

California District Enjoys “Best Year” of Absence Coverage



Challenges

- The substitute teacher shortage caused classes to be combined
- Families were upset that absences went uncovered
- The teacher’s union wanted better substitute teacher coverage

Solution

Swing Education

Results

- More teacher absences have been covered
- Families are happy that more classes are led by quality educators
- The teacher’s union appreciates the additional substitute teacher support



About San Leandro Unified School District

- Serves 9,000 students across 13 campuses
- Located in the San Francisco Bay Area
- Recently named a College Board Advanced Placement® District of the Year

In April, 2017, San Leandro Unified School District implemented a new strategic plan designed to prepare its students for college and beyond.

The plan is comprised of five pillars

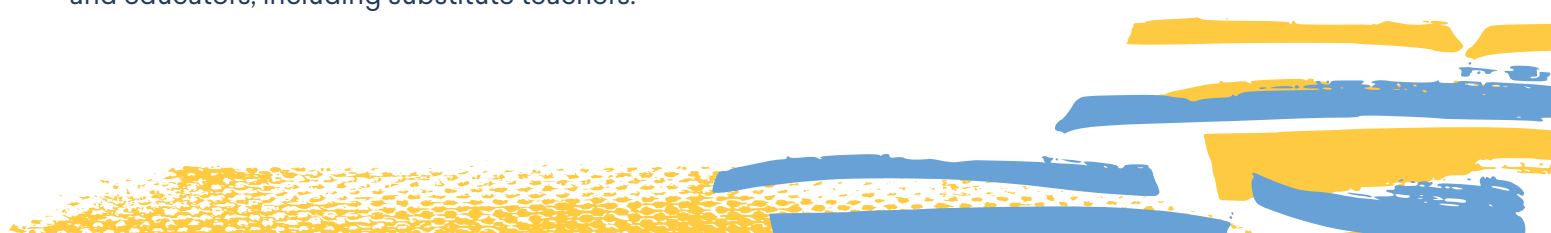
- Teach, Learn, and Achieve
- Equity and Inclusion Through College and Career Readiness
- Collaborative and Engaged District Culture
- Family and Community Engagement
- Facilities and Technology

Staffing -- from the back office to the classroom and everywhere in between -- plays a vital role in those initiatives. That’s true for all administrators and educators, including substitute teachers:

San Leandro USD administrators know that they can’t provide students the best learning opportunities without quality educators in every classroom.

So when confronted by the challenges of the substitute teacher shortage, San Leandro USD superintendent Dr. Mike McLaughlin took action. The district partnered with Swing Education, an organization that provides substitute teachers to a wide range of California districts, to improve fill rates and provide quality instruction even when teachers are absent.

“With Swing in the picture, I can tell you this has been the best year in the six years I’ve been here,” McLaughlin says.



Getting Started with Swing Education

Like many school districts, San Leandro USD has felt the impact of the substitute teacher shortage. It utilized a variety of strategies to recruit and retain substitute teachers, such as incentive programs, advertising, and creating a sub-friendly culture, with only limited success.

“We still found holes in trying to get substitutes,” McLaughlin says.

“It was difficult, especially at the high-school level, where I would go in on a Monday and we’d have a lot of kids in the cafeteria with one teacher because we could not get a substitute.”

With Swing Education, which recruits, screens, and supports a large pool of substitute teachers -- and makes it easy for schools to quickly fill absences -- McLaughlin and San Leandro USD found a solution to the challenges of the substitute teacher shortage.

San Leandro USD uses Swing to cover teacher absences that its internal pool can't. (With Swing, administrators can post a substitute request in 30-60 seconds and fill an absence in minutes.) That's helped the district reduce uncovered absences and unfilled classrooms.

“It's really helping us on a day-to-day basis,” McLaughlin says.

Wide-Ranging Benefits

San Leandro USD's partnership with Swing Education has paid big dividends for the district and its community.

Administrators save time on coordinating absence coverage and fill more vacancies, parents are happy their children are getting more consistent learning opportunities, and the teacher's union likes having additional substitute support.

“We're not getting parent complaints about combined classes,” McLaughlin says. “The union is not upset with us because I think there was a perception that we weren't trying to hire more subs, which we were -- they just weren't out there.”

It's been good for students, too.

“From an academic perspective, we're not only getting a teacher in the classroom, but the quality of substitute teachers has been strong as well,” McLaughlin says.

While McLaughlin has enjoyed a productive partnership with Swing Education, he does have one pressing question.

“When we talk about Swing in the superintendent world, a lot of us are, like, ‘How come we didn't come up with this idea?’” McLaughlin says. “It's very unique and very innovative, and I know that there are more and more superintendents signing up for it.”

