



# Education Support Professionals (ESPs): Professional Growth Continuum (PGC) Professionalism: Professional Preparedness *Proficient Level*

## Competency

The ESP demonstrates professional preparedness, professional knowledge, and self-presentation skills effectively at their worksite.

## Key Method

The ESP demonstrates how professional preparedness shapes their experiences and effectiveness at work.

## Method Components

This micro-credential is based on the Universal Standard of Professionalism from the [NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum \(PGC\)](#), which defines professionalism as the ability to present and conduct oneself in a professional manner in all job settings.

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

## Professional Preparedness Proficient Level

1. Professional Preparedness
2. Professional Dispositions

This micro-credential focuses on *professional preparedness*.

### Words to Know

**Continuum:** a set of things on a scale, which have a particular characteristic to different degrees

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

**Law:** a rule made by a government or a system of rules that states how people may and may not behave in society and in business, and that often orders particular punishments if they do not obey

**Policy:** a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party

**Procedure:** a set of actions that is the official or accepted way of doing something

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

**Regulation:** an official rule or law

**Report:** a spoken or written description of an event or situation

**Requirement:** something needed or necessary; something that you must do

**Rule:** an accepted principle or instruction that states the way things are or should be done, and tells you what you are allowed or are not allowed to do

## NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum

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

- **Align appearance appropriately to job duties and professional expectations as outlined in the handbook or job description.**

**(For Clerical Services)**

- business or business casual, appropriate to an education setting

**(For Custodial and Maintenance)**

- uniform shirt and pants, clean and wrinkle-free
- sturdy footwear or boots appropriate to clean or perform maintenance tasks in an education setting

**(For Food Services)**

- uniform, clean and wrinkle-free
- sturdy footwear
- hair restraint or visor, and gloves
- no jewelry on hands or arms

**(For Health and Student Services)**

- uniform, if required, clean and wrinkle-free
- sturdy footwear
- no jewelry on hands or arms

**(For Paraeducators)**

- business or business casual, appropriate to an education setting

**(For Security Services)**

- uniform shirt and pants, clean and wrinkle-free
- sturdy footwear or boots appropriate to perform security tasks in an education setting

**(For Skilled Trades)**

- uniform shirt and pants, clean and wrinkle-free
- sturdy footwear or boots appropriate to perform construction or maintenance tasks at the worksite

**(For Technical Services)**

- business or business casual, appropriate to an education setting

**(For Skilled Trades)**

- clean and durable clothing providing free range of motion to complete pre- and post-trip inspections
- sturdy footwear to protect feet in case of an emergency

● **Know the roles and responsibilities of your career field.**

**(For Clerical Services)**

- perform expected clerical duties for administration
- perform expected clerical duties for other staff positions
- perform nonclerical duties outlined in your job description and work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Custodial and Maintenance)**

- perform general housekeeping and other support functions on a regular and as-needed basis
- perform non-custodian duties outlined in your job description
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Food Services)**

- perform general food preparation and service duties on a regular and as-needed basis
- carry out cleaning duties outlined in job description
- comply with all regulations as defined by the Health Department
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Health and Student Services)**

- carry out general health care and screening duties
- follow professional and ethical standards for a health care

- provider
- perform cleaning duties outlined in job description (medical equipment, patient areas, etc.)
- comply with all regulations as defined by the Health Department Work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Paraeducators)**

- interact collegially with teachers, professional practitioners, and other paraeducators who are providing learning support to students
- attend workshops and required training that meet and maintain all district, state, and federal requirements
- participate in routine communication with education team members
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Security Services)**

- complete basic training for school resource officers
- know areas of responsibility and policy for intervening with students as established by school/district administration
- effectively prioritize patrolling needs
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Skilled Trades)**

- obtain licensing/certification (if required)
- follow proper use and care of tools and equipment
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Technical Services)**

- obtain licensing/certification (if required)
- follow proper use and care of tools and equipment
- know parameters for interacting with students, staff, and administration
- follow Board policy and regulations
- work independently (e.g., initiate tasks, complete tasks within an assigned time frame without prompting)

**(For Transportation Services)**

- obtain licensing/certification (if required)
- follow proper use and care of vehicles and equipment
- know parameters for interaction with students, staff, and administration
- follow proper procedure for reporting student behavior

● **Project a positive image to the community through communication, involvement, and personal conduct.**

**(For all Clerical Services)**

- provide comprehensive and accurate information in routine, sensitive, and confidential matters with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- convey willingness to take information
- be responsive to requests for assistance
- communicate clearly and directly

**(For Custodial and Maintenance, Food Services, Health and Student Services)**

- commit to providing a clean and welcoming environment
- communicate clearly and directly with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

**(For Paraeducators)**

- provide comprehensive and accurate information in routine, sensitive, and confidential matters with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- be willing to take information or requests for assistance
- communicate clearly and directly

**(For Security Services)**

- commit to providing a secure and welcoming learning environment
- communicate clearly and directly with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

**(For Skilled Trades)**

- commit to providing a safe and functioning learning environment
- communicate clearly and directly with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

**(For Technical Services)**

- commit to providing a safe and functioning technology-enabled learning environment
- communicate clearly and directly with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

**(For Transportation Services)**

- commit to providing a safe and welcoming learning environment
- communicate clearly and directly with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

● **Maintain current knowledge of procedures, policies, and laws.**

**(For Clerical Services)**

- use culturally responsive procedures for enrolling new students
- seek guidance on immigration status and protections

**(For Custodial and Maintenance)**

- competently use cleaning/maintenance methods, materials, tools, and equipment
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community when performing work tasks
- know the requirements for maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment

**(For Food Services)**

- know the changes in Nutrition Services

- competently use food preparation/cleaning methods, materials, tools, and equipment
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community when performing work tasks (options for dietary requirements, space for students observing religious fasting, etc.)
- know requirements for maintaining healthy and safe food preparation

**(For Health and Student Services)**

- stay up-to-date on changes in Health and Student Services and current health topics
- competently use health-monitoring tools and equipment
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community during daily health care duties
- know requirements for student and staff health care records

**(For Paraeducators)**

- use culturally responsive practices
- participate in training to work with students with specific physical and intellectual learning disabilities
- implement accommodations and modifications as designed
- know important terms and acronyms used in special education programs

**(For Security Services)**

- know changes in security services, immigration status, protections in schools, etc.
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community

**(For Skilled Trades)**

- complete the coursework for certification or license renewal
- know and be able to use tools and equipment

## Professional Preparedness Proficient Level

- know and be able to use systems, materials, products, and project planning
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community when performing work tasks
- know requirements for maintaining a healthy and safe work environment

### **(For Technical Services)**

- know best practices for using technology in an education environment
- know and be able to use software, apps, and equipment
- know and be able to use systems, materials, products, and project planning
- obtain continuing education for appropriate licenses
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community when performing work tasks
- know requirements for maintaining a healthy and safe work environment

### **(For Transportation Services)**

- obtain continuing education for appropriate licenses
- know and be able to use of tools and equipment
- use culturally responsive procedures for engaging students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community when performing work tasks
- know requirements for maintaining a healthy and safe work environment

## Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1, 2, and 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 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 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 – Professional Preparedness 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 professional preparedness skills and list them below.

Task #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Task #2: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Based on what you selected above for Task #1, check the box or boxes of all the PGC indicators of professional preparedness skills that you think are related to the task. (There are no wrong answers.)
  - Align your appearance appropriately to job duties and professional expectations as outlined in handbook or job description
  - Know the roles and responsibilities of your career field
  - Project a positive image to the community through communication, involvement, and personal conduct
  - Maintain current knowledge of procedures, policies, and laws
4. Based on what you selected above for Task #2, check the box or boxes of all the PGC indicators of professional preparedness skills that you think are related to the task. (There are no wrong answers.)
  - Align your appearance appropriately to job duties and professional expectations as outlined in your handbook or job description
  - Know the roles and responsibilities of your career field

## Professional Preparedness Proficient Level

- Project a positive image to the community through communication, involvement, and personal conduct
  - Maintain current knowledge of procedures, policies, and laws
5. Explain how professional preparedness 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;
    - 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 professional preparedness essential to how you complete these tasks?
  - c. What could happen if you did not have professional preparedness skills? What impact(s) could it have on students, schools, etc.?
  - d. How does professional preparedness help you help 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 professional preparedness was challenging and explain 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 answers/responses to the above questions and prompts. Save the document.
- Upload the document file to the 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 while exploring 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 long. 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 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 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

## Professional Preparedness Proficient Level

Score:	Developing	Proficient
Direction#5: Explain how professional preparedness is essential to how you complete work tasks #1 and #2 using the PGC skills identified.	Provide answers to some or all questions but little to no detail illustrating the points shared.	Provide answers to all questions describing with examples from work experiences how professional preparedness is essential to completing work tasks. Examples describe positive and negative impacts and 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 professional preparedness. 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 professional preparedness that you feel confident in?
  - a. What specifically did you do or what happened to help you gain that confidence?
2. What is one aspect of professional preparedness 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?
3. Do you think that we, at our worksite, are encouraging adults to develop and use their professional preparedness skills?
  - a. If yes, provide a specific example of what we are doing well to make this happen and how you know it works.
  - b. If not, what specifically do you think we could do differently?
4. What have you learned from talking with a co-worker or colleague about professional preparedness?

**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 questions 3a or 3b, provide relevant specifics on how school/worksite/community staff and/or leaders are encouraging the development and usage of professional preparedness or provide achievable ideas for what could be done differently to do better in this area.
- Make sure the length of your 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 of how confidence has been gained in professional preparedness, 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.	Interview of co-worker and self provide answers to all questions, demonstrating understanding of professional preparedness and describe with work examples how confidence has been gained in professional preparedness; 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 co-worker's experiences to inform the submitter's knowledge about the skill area.

## 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 using professional preparedness skills effectively. (\*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 professional preparedness 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 professional preparedness with another member of your worksite community. Share what you've learned or realized, and ask them about their thoughts on the topic.
  - Change how you approach one task or part of your day where you have realized you could be more effective through professional preparedness.
3. Describe who will benefit from your steps to develop and deepen your professional preparedness 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 professional preparedness 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 that you can make to strengthen your professional preparedness skills, how you will put those stronger skills to use at your worksite, school, community, or institution of higher education, as well as 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](#)

Professional Preparedness Proficient Level

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