Food Service Worker
Bus Driver  Custodian
Data Clerk  Mechanic
Secretary
Plant Operator
Dispatcher  Parent
Training Specialist
Teacher Assistant
Payroll Clerk
Carpenter  Cafeteria Manager
Security Officer  Bus Monitor
Electrician  Classroom Paraprofessional
Library Clerk
Groundskeeper
Special Education
Our Work

Making sure kids succeed

There are thousands of paraprofessionals and support personnel across the great state of Texas. We share a pride in our work and our schools, but our students are always first in our minds and our hearts.

Our work all centers around making sure kids succeed.

Our jobs are varied—there are hundreds of job titles describing the work we do. We know the core services we provide are essential to the success of our public schools. We appreciate and value all of our roles, and we want everyone in our schools and our communities to get to know us better.

We know we make schools work. We have daily contact with students on the bus and the playground, in the cafeteria and the classroom, in the hallway and the front office.

We work behind the scenes to ensure clean and secure buildings, smooth administrative functioning, quality nutrition, safe buses, and needed support for all who deliver services to students.

All of us work to support one goal: the success and safety of each student entrusted to our care.
Our Issues

The issues that concern us are as varied as our job titles, but there are some key areas that affect almost all of us.

Professional Development
We love our work and we want to do the best job possible. To that end, we desire professional development that enhances our skills and helps us shine as we serve our students. Teacher assistants are eager to support their teacher partners and long for high-quality continuing education. Bus drivers and attendants seek techniques for managing student behavior in challenging situations. Housekeeping staff want tips on efficient cleaning methods that stop the spread of communicable diseases. Clerks and secretaries require focused time to learn new computer skills as school districts introduce new programs and software. Food service employees need to know how to lift heavy kitchen equipment in a safe manner. We are ready to invest our time to excel in our work.

The union has developed partnerships in several districts across the state to help provide the quality training we want. We believe all school districts should offer meaningful professional development for every category of employee.

Privatization
When school districts feel a financial crunch—all too common in Texas with our history of devastating cuts to public education—there is a temptation to contract out core services in an attempt to save money.

Our national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, has done extensive research showing how these misguided attempts to save money typically cost the district in different ways. There is a loss of direct accountability to the public and the parents as the contracted employees report to a private company instead of the school district, while the privatized support personnel are either

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out of a job or must work for less pay and fewer benefits, further harming the community. Custodians and transportation workers and food service employees and groundskeepers are especially vulnerable to the threat of losing their livelihoods. This is a big price to pay while the private companies make a profit using tax dollars.

Texas AFT believes contracting out is wrong: harmful to our students and harmful to those who have worked diligently in our schools.

**Overtime Abuse**

Another result of the immense pressure on schools to perform at ever-higher levels with reduced staff (and limited funds) is the practice of encouraging employees to work overtime without compensation. It can be as subtle as a gentle word to “get the job done” before leaving the office, or as overt as a directive to “clock out” before taking out the trash.

Overtime abuse comes in many forms that can be confusing: what is reasonable and what is fair? We need to look at what is legal. The Fair Labor Standards Act provides clear guidance. Texas AFT has worked hard to create manuals, pamphlets, and training materials to inform workers and their bosses of the federal law, and we have not shied away from grievances or legal action when abuses were documented. As employees, we are happy to do our fair share for our hourly wage, but we expect our employers to meet their obligation to pay us appropriately for work performed.

**Respect**

Respect is the most intangible of our issues, but one that shows up regularly in conversations with our co-workers. Maybe another employee in the school acts thoughtlessly, walking through a newly mopped area or using a clerk’s desk phone without asking permission. Perhaps bus routes are distributed to “favorites” instead of through a clear system that all agree is fair. Maybe cafeteria workers are left out of school lockdown drills or holiday parties.

Lower pay, unpaid vacation and skimpy benefits do not show respect. Maybe the school district refuses to meet in formal consultation with support personnel or our representatives. Or support personnel are not given a voice in decision-making within our own profession, looked over instead of looked to for their expertise.

The union is committed to empowering support personnel to stand up and demand the same respect we show parents, students, co-workers and our employers. Our working environment is our students’ learning environment. We want to work together with all members of the educational team to encourage a positive, supportive work environment. We want to make our schools the best places to work and the best places to learn!
Our Union

As school support personnel, we understand the value of standing together as a union, working to create a voice that can be heard in our schools, in our districts, and at the Capitol. We know our unique perspective has value within our union and within our school system, and we can participate in strengthening our own professions.

We join Texas AFT for many reasons: we want someone watching our backs, we want a structure to help us make needed changes, we want special member benefits that help our families save money, we want job security, we want professional development. We want to make our jobs the best they can be in a school system that is the best it can be.

We are proud to be part of a union that celebrates all its members: paraprofessionals and school related personnel, teachers and counselors and librarians, nursing professionals, community college faculty and staff, and more. We all work together to ensure that our children succeed as they move through our public schools and institutions of higher education.

In Texas AFT, we know we are valued and appreciated—in our schools, our local unions, our state union, and within the American Federation of Teachers. We are encouraged to attend workshops to improve our skills in union leadership, public speaking, legislative lobbying, and effectively advocating for our own unique issues. We choose to participate—to actively embrace our role in the union.

We serve on local, state, and national committees to help guide the policies of our union. We are seen as leaders and equal partners in our mission to strengthen public education and to strengthen our union. Texas AFT is the way to make our voices heard.
We make schools WORK
Texas AFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel

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