



PERMANENT SUBSTITUTES: THE COVID-19 SUBSTITUTE SOLUTION

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School districts across the country are dealing with the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only is it especially important to provide students continuity in education during this already turbulent school year, but schools will likely face higher absences than normal as staff will use sick time more liberally as a precaution during the pandemic. This increases the need for substitutes and makes the critical mission of finding effective substitute coverage even more difficult. Fortunately, there are steps that school districts can take to establish a substitute program that meets their traditional and remote learning needs and supplies substitute coverage when and where it is needed most.

Permanent Substitute Programs

A permanent substitute program is when a school district identifies a group of highly qualified substitute teachers from their substitute pool, analyzes historical absence data for each school building, and assigns an appropriate number of substitutes directly to each school. These substitutes report to their assigned

school each morning, readily available to fill critical vacancies or last-minute assignments every day.

Since permanent substitutes report to the same school each day, they become a reliable long-term cultural fit for your schools. They develop relationships with students and staff, master teaching strategies for both traditional instruction and any remote learning technologies used by the school, learn the school's policies and procedures, and strictly adhere to any established COVID-19 safety protocol. Students experience a better education when working with familiar, confident substitutes, and the regular teacher can rely on these qualified substitutes to effectively continue the lesson in their absence. And, permanent substitutes reduce exposure to COVID-19 and simplify contact tracing by reporting to the same school building rather than working in many school buildings like a traditional substitute might.

Recruiting the Ideal Permanent Substitute

Anticipated challenges such as

increased staff leave and resignations, difficulty finding enough qualified candidates willing to accept positions, and strained resources due to increased staffing needs mean that school districts need to focus their recruiting efforts on only the most capable, qualified candidates to establish an effective permanent substitute program.

Recent graduates make excellent candidates because they're eager and enthusiastic for work opportunities, they're particularly flexible and receptive to training, and they're not inhibited by the same considerations other candidates might have such as family, financial obligations or an established skill set they're unwilling to change. The recent graduate is more likely to put in extra effort to prove they can be a valuable asset to the district team, and they're more familiar with technology so they can better incorporate any remote learning technologies used by the district.

Districts should have a multi-faceted strategy for recruiting



these candidates. Efforts should include the district’s social media and website, online job boards such as CareerBuilder and Indeed, and partnerships with local colleges and universities. It’s important to work with several local colleges to increase the chances of finding top talent. Attend job fairs, recruit on campus, use the university job boards, and build relationships with their career guidance centers.

It’s also important to “sell” the position to attract as many candidates as possible. Increase pay rates, provide health benefits and advertise the comprehensive training you’ll provide. Share testimonials from current substitutes on social media as well as pictures of the “new” classroom with any safety measures in place (desks spread apart, barriers around desks) to make candidates more comfortable accepting positions.

Preparing Permanent Substitutes for Success

We can’t take any chances this school year – each vacancy needs to be staffed by a well-trained, well-prepared permanent substitute to ensure each day is a valuable learning day. Permanent substitutes

should be provided comprehensive training before they begin working with students. School policies and procedures, including any applicable COVID-19 safety protocol, should be reviewed extensively. Training should also cover instructional strategies, classroom management, and special education.

In addition to traditional classroom strategies, permanent substitutes must also be trained on remote learning technologies and virtual instructional strategies to ensure students attending class digitally are succeeding along with their peers in the classroom. Permanent substitutes should be trained on how to ensure all students in the class, both in-person and virtual, are active, engaged and participating at all times. This school year demands more flexibility of our educators, and permanent substitutes need to be capable of supporting student achievement in all learning environments.

Supporting School Districts in Need

For the past 20 years, ESS has been committed to providing solutions to school districts in need – and this is true now more than ever. Partnered with more than 750 districts in 29

states, we have developed a cutting-edge permanent substitute program to support our district partners this school year.

We recruit top talent from the local community, analyze absence data to assign substitutes, offer benefits and incentives to substitute staff, and assign local management teams to handle the day-to-day management of the program. Each substitute is provided the industry’s leading training, including traditional and virtual instructional strategies, information on remote learning technologies, COVID-19 safety, and any additional information as requested. School administrators can choose to allow substitutes to be assigned automatically or to manually place each substitute where they see fit – our permanent substitute programs are customized to each school’s needs.

Contact ESS today to find out how a permanent substitute program can provide relief for your administrators and continuity for your students.