

Smart Staffing Powers Student Achievement at Great Oaks NYC



Challenges

- Inconsistent substitute teacher quality
- Uncovered teacher absences
- Poor communication from substitute providers

Solution

Swing Education

Results

- High-quality instruction
- Strong customer support
- Visibility into substitute teacher profiles
- Improved teacher morale and retention

As a Title 1 school that specializes in helping students turn around their academic careers, Great Oaks Charter in New York City places a premium on high-quality instruction.

For Great Oaks, that starts with smart staffing.

- Small class sizes allow for personalized learning
- A team of 45 tutors provides daily math and english coaching to all students
- Quality substitute teachers through Swing Education ensure learning continues when full-time teachers are absent

It's an approach that's paying big dividends for the school's students. Great Oaks outperformed comparison schools in both Math and ELA, per a recent NYC Department of Education report.

"We have a lot of amazing, amazing students here," says Russell Booker, the school's Data and Technology Manager. "Our focus is to provide an opportunity to go from well below grade level to graduating at grade level to set them up for high school and beyond."



About Great Oaks Charter School New York City

- Founded in 2013
- Located in Manhattan's Lower-East Side
- Serves 350 students in grades 6-8

Getting Started with Swing

Due to budget and logistical constraints, Great Oaks does not have an internal pool of substitute teachers, so it partners with outside organizations for absence coverage. Given that many of its students are fighting to improve their academic standing, it's particularly important for Great Oaks to provide as many quality learning opportunities as possible -- even when full-time teachers are out.

Unfortunately, Great Oaks was unable to get reliable, effective teacher absence coverage with its previous substitute teacher providers.

"It was very, very difficult to get consistent, quality substitute teacher coverage," Russell says. "Often, subs would not show up or would cancel at the last minute, and then there wouldn't be available subs to cover. It was really hard for us to find a consistent and reliable way to cover absences."

That changed when Great Oaks partnered with a substitute teacher provider that prioritizes substitute teacher quality and reliability: Swing Education.

“When Swing came in, our issues with substitute teachers disappeared,” Russell says.

“There have been many times when a Swing substitute will come in and my principal will say, ‘Let’s make sure we get them again.’ That’s something that hadn’t happened before.”

Quality Instruction

Great Oaks Charter School’s success in boosting student achievement is due in part to its data-driven approach to staffing and instruction -- the school strives to understand and remediate specific areas where students may be struggling.

Swing Education gives Great Oaks the tools it needs to make informed staffing decisions even when full-time teachers are absent.

- Swing’s substitute teacher profiles include background on the educator’s areas of expertise
- Swing’s Favorites Feature enables Great Oaks to easily build a pool of substitute teachers that best fits its classrooms
- Swing uses quality metrics to connect top-performing substitute teachers to more assignments

Wide-Ranging Impact

Reliable, high-quality substitute teacher coverage through Swing Education hasn’t just benefited Great Oaks Charter School’s student body. It’s also helped the school retain full-time faculty.

“We are very open and respectful with all of our staff,” Russell says. “Part of that is making sure teachers get time off and not have to worry about loss of instruction, which is where Swing comes in.

“This last year, we had almost all instructional staff come back. Good substitute teacher coverage is important because our full-time teachers don’t feel pressured in the workplace. It gives a lot of assurance to teachers that the school is helping them and their needs and giving them the time and space to do what they need to do outside of work.”

Administrators like Russell have also benefited. Swing’s dedicated customer support team has been fast to respond to Great Oaks’ questions and requests, reducing the burden of coordinating absence coverage.

“One of the biggest issues we experienced previously was whenever something would go wrong or if a sub cancelled, there was very little communication on the vendor’s end about what was going on,” Russell says. “With Swing, now it’s kind of the opposite, there’s someone who’s always reaching out to us.”

Couple superior customer service with quality, reliable educators, and Great Oaks is thrilled with how Swing Education has supported the school’s staffing goals.

“It’s important to work with an organization whose subs are engaged and are following the lesson plan the absent teacher outlines,” Russell says. “We haven’t had any issues with Swing. We’ve seen a lot of instructional time that kids would normally miss out on actually be followed through on, and that’s important for us.”

