

## **NSEA SUPPORTS SB71**

*February 13, 2023*

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years.

***NSEA supports SB71, creating the Nevada State Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force to address record vacancies in personnel who make our schools run.***

While there rightfully has been a great deal of focus on teacher vacancies, Nevada schools also face a record shortage of education support professionals, a critical component of the family of educators in our schools. Students have a range of needs that must be met for learning to take place. Transportation professionals make sure our kids arrive safely in the morning. Nutrition professionals make sure no child is trying to learn on an empty stomach. Custodial and maintenance keep the learning environment clean and safe. Tech professionals do the necessary task of keeping our students online. Paraprofessionals tirelessly support students in their learning. Clerical support staff do about 30 different jobs making sure schools run smoothly.

Over the past two years, Nevada school districts have tried to weather an unprecedented shortage of education support professionals, including bus drivers, food service workers, and paraprofessionals. Due to this crisis, many districts greatly reduced services like student transportation. Shortages of paraprofessionals compound problems related to teacher vacancies, compromising learning in the classroom. The crisis is continuing – today the Clark County School District lists nearly 500 vacant support professional positions with another nearly 200 in Washoe.

NSEA raised this issue at the Interim Education Committee last summer, proposing the model of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force to address the very real issue of recruitment and retention of education support professionals. NSEA appreciates the inclusion of other licensed education professionals, like counselors, psychologists, and social workers who provide critical services to Nevada students. NSEA supported SB151 last session to address overwhelming caseloads of these specialized instructional support personnel. As this Task Force moves forward, NSEA believes it will be important to make sure the specific needs and voices of both classified and other licensed education professionals are included in this work.