

Paul Public Charter Makes Big Gains in Substitute Teacher Management



Challenges

- There weren't enough substitute teachers to cover all absences
- Too much time and money were spent managing substitute teachers
- Full-time teachers missed out on prep periods to cover colleagues' absences

Solution

Swing Education

Results

- Fill rate has improved from roughly 67 percent to 93.6 percent
- A quality, reliable group of substitute teachers has fit well with the school community
- Administrative staff has more efficient systems for substitute teacher management
- Full-time teachers have more time for planning



About Paul Public Charter School

- Charter school located in Washington, D.C.
- Serves grades 6 - 12
- Enrollment is around 700 students
- Founded in 2000

Swing has helped Paul Public Charter fill 1,595 teacher absence days with a 93.6 percent all-time fill rate.

Paul Public Charter School in Washington D.C. tried just about everything to develop a successful substitute teacher program.

An internal pool? Too expensive, and not enough substitute teachers to cover all openings.

Outside agencies? Not enough substitutes, and some agencies couldn't accommodate the school's billing processes.

"It really wasn't working," recalls Pamela Merkerson, Paul Public Charter's Director of Talent Management.

Merkerson estimates that about one-third of substitute teacher requests went unfilled as a result. That took a big toll on the school's full-time educators, who were often forced to give up planning periods to cover for colleagues.

Last year, however, Paul Public Charter found a substitute teacher solution that worked -- for administrators, full-time teachers, and students alike: Swing Education, which matches high-quality substitute teachers with schools that need them.

With an assist from Swing, Paul Public Charter has significantly increased its fill rate, decreased the burden on full-time teachers and administrators, and given students more consistent learning opportunities.

"Substitute teachers are a completely necessary component of every single day in a school," Merkerson says. "Swing allows us to be able to plan well and keep everything moving in light of teacher absences and/or vacancies."

GETTING STARTED WITH SWING

Paul Public Charter officially partnered with Swing Education in August, 2017. Merkerson recalls that implementing Swing's platform was a breeze; her team was up and running in no time.

"It was all so easy," Merkerson says. "This felt like a much better, more intuitive, user-friendly platform. You can go in, upload all the teachers and grades and subjects; they can make requests very quickly and fill the requests even quicker."

"(Once a request is issued), you get these automatic updates, and that's been amazing because the other platforms weren't as modern."

In addition to receiving real-time notifications (via email) on the status of requests, schools can also easily add (or remove) admins and update important policy information directly on the Swing platform.

Swing's emphasis on technology hasn't just helped Paul Public Charter improve the efficiency of its substitute teacher operations, however. The school uses Swing's Quality Management System to build a substitute teacher pool that's an ideal match for its values.

"We have been able to craft a group that works best for our school by using the favorites list (which is a feature in Swing's Quality Management System)," Merkerson says. "So when we have educators from Swing and they've worked really well with our students, we can put them on our list and keep them coming back very regularly.

That helps because they only get more familiar with our policies, procedures, schedules, and students."

That has created significant peace of mind for Paul Public Charter. Now, if a full-time teacher is out, staff knows that students won't miss a beat with a Swing substitute.

"I think that we're blessed," Merkerson says. "We've been really lucky to find some substitute teachers from Swing that we think of as part of the Paul family. Our teachers rely on the fact that if they have to be out for any reason, their classroom will still function appropriately because of the folks we've had come through here from Swing that were exemplary."

WIDE-RANGING BENEFITS

A stronger fill rate and superior teacher fit are just a few of the improvements Paul Public Charter has made to its substitute teacher program since partnering with Swing Education. Financial staff now has a much easier time with budgeting tasks related to substitute teachers as well.

"From an accounting standpoint, the billing has been the easiest of any agency that we've used in terms of being able to preset our hourly rate or the way in which we receive our invoices," Merkerson says.

And, if Paul Public Charter does have any questions (about billing, technology, or anything else) along the way, they've been able to get answers quickly.

"I think that the customer service has been exemplary," Merkerson says. "When we reach out to support at Swing Education, we get a response very quickly and everyone is invested in resolving our issues, from the top down to anyone that we've encountered at Swing. We've had really great customer service."

That type of support -- along with an improved fill rate, substitute teachers who fit with the school community, and an easy-to-use platform -- has been part of a successful formula for Paul Public Charter. The school's administrators and full-time teachers are now able to spend more time doing what matters most: directly supporting students.

"It's one less thing to worry about," Merkerson says.

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