

Privatization at a Glance

What is privatization?

Privatization is another word for FIRED. In education, “privatization” or “contracting out” shifts the delivery of education services from our members, public employees, to private, for-profit

businesses. Although private business is targeting all of public education, ESP jobs are particularly at risk. Privatization is a threat to public education, and more broadly, to democracy itself.

ESP privatization trend

The recession has created huge budget deficits for state and local governments, and widespread layoffs across the country. Governments are looking to privatize with 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.

You can’t get the same for less

For our members: When ESP positions are privatized, ESP members lose their jobs. Even if they are hired by the private firms that are now doing the work, they rarely have the same pay and benefits, nor do they have the benefits of union representation, such as grievance procedure, health and safety protection, and protection from arbitrary treatment. And ESPs and teachers whose positions are not privatized are also harmed by the creation of a divided workforce.

For students, parents and the community: The quality of education and the safety of our children are at risk. Private contractors bring in strangers from outside the community with no connection to the students and families they serve. More than 77 percent of ESPs live

within their school district. On average, they have been employed more than 12 years. 82 percent plan to stay in their profession, and 67 percent plan to stay with their current jobs until they retire. 61 percent give money out of their own pockets to help students with things such as classroom materials, field trips and class projects. They know the students and their families and are committed to their communities.

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 our local associations can fight privatization

We can beat privatization, but there is no magic wand to wave. Beating privatization requires good, basic organizing. Local associations need to get on the offensive now and pressure school board members and

administrators. In order to do this, we must educate and organize our own members, who in turn must educate and mobilize the community.

What NEA ESP Quality is doing to help

NEA ESP Quality has responded to the privatization challenges that our members are facing by creating a “Privatization Desk,” a new staff position devoted to

fighting the privatization of ESP jobs. Jon Falk is the privatization specialist in this position. You can reach him at (202) 822-7114 or JFalk@nea.org.

- NEA ESP Quality provides consulting services, training and technical assistance to state and local affiliates facing privatization threats.
- NEA offers a growing body of resources on privatization to help local associations, including “Beat Privatization,” a step-by-step crisis action handbook; anti-privatization training sessions; and an extensive database with information on companies engaged in privatization and on ESP privatization attempts around the country.

Much of this information can be found in the NEA ESP Virtual Library, an online resource for state and local staff and leaders. For more information about the

virtual library, contact Jessica Brinkley, (202) 822-7931 or JDBrinkley@nea.org. Find the library at www.nea-espresources.net.

About ESPs

We are a quality workforce.

- Our jobs are special – being a school bus driver is not like driving anything else, and a school custodian is very different from the custodian taking care of an office building.
- We are experienced, skilled and committed. On average, we have been employed more than 12 years. 82 percent plan to stay in our profession, and 67 percent plan to stay with our current jobs until we retire.
- 61 percent give money out of our own pockets to help students with things such as classroom materials, field trips and class projects.
- We know our students. More than 77 percent of us live within our school districts.
- Poorly paid contractor employees, with less time on the job and less connection to the community, cannot match our quality.

We are part of an education team.

- It takes the work of all school employees to care for students – educating them, keeping them safe, healthy, and well nourished. ESPs who work for the school district share with teachers the common goal of providing an environment where students can grow socially, emotionally and academically.
- When we are all school employees, it is easier to coordinate to meet students' needs.
- We owe our allegiance to the school district, not to a contractor. Our motivation comes from serving our school and community, not by profiting off our school and community.

We ensure students' safety.

- Most of us live within school districts. On average, we have been employed more than 12 years. We know our students, and are well known to their families and to our administrators. Parents are not entrusting their children to strangers.
- We are dedicated professionals, not high-turnover, low-wage employees.
- ESPs are required to pass background checks. High-turnover, private sector workers may not be on the job long enough for their background checks to be completed.

What the Public Needs to Know about Privatization

The privatization of public school employees hurts our students, our schools and our community.

Privatization hurts our students.

- School districts are gambling with students' safety and security when they privatize school employees' jobs.
- Loyal and skilled employees are exchanged for employees with no commitment to our schools.
- Losing trusted employees is emotionally upsetting and disruptive to a student's learning environment.
- Children will lose caring adult role models who complete their education beyond the classroom.
- Student achievement, not profit, should be a school district's concern.

Privatization hurts our schools.

- School districts drain their budgets with expensive attorneys and legal fees when they have to defend themselves against lawsuits over privatization.
- There is little evidence to support dramatic savings with privatization. It's a gamble.
- Hidden costs in privatization contracts reduce any eventual savings for the district.
- Because of low wages and no benefits, there is a constant turnover in employees hired by a private company.
- School districts lose control over their services when they turn it over to a private company.
- Private companies hire employees who usually have less training and commitment to the school district.
- Privatization of school services lets school districts shirk their responsibility of managing their schools and lose site of student and community interests.

The Effects of Privatization

- Increased unemployment
- More foreclosures – declining property values
- Loss of neighborhood schools
- High turnover of teachers and staff
- Loss of teachers and staff who know and care about you and local children
- Loss of local control
- Less money in the community
- Business closures
- More community members on Medicaid/Welfare
- More corporate corruption
- Empty neighborhoods
- Unsafe schools
- Loss of school nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists
- Loss of after-school activities
- No transportation to and from school
- Loss of school spirit
- Loss of school community
- Loss of volunteerism

Privatization hurts our community.

- The privatization of public school employees destroys the concept of neighborhood schools, which in many cases are the backbone of the community. Neighborhood schools serve as a unifying force for communities. They are a draw for businesses and families. That draw encourages economic growth in the community.
- The issue of privatization divides communities and distracts them from the more important issue – a quality education for children.
- Private companies make a profit at the expense of the community when they are not a local business; their profits are spent elsewhere.
- When privatized school employees lose their jobs, they may have to leave the community to find work. The economic survival of the community is at stake.
- When privatization happens, there is no guarantee that the for-profit, private company will hire the current employees. When employees' job security is threatened, the community's future is also threatened.
- Local businesses suffer because the private company does not use community businesses for supplies and services.
- Taxpayer money is being spent without community support for privatization.
- Taxpayers lose the right to have a say in school district decisions.
- The public good shouldn't be at the mercy of the for-profit companies.
- Privatization has a direct impact on a community's economy and schools. Qualified and trusted school employees lose their jobs and their homes, often having to uproot their families. The community loses taxpayers and homeowners who support the local economy. The schools lose students as parents leave the community to find work.

What Members Need to Know about Privatization

The privatization of public school employees hurts our students, our schools and our community.

Privatization hurts our students.

- School districts are gambling with students' safety and security when they privatize school employees' jobs.
- Loyal and skilled employees are exchanged for employees with no commitment to our schools.
- Losing trusted employees is emotionally upsetting and disruptive to a student's learning environment.
- Children will lose caring adult role models who complete their education beyond the classroom.
- Student achievement, not profit, should be a school district's concern.

Privatization hurts our schools.

- School districts drain their budgets with expensive attorneys and legal fees when they have to defend themselves against lawsuits over privatization.
- There is little evidence to support dramatic savings with privatization. It's a gamble.
- Hidden costs in privatization contracts reduce any eventual savings for the district.
- Traditionally, private companies hire employees at lower wages and with no benefits. This demeans the contributions of school employees.
- Since a private company will not be paying retirement for its employees, there's an additional strain on the retirement system with fewer people supporting it.
- Because of low wages and no benefits, there is constant turnover in employees hired by a private company.
- School districts lose control over their services when they turn it over to a private company.

The Effects of Privatization

- Increased unemployment
- More foreclosures – declining property values
- Loss of neighborhood schools
- High turnover of teachers and staff
- Loss of teachers and staff who know and care about you and local children
- Loss of local control
- Less money in the community
- Business closures
- More community members on Medicaid/Welfare
- More corporate corruption
- Empty neighborhoods
- Unsafe schools
- Loss of school nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists
- Loss of after-school activities
- No transportation to and from school
- Loss of school spirit
- Loss of school community
- Loss of volunteerism

- Private companies hire employees who usually have less training and commitment to the school district.
- The cost of unemployment claims of the fired workers puts a burden on the school district's budget.
- Since most support staff employees live and work in the same community, the district loses stable and loyal employees.
- Privatization of school services lets school districts shirk their responsibility of managing their schools. Interests of students and the community are ignored.

Privatization hurts our community.

- The issue of privatization divides communities and distracts them from the more important issue – a quality education for children.
- Private companies make a profit at the expense of the community when they are not a local business; their profits are spent elsewhere.
- When privatized school employees lose their jobs, they may have to leave the community to find work. The economic survival of the community is at stake.
- When privatization happens, there is no guarantee that the for-profit, private company will hire the current employees. When their job security is threatened, the community's future is also threatened.
- Local businesses suffer because the private company does not use community businesses for supplies and services.
- Taxpayer money is being spent without community support for privatization.
- Taxpayers lose the right to have a say in school district decisions.
- Our schools are not for sale to the lowest bidder.
- The public good shouldn't be at the mercy of the for-profit companies.
- Current contract protections aren't guaranteed to continue with a private employer – rights about job assignment, sick leave, vacation time and working conditions may disappear.
- Privatization has a direct impact on a community's economy and schools. Qualified and trusted school employees lose their jobs and their homes, often having to uproot their families. The community loses taxpayers and homeowners who support the local economy. The schools lose students as parents leave the community to find work.
- The current retirement system is threatened since privatized employees are no longer in the system. That means those left behind will be paying more to keep the system going.

Privatization is NOT only an issue for Education Support Professionals.

Charter schools and online schools indirectly pose a privatization threat to teachers.

Privatization leads to loss of control.

- When school workers work for a private company, not the school district, there can be confusion and red tape. There are multiple chains of commands and lots of ways to pass the

buck. When parents, teachers and administrators have concerns, it is hard to communicate them and get action taken.

- School district employees are more flexible than contractors are because their allegiance is to the school district, not an outside company.
- Contracts are frequently based on inaccurate or incomplete job descriptions. If work is not spelled out in the contract, it may be impossible to get it done, even district employees may have done it in the past.
- When districts get rid of needed equipment (for example, kitchen equipment or buses), they lose bargaining power. Once a district sells its buses, it is nearly impossible for it to buy a new bus fleet. A short-term financial gain may become a long-term disaster.

Privatization often does not save money.

- Apparent short-term savings can lead to big long-term costs.
- Contractors often underestimate or “low-ball” initial bids to get a contract. Then they raise fees in later years.
- There are hidden costs that are often overlooked when calculating “savings,” including:
 1. Legal fees and other costs associated with transferring authority
 2. Costs to train contractor employees and costs of poor contractor employee performance
 3. Costs of needed work that was not included in the original contract
- Money that goes to contractor profits is money that previously was used to provide services in the school district.
- Privatization carries with it the risk of corruption. Civil service systems were created in this country more than 100 years ago as a response to rampant contracting corruption. There is a long history of bribery, kickbacks, and payoffs in contracting that continues to this day.

Privatization hurts the local economy.

- ESPs live in our communities, and the dollars we earn directly help the local economy. When contractors pay lower wages and hire people who may not live locally, they remove this local economic stimulus.
- School districts are more likely to deal with local businesses when purchasing goods and supplies, compared to large, multinational contractors who use their own supply chains.
- The profits that are earned by the contractor, particularly one that is not locally based, represent additional funds that are drained out of the local economy.

SAMPLE

Proactive Anti-Privatization Campaign Plan

Activity	When	Who is responsible	Cost
Research and create a community power map based on influencing board members	October	Community Connections Committee	
Develop message and talking points that will be effective with campaign targets	October	PR Subcommittee	
Conduct one-on-one conversations with community leaders (allies and potential allies)	Oct-Nov.	PR Subcommittee	
Produce "Who We Are" anti-privatization flyer	November	Community Connections Committee	\$500
Presentations to educator, parent, community groups (allies and potential allies)--why it's important to the community that ESPs be school employees	Nov-March	Community Connections Committee, PR Subcommittee	
ESP and community allies meet with individual school board members	Jan.-June	Community Connections Committee, PR Subcommittee	
ESP and community allies speak at school board meetings in opposition to privatization	Jan.-June	Community Connections Committee	
Letters to the editor and Op-eds in local paper; radio, TV, ads at movies	Feb.-June	PR Subcommittee	
Circulate petition in community asking Board to oppose privatization, present signed petition to school board. (Goal: More signatures than vote winning board candidates received in last election)	March-May	PR Subcommittee	\$100
Put up lawn signs around community	April-June	PR Subcommittee	\$200
Board votes against privatization	June	PR Subcommittee	
Wrap-up and evaluation	June	Community Connections Committee	
Association and community celebration	June	Community Connections Committee	

UD Checklist for Privatization

Name of UD:

Name of District:

Name of Unit:

President:

E-mail:

Phone/Cell:

Member Count:

Classification:

	Yes	No	Date sent/due:
Was an RFP (Request for Proposal) submitted?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Company name:

Do we have experience with the privateer?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------

Has the association faced threats in the past 3 years?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
--	----------------------	----------------------

Is this a wall-to-wall unit?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

Have you met with the members?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
--------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

How vested are members in the fight?

1= No interest 5= full commitment

Have you communicated with other employees?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------

Do you have a crisis team?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

What plans are in action?

--

	Yes	No
Is there a plan of action?		

	Yes	No	Names(s)
Members that have a relationship with board members?			

Is there a board watch?		
-------------------------	--	--

Is the district currently facing a budget deficit and/or problem?		
---	--	--

Do you know how the community feels about privatization/outsourcing?		
--	--	--

Have you contacted the Anti-Privatization consultant?		
---	--	--

Is there any other unit in the district being privatized or being considered?		
---	--	--

Has there been a FOIA request made?		
-------------------------------------	--	--

Any additional information:

--