 5-10 minutes in length. If a submitted recording for Part 2 is longer than 10 minutes, only the first 10 minutes will be reviewed. Written transcriptions should be no longer than 1000 words.

Interview the person using only questions #1-3 below and include their responses. After conducting the interview, answer all of the questions yourself:

1. What is one aspect of effective communication that you feel confident in?
 - a. What specifically did you do or what happened to help you to gain that confidence?
2. What is one aspect of effective communication where you think you have the most growing or learning to do?
 - a. Why do you think you have the most growing or learning to do in this aspect?
3. Do you think that we, at our worksite, are encouraging adults to develop and use their skills in effective communication?
 - a. If yes, provide a specific example of what we are doing well to make this happen, and how you know it is working.

- b. If no, what specifically do you think we could do differently?
- 4. What have you learned from talking with a co-worker, or colleague about effective communication?

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your audio or video recording or written transcription of your interview to Part 2 of the NEA Certification Bank submission page.
- Include complete, relevant responses to all questions from the interviewee AND from the submitter/you.
- Answer 1, 1a, 2, 2a, 3; then
- Answer either 3a or 3b.
- For questions 1 and 2, provide specific and relevant examples.
- For question 3a or 3b, provide relevant specifics on how school/worksite/community staff and/or leaders are encouraging the development and usage of effective communication, or provide achievable ideas for what could be done differently to do better in this area.
- Make sure the length of a recording is no longer than 10 minutes and the length of a written transcription is no longer than 1000 words.

How to earn a proficient score in Part 2:

Part 2 Rubric:

Score:	Developing	Proficient
Interviews	Interview of co-worker and self do not provide answers to all questions, or provide answers to all questions but only with general examples on how confidence has been gained in effective	Interview of co-worker and self provide answers to all questions, demonstrating understanding of effective communication and describe with work examples how confidence has been

	<p>communication, areas of growth or learning related to the skill area; and whether adults are encouraged to develop and use their knowledge in this skill area on the job.</p>	<p>gained in effective communication, identify areas of growth or learning related to the skill area; whether adults are encouraged to develop and use their knowledge in this skill area on the job and how this could be improved if needed; and apply understanding of the co-worker's experiences to inform the submitter's knowledge about the skill area.</p>
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Part 3: Reflection

Directions: Read all of the text in the three numbered prompts/questions below, then respond to all three prompts/questions through a written response, **OR** through an audio or video recording of yourself.

- If you submit a written response: make sure your Part 3 response is 350 words minimum and no longer than 750 words.
- If you submit a recording (audio or video): make sure your recording for Part 3 is no longer than 5 minutes.

Prompts/Questions:

1. Describe one missed opportunity at your worksite, when you or others could have done a better job in effective communication.

(*Your response describing a missed opportunity will not negatively impact your score and will not be shared.)

2. What action step or small change can you make in the next seven months to strengthen your effective communication skills? How could you put those stronger skills to use at your worksite, school, community, district, or institution of higher education?

Some examples:

- Talk about your exploration of effective communication with another member of your worksite community. Share what you've learned or realized, and ask them about their thoughts on the topic.
 - Describe how you can change your approach to one task or a part of your day through effective communication.
3. Describe who will benefit from your steps to develop and deepen your own effective communication skills. Tell us how and why they will benefit.

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your written, audio, or video response to the NEA Certification Bank submission page for Part 3.
- Include relevant, complete, and specific responses to all three prompts/questions.
- Make sure your responses reflect an understanding of what proficient effective communication means for ESPs.
- Make sure the length of your written response is 350 words minimum and no longer than 750 words; or the length of your recording is no longer than 5 minutes.

How to earn a passing score in Part 3:

Part 3 Passing: Your reflection identifies an action step or change you can make to strengthen your effective communication skills, how you will put those stronger skills to use at your worksite, school, community, or institution of higher education, and who will benefit and how they will benefit.

Supporting Rationale and Research

ESPs are strongly encouraged to explore the links in the Supporting Rationale and Research and Resources section below before beginning to work on Part 1 of the micro-credential.

National Education Association: [NEA ESP Professional Growth Continuum](#)

Resources:

The PGC: What it is and how to use it

- [English video](#)
- [Spanish video](#)
- [Spanish resources](#)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD): [Whole Child Approach to Education](#)