

# Retaining and expanding a pool of substitute teachers

Teachers On Call helps Wisconsin district retain longtime substitutes while recruiting, hiring and managing additional qualified candidates

**M**iddleton-Cross Plains Area School District, near Madison, Wisconsin, was facing the potential loss of a large number of substitute teachers about four years ago. The pool of substitutes was filled with retired teachers. Due to changes in retirement benefits, retired teachers would not be able to concurrently collect retirement benefits and work as substitute teachers in Middleton-Cross Plains.

"We realized very quickly that we had a big problem but we didn't want to lose the retired teachers as a resource because they have a ton of knowledge of our district and a deep history with many of our students," says Tabatha Gundrum, director of employee services for Middleton-Cross Plains.

Not only was the loss of institutional knowledge concerning, but also that administrative assistants across the district would be distracted from other important duties trying to find qualified new candidates for the pool of substitute teachers. The district decided to partner with Teachers On Call—which currently serves more than 100 school districts in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and is expanding into Iowa—to solve both problems.

Teachers On Call recruits, hires, trains and manages substitute teachers, paraprofessionals and administrative assistants throughout the year. It eliminates district payroll and HR responsibilities including annual background screening, and Teachers On Call uses technology that makes it easy for schools and teachers to enter absences. The company's large pool of substitute teachers can pick up jobs in school districts such as Middleton-Cross Plains from a secure web portal.

Teachers On Call provides not only substitute teachers, but also paraprofessionals and teacher aides. Substitutes receive weekly pay, holiday pay, bonuses and even 401(k) plans, which increases the quality and depth of the pool of substitutes. Retired teachers working as substitutes now don't lose benefits, but gain them through Teachers On Call.

"If we had lost all of our retirees we wouldn't be able to meet the need that we have across the district," says Gundrum. "We were pulling our staff away pretty consistently from professional development, as many as 20 to 40 staff members in any given day and causing our own problems when we had a lot of failed fills for substitutes."

Gundrum says that partnering with Teachers On Call,



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while helping retain the retired teachers who made up an invaluable portion of the substitute teacher pool, also helped the district add new candidates. Teachers On Call is always hiring, and handles the entire substitute process, which made for better operational efficiency.

"Teachers On Call has taken away a lot of the administrative process that we used to have to deal with, and has increased the number of substitutes that we have access to," says Gundrum, who adds that Middleton-Cross Plains' monthly fill rate for substitute teachers is "about 2 percent higher than area school districts that do not use Teachers On Call, which has made a real difference in our classrooms."



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