



Written by  
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## District reviews initial use of Kelly Educational Staffing<sup>®</sup> to find substitutes

Flu season used to mean scrambling for substitute teachers.

Since Columbia Public Schools started its contract with Kelly Educational Staffing in January, Mary Lamberson, principal's secretary at Russell Boulevard Elementary School, said that during flu season, she saves about three extra hours a week that used to be spent filling substitute openings.

"The time you're saving is when people have last-minute emergencies because that's when you're having to scramble," Lamberson said. "Now they're doing the scrambling."

In October, the Columbia School Board approved an 18-month contract with Kelly Educational Staffing, a branch of Kelly Services<sup>®</sup>.

Since January, Kelly Educational Staffing has handled hiring substitutes and filling classrooms as teachers call in sick, request personal days, and attend professional development classes.

A team from the district met with a group of Kelly Educational Staffing employees on Feb. 25 to review, 45 days into the contract. This group included Dana Clippard, assistant superintendent for human resources for the district.

Clippard said the group discussed the process of requesting, tracking, responding, and filling a spot for a substitute teacher as well as fill-rate statistics.

The fill rate for substitutes is 98.5 percent, she said. Additionally, 65.5 percent of those requests took less than an hour to fill, according to information from Kelly<sup>®</sup>.

"The surprising thing for me was how much time it saved for the principal and the principal's office support," Clippard said. "When things fill and you're not having to call around searching for a substitute, it's really been a time saver."

Over the past 10 years, when the district used its own substitute system, the fill rate was 92 percent, according to a presentation Clippard gave at an Oct. 8, 2012, school board meeting.

"I think we're pleased with the results," Clippard said. "There was no change in service or responsiveness once the contract was signed. They've continued to perform at a high level."

### **Kelly Educational Staffing services**

Kelly Educational Staffing provides several ways for teachers to request substitutes for their classrooms. The company has a local office teachers can call, an automated phone system, and a non-automated hotline staffed by 35 – 50 employees from 4 a.m. to 7 p.m., said Allen Jennings, district manager for Kelly in central Missouri.

"The bottom line is everything has to link together so we make sure we're filling classrooms," Jennings said.

Denise McGonigle, secretary to the principal

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*—Dana Clippard, assistant superintendent for human resources, Columbia Public Schools*

at Rock Bridge High School, said talking to a real person is superior to the automated system the district used to use.

"When you're sick you don't want to go through that," she said. "It's really easy to just call that number and tell that person you're sick and just go back to bed."

Both McGonigle and Lamberson said Kelly Educational Staffing has been useful when teachers have to leave unexpectedly.

"I had a [special education paraeducator] on a Friday, which is usually a harder day to get subs, get sick at seven in the morning, which is a late time to call in," Lamberson said. "I had someone fill in by the time school started."

Clippard said she has received positive feedback about the company's 24-hour services.

"We've gotten several spontaneous emails from buildings with notes regarding how easy it is to get a sub and how friendly they are on the phone," she said.

One office staffer wrote to Clippard expressing relief that a substitute opening had been filled overnight. The teacher who requested the sub



had become sick late the night before and had not been trained in the Kelly system but was able to use it to request a sub easily.

McGonigle had a similar experience where a teacher got sick at school. Within an hour, a substitute showed up.

"I was like, 'Wow,' I didn't do anything and this person just appeared," she said.

Before, she would have to start calling her regular substitutes to try to find a replacement.

"In the past when someone would leave, I would have to get other teachers to cover for them," McGonigle said. "I didn't have anyone to call. It was my problem and then it was other teachers' problems."

### Hiring process

Kelly Educational Staffing relies on a pool of 380 substitute teachers to fill any spots the district needs. Of this pool, 62 percent are substitute teachers who transitioned from the district to Kelly, and the remainder are new hires recruited by Kelly.

Jennings credited the district with doing an excellent job of communicating the change in the substitute teacher program. Many of the substitutes contacted Kelly directly; Kelly was given a list of the substitute teachers and reached out to them as well.

Jennings said potential substitutes start the hiring process by contacting Kelly. Candidates are pre-screened by phone, and the requirements are relayed to them. Requirements include providing educational transcripts and undergoing a fingerprint background check, both of which are submitted to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. If that information passes muster, the department issues a substitute certificate.

Once the certificate has been issued, the candidate goes through the Kelly

hiring process. This includes an additional background check and, if that clears, a three-hour substitute-teaching orientation.

If Kelly decides to hire the substitute, he or she is given access to the automated scheduling system and can start accepting assignments.

Even though many people have substitute teaching certificates, they must meet the requirements of both Kelly and the district, Jennings said. The process can take anywhere from two weeks to two months, depending on how quickly the steps are completed.

### The transition

McGonigle said the old system made it easier for her to request substitutes who were familiar with Rock Bridge.

"I was able to request the same subs all the time," McGonigle said. "They have parking passes and know routines and are kind of at home here because they come here so often."

Now, if McGonigle wants to request a specific substitute, she must personally call the sub to see if he or she is available before entering the job into the Kelly system.

"The teacher or I have to call them," she said. "That puts more work on this end."

McGonigle has seen about five of her old substitutes back in the building this semester. For the new ones, she has to explain the building and bell schedule.

She said she has heard from established subs that it's harder to get jobs now. "I don't know if there's more people that Kelly has hired or if you're not always on your computer checking for jobs then you're not going to get them," McGonigle said.

Jennings said substitutes can search for jobs on the Kelly system, determining where they would like to teach. They can also call the

local Kelly Educational Staffing office in the morning to see if there are classrooms to fill.

McGonigle had used the old system for 14 years, so she was used to the system and substitutes.

"It didn't help that it was the middle of the year when we started the Kelly system so I came back from the holidays and it was all these new substitutes," she said. "I felt like I was starting all over."

When she finds substitutes she likes, she asks for their phone numbers, so she can request them the next time there is a spot to fill. Kelly Educational Staffing does not provide personal numbers for substitutes. ■

### About Kelly Educational Staffing

*Kelly Educational Staffing (KES®) is a specialty business of Kelly Services, Inc, a leader in workforce solutions and the first staffing provider to develop a comprehensive education staffing solution. Since 1997, KES has been dedicated to helping K – 12 public, private, and charter schools around the country operate at peak capacity through gains in operational efficiency and cost savings opportunities. KES partners with 3,000+ public, private, and charter schools across 35 states and has a national placement rate greater than 98 percent.*

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