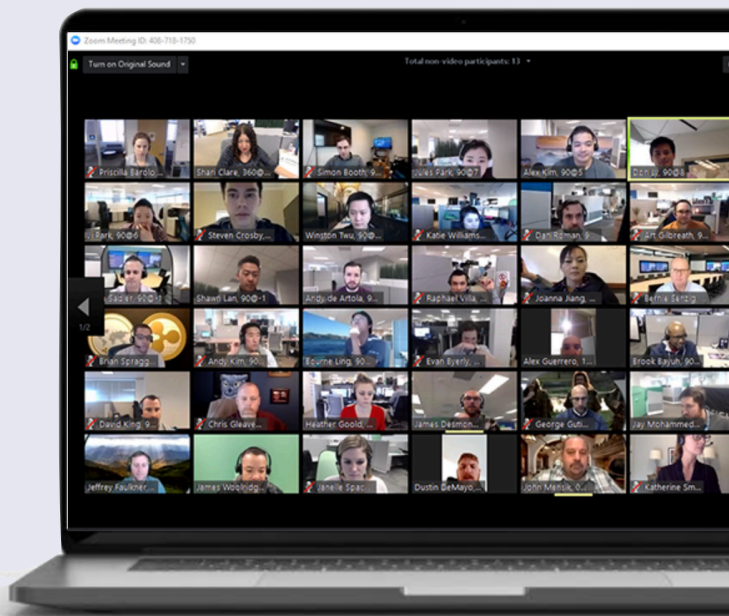


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Life After Leave: Bringing Employees Back in a COVID-19 Age

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# RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT THROUGH QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

by Dr. Heather Davis Schmidt, Superintendent;  
Whitefish School District; Whitefish, MT

## Why is a quality communication system so essential?

The unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 are evident in every community across the world right now. Our small community, usually bustling with tourists who are visiting our top ranked ski area, Whitefish Mountain Resort, or the most beautiful place on earth, Glacier National Park, is like a ghost town. Restaurants and shops are shuttered, parking lots empty, and doors are locked as people “hunker down” per Montana Governor Steve Bullock’s stay at home directive. We’ve never felt more isolated with human connection so limited. And schools are often the glue that binds a small community together, particularly in times like these. School leaders and educators serve a critical role in preserving calm and relieving anxiety in difficult times.

School districts in small communities are also often the largest employer in a community, with each staff member having a large network of parents, friends, family and neighbors broadening the impact of the educational system on the whole community. What teachers say and do matters; each educator serves as a role model for the community. They can model calm and perseverance or they can model anxiety and stress, impacting an entire community in a positive or negative way. Superintendents, personnel directors, principals, union presidents and other staff leaders send important messages to personnel about how they should feel, how they should react, and how we are going to get through challenging circumstances. Leaders do this through their messages, written emails, voice phone calls, photos and videos. Word choice, pitch, body language, facial expressions and more sets the tone for the entire community. Well thought out and planned communications systems are needed on a regular day-to-day basis so that when we find ourselves in difficult times, our staff and community are turning to these already ingrained systems to get the facts, maintain calm and relieve anxiety.

## What does a quality communication system look like?

Regular, quality communications systems are important at any time, but absolutely essential right now. Consistency and accuracy of critical information is needed by staff, students, families and the broader community. In many small communities like ours, the school system has the most comprehensive access to communications across a community. It didn’t used to be that way, with people watching local news channels, listening to the radio and reading the weekly newspaper. More recently consumers are moving to



streaming services, satellite radio, social media and downloaded content that does not provide immediate access to the most important and factual local community information. As our local communications systems have eroded, school systems across the country have embraced a variety of tools such as email marketing platforms, social media, robocalling and video systems.

Internal communications are also an essential component of any school system. Creating a labor-management collaboration team resolves problems as they arise rather than going unnoticed by district leadership until it becomes a much bigger issue. As educators we recognize the importance of building quality relationships with our students for the best learning outcomes. The same principle applies to our staff. With great relationships between school leaders and staff we build trust that is relied on in our day to day operations and maintains calm in our most stressful conditions.

### How do we get started or improve what we are already doing?

Over the last five years, Whitefish Schools purposefully embarked on a review of the District's communication needs, starting with an audit of what was currently in place and then identifying gaps in our services. To do this we began by prioritizing quality internal and external communications systems in our budget. We are a small district. Over 90% of our funding goes to salaries and benefits, but we knew we had to find a way to make it happen. We set aside \$10,000 each year for this work.

The first year we wrote a Request for Proposal (RFP) and ended up identifying two organizations to work with. One to guide our brand. Yes, public schools need branding in this era of constant criticism of public schools and attempts at privatization. Public schools need to communicate their value to their community in the same way that any organization or product needs to do so. The second organization was focused on telling our story. We only had enough money our

first year to do a brand audit and build a template for a print and web-based magazine to share our value as an educational institution. A local realtor donated the costs for the printed magazine because his clients were constantly asking about the schools and this made it easy for him.

The second year we focused our funding and efforts on streamlining our social media to drive all of our audiences to one place, instead of having our audience scattered over several platforms and individual pages. By doing this, we could manage the content, ensure facts and control the story more effectively. We identified individuals in each school and program to post regularly, trained them and built our social media audience. At the same time, we created regular articles from the Superintendent that were shared in our local weekly newspaper and sent to families and staff via our email marketing platform.



In the fall of our third year, we found ourselves in the middle of a cyberterrorism

event that closed 31 schools in our county for three school days. This event tested the communications system we'd been building over the prior two years and it paid off. The 31 schools in our county represent 26 different school districts with 26 different school boards in a state that believes whole heartedly in local control. However, Montana really is one big small town and if one district makes a decision and communicates it out, the rest of us hear about it within the hour. As a group of Superintendents involved in this situation, we recognized immediately that quality and consistent communications amongst all of our schools were needed to keep our staff and families calm through the unknown. It worked. A small group of area Superintendents developed communications that we then shared with the rest of the 26 school districts. We all shared consistent information with our staffs, families and communities at the same time. In these situations, it is also crucial to share when people can expect the next update.

When it was all over, we took one more day just to work with staff. We wanted to ensure that staff had the information they needed to feel safe, be calm and relieve their anxiety. We focused on three elements in our meetings with staff: 1) the facts of what happened, along with how law enforcement responded and resolved the threat; 2) it's okay and normal for staff to feel whatever it is that they are feeling; and 3) staff serve as role models for our students and families, and we needed our staff to model calm and reassurance.

In the last few years we've continued to refine our communications system, still with the same annual budget we started with and maintaining our belief in strong relationships with our staff. Building principals now share out regular communications to families and staff via our email marketing platform. As we go through our current unusual circumstances we are so thankful we prioritized our time and efforts on building relationships through our communications systems.



*Dr. Heather Davis Schmidt is in her eighteenth year in education, serving as a high school social studies teacher, high school dean of students, curriculum director and executive regional director in Missoula, Montana before moving to Whitefish, Montana. Currently, Heather is finishing up her fifth year as Superintendent of Whitefish School District. She was awarded Montana Administrator of the Year by the Montana School Counselor Association and is proud to have played a leadership role in the creation of the only public school dual language elementary school in Montana, implementation of multiple International Baccalaureate programs, and awards from the United States Department of Education for Green Ribbon Schools in both Whitefish and Missoula. Heather also provides educational consulting in school improvement, leadership coaching, and data-driven decision making. Heather believes engaging students in directing their own learning provides the greatest inspiration for developing our next generation. Heather earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Colorado College. She also holds a Master of Education in Educational Leadership and a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Montana. Go Griz! Heather's husband Matt and three children, Megan, Cole and Macy, all enjoy spending time outdoors admiring all the beauty Montana has to offer.*

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# REMEMBER DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT INVESTIGATION TIMELINES

by Katy Dahl, Human Resource Director;  
Minot Public School District; Minot, ND

We all know that just because our schools are not currently functioning as they have in the past, that doesn't mean our responsibilities have diminished. We are still responsible to conduct the business of running schools, including handling any complaints of discrimination or harassment that arise. I know all of you are just as acutely aware as I am, of the enormous responsibility we have taken upon our shoulders to educate and care for our students, staff, and patrons now more than ever.

It is striking how little things have become big things. Sometimes, complaints of discrimination or harassment can sound "little." I understand what that feels like.

Picture this: pre-COVID-19 you're packing up your backpack with your laptop and a granola bar for lunch as you head to your 5<sup>th</sup> meeting for the day. Your schedule is jam-packed, you have a handful of sticky notes your administrative assistant has left for you and you have at least 75 new email messages awaiting your attention. Also, you haven't gotten a bathroom break in hours and you hope you get to go home to have dinner with your kids at least one day this week. Then, as you are exiting your office to hopefully make it on time to your meeting about the bomb threat that was received earlier that day, your receptionist stops you and says a parent left a message that they felt like other students

were bullying their child by sharing pictures of them via social media. That message may not sound "big" in the grand scheme of all that you have going on, but you know as well as I do that there is a good chance there is much more to that story than appears on the surface. This may be a complaint of discrimination or harassment that you are responsible to investigate.

Now, picture this: during the COVID-19 pandemic you've just arrived home from checking your building to make sure everything is as it should be and picking up a box full of mail you need to sort and scan to your staff. Your kids attack you at the door, begging for your attention, and you struggle to get in the door with your box of mail without touching anyone or anything. Your first virtual conference call of the day starts in seven minutes, you haven't gotten to eat yet, you need to change your clothes and scrub your hands up to your elbows before you touch anything in your house, and one of your assistants is calling your cell phone. You manage to answer your phone and your assistant tells you a staff member has asked you to call them because of the concerns they have regarding another employee. Here, again, although this may not sound big, it could be. This too may be a complaint of discrimination or harassment that you are responsible to investigate.

Like any issues we face in education, it is important to handle any complaints, concerns or problems that arise

as quickly as possible. Discrimination and harassment complaints are no different. Most policies have a requirement that discrimination and harassment complaints be handled within certain timeframes. If you aren't aware of what those time frames are in your policy, I encourage you to read your policy as soon as possible to find out. If you feel you are in jeopardy of surpassing a time frame in your policy for handling a discrimination or harassment complaint, I suggest you carefully document your reasons for potentially surpassing the time frame requirements and contact your school district's legal counsel as soon as possible.

Listening carefully to my colleagues and other educational leaders, I hear in your words and voices how much you worry about your people. I hear the great lengths you go to care for them - taking a 7:00 pm phone call from a second-grader who is scared and lonely and just needs someone to talk to, personally delivering boxed meals to certain families in your school because you know how much they need them, coordinating and leading socially-distanced parades through your attendance areas waving at the faces of students in the windows of their homes to show them how much you miss them or being the one to go into the office to check your buildings so your staff can stay safe at home. I could go on and on.

Let us ensure that we handle each potential complaint of discrimination or harassment with no less time and effort than we give to handle other issues or concerns.

Here we are, most of us nearing the end of a school year, conducting education and the business of education in a very new and different way than we were just mere months ago. A lot has changed recently,

in terms of how your districts educate students, supervise staff and work with parents and patrons. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced educational leaders to abruptly interrupt their normal school operations and move to a completely new method of delivering education, and conducting school business. The workplace environment for most employees in school settings has suddenly undergone drastic changes. These changes will no doubt cause challenges for you in investigating any discrimination or harassment complaints you receive.

We all know that just because our students and staff are mostly no longer under our physical roofs, we are still responsible for them. Just listening carefully to my colleagues and other educational leaders, we are acutely aware of the enormous responsibility we have taken upon our shoulders to educate and care for our students, staff and patrons now more than ever. I encourage you, please, make sure you also pay attention to your responsibility to handle complaints of discrimination or harassment per your policy.



*Katy Dahl has worked in the area of HR in education for over seven years and has been a HR professional for over a decade. She has personally conducted or coordinated hundreds of investigations into issues of discrimination and harassment and has been serving as an independent, third party investigator for public K12 organizations. Katy is regarded as one of the most highly trained and experienced layperson independent investigators in education in North Dakota.*



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# BUILDING TEAM CULTURE ONLINE

by Devin Dupuis, HR Marketing Specialist;  
Florida Virtual Schools; Orlando, FL



Anyone in human resources administration knows that the hiring choices you make can affect the culture of your entire team. A single positive addition can lift your team up, and likewise, one bad egg can easily bring them down. In brick-and-mortar hiring, we determine appropriate candidates through traditional methods of judgment: eye contact, handshake, body language, face-to-face conversational skills and more.

In a virtual work environment, it is equally important to choose new hires who will contribute positively to the team culture; however, most traditional methods of candidate analysis are no longer useful when in-person interactions are removed from the equation. At Florida Virtual School (FLVS), this hurdle consistently challenges us to think outside of the box when it comes to hiring school personnel remotely, and we are happy to share a few of the lessons learned.

Based on many years of experience building team culture online, FLVS places value on incorporating extensive phone communication into the candidate evaluation process. This step allows us to analyze how engaged and comfortable a candidate feels with phone communication. If a candidate struggles with “verbal only” communication during the application process, those same struggles will likely translate into his/her everyday conversations if hired to work virtually.

If the initial phone conversation leaves a positive impression, then our next step is a video interview. This part of the process provides an opportunity for us to analyze the candidate’s ability to both utilize and manage technology. Once again, difficulty understanding and working through important job skills during the interview phase will likely translate to future work performance concerns.

Finally, and perhaps the most complicated lesson to accept, is the idea of sometimes placing cultural fit above skills fit when considering candidates. Of course, the perfect scenario would be a candidate who fits both; however, perfection is a luxury rarely found when it comes to personnel administration. More often than not, we find that we must make trade-offs, giving up one candidate attribute for another. In our experience, we have found it much easier to provide a bit of extra skills training for a new hire than to try to teach him/her how to fit into our culture model. If a less-experienced candidate with a positive demeanor exhibits a strong aptitude for learning new skills, then he/she is a much better choice than a technical expert with a poor attitude.

In an online work environment, building and maintaining a positive team culture is a top priority, and it starts with embracing new and innovative hiring concepts. Virtual personnel administration is different than the traditional brick-and-mortar process, but it does not have to be harder. With an understanding of the basic concepts outlined in this article, you can be well on your way to a successful online human resources system.



*Devin Dupuis is an HR Marketing Specialist at Florida Virtual School (FLVS). She holds a Masters of Business Administration, and her career in education spans nearly a decade. As an FLVS alumna herself, Devon knows first-hand the value of meeting students where they are in order to provide an individualized education experience. Her work at FLVS focuses on hiring the right team of school personnel to provide a virtual education with one-to-one instruction for students.*



# CARING FROM A DISTANCE: SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS & WELL-BEING DURING COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES

by Dr. Daniel Hartman, Assistant Superintendent;  
Southwestern School District; York County, PA

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced school systems to rethink and redesign how they deliver education virtually overnight. Without hesitation, educators and other school personnel responded by developing plans to offer continuity of education, to ensure equity of access to resources to students and their families, provide meal distribution to needy families and to ensure other essential operations of their organizations could continue remotely as various forms of stay-at-home orders and social isolation mandates swept the globe. Despite these valiant efforts, and as people continue to do as well as possible given the difficult time we all find ourselves in, as the weeks of social distancing and remote work/learning add up the potential for a negative impact on the personal wellness and well-being of individuals will increase.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 20% of U.S. adults experience mental illness each year, and one in 25 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness annually. The two most common mental health conditions experienced by adults are Depression and Anxiety Disorder, and educators certainly are not immune to these. Even for those who don't formally experience one of these conditions, the current state of uncertainty created from being required to suddenly and without warning change how they deliver their respective service and perform their jobs, compounded by other fear raising conditions such as a drastic reduction in socialization, concern for the safety and health of themselves and loved ones and economic uncertainty can have an adverse impact on one's mental and physical health.

Educational leaders must be mindful of this and should take intentional steps to address employee wellness and well-being even when schools are closed and/or operating remotely.

## Supporting Employees Remotely

A school organizations communication strategy towards its staff is critical during uncertain times, especially

when rapid change and new practices are required and when information is evolving constantly. The following list provides a small sample of practices and suggested approaches school organizations and leaders should consider during the current state of remote work and distance learning:

### Be Mindful of the Message; Emphasize Positivity, Patience and Productive Struggle

In an ideal distance learning/remote working environment all parties involved have typically opted for that modality of learning or work. In our current reality, no one "signed up" for the current state they find themselves in. School organizations can help ease stress and tension their staff members may be feeling by having consistent messaging that emphasizes that the goal is not to create the perfect online learning environment, but rather to provide continuity of education and services as best we can due to the emergency caused by this global pandemic. It should also be made clear that it is acceptable to struggle and to fail at the first attempt of trying something new and that the best professional learning will occur by getting feedback from students, parents, colleagues, and others and making adjustments accordingly. Leaders set the tone for others, and if they maintain consistent communication that is positive and supportive, others will follow.

### Remind Employees of Benefits They May Not Be Aware of

Many district health benefit programs include access to services that are often under-utilized by employees or that employees have not given much thought to in the past that they may consider advantageous under the current circumstances, such as telemedicine options and employee assistance programs. In some cases, providers have temporarily expanded these services due to COVID-19. Now more than ever, school organizations should clearly communicate about these services to all eligible employees and provide easy access to information and resources.

### Make Information Easily Accessible

Due to the sudden change in the work environment and in school operations, school leaders scrambled to develop temporary policies, procedures and guidelines for an array of personnel-related items. In some cases, existing policies and procedures needed to be revised. Temporary essential functions, new procedures for requesting leaves or submitting for tuition reimbursement and updated legislation regarding COVID-19 employment issues are all examples of new information employees may now need to be aware of. For all employees, having to relearn how to perform their job in a new way is stressful enough, so at all costs school leaders should attempt to not cause additional undue stress by making information or resources employees need to access hard to find. Consider developing a temporary, well organized, website or digital repository that can serve as a "one stop shop" for any personnel-related information or documents employees may need to access while working remotely if one doesn't currently exist.



### Recognize and Promote Small Victories

As distance learning and remote work continues to be the norm, it is important to recognize small victories that occur and to share these with members of the school community. Providing both public and private praise to groups and individuals and recognizing the hard work under extreme circumstances being carried out can help promote a healthy culture and improve morale. Small victories, such as a team of food services workers successfully dealing with an increase in meals served during daily meal distribution, a custodian developing a successful solution for ensuring that all packages delivered to a school are properly sanitized, a team of counselors and social workers figuring out how to identify and support students in need of remote mental health services or a teacher developing an innovative way to connect with students who do not have Internet access are all accomplishments that deserve recognition and show others that they can be successful in their jobs in our current times.

### Continue the Support and Positive Messaging, Don't Let Up

As school organizations worked feverishly to develop their continuity of education plans at the onset of COVID-19 school closures, school leaders mobilized quickly to provide professional development opportunities, virtual meetings, guidance documents and other supports to help prepare educators and other staff members for their new roles and work expectations. There was also a lot of initial acknowledgement of appreciation and positive communication. As the weeks go by and distance learning and remote work become the norm, it would be easy to allow the support and positive encouragement to wane. It is critical for school leaders to continue to evaluate the successes and challenges of how education and services are being delivered and to continue to offer follow-up professional

development opportunities throughout the duration of school closures, as well as continue to communicate consistently a message of positivity, encouragement, and support with the same abundance that existed at the onset of this unprecedented journey.

### The Silver Lining

Challenging and uncertain times unquestionably put stress on even the most successful individuals, organizations, and systems. It is important to note, however, the positives that have come to light by the current circumstances we all find ourselves in. During the onset of mass school closures throughout the country, social media pages were flooded with praise from parents and the public for schools, praise from administrators to staff members for their dedication and willingness to rise to the occasion and praise from staff members to administrators for their support as they willingly ventured into uncharted waters. For the first time in a long time, there was a “were all in this together” mentality among key stakeholders.

Additionally, professionals have been able to demonstrate their ingenuity and talents in new ways, and the requirement of new skill sets and knowledge in order to implement this temporary school redesign has led to the rise of new informal leaders among staff members.

Undoubtedly, school systems will continue to face ongoing financial and operational challenges as a result of the fallout of this pandemic well into the foreseeable future. However, based on how individuals and school systems have mobilized and responded thus far, there should be confidence that there is light at the end of the tunnel. In the end, schools may not only recover, but become stronger than ever if they choose to reflect and take action on the lessons learned from this crisis, and they continue to support their most valuable resource, their people.



*Dr. Hartman is the Assistant Superintendent of the South Western School District in York County, PA and oversees Human Capital and Talent Development, Supervision, and Professional Development. He has worked in education for sixteen years, serving as a middle school teacher, middle school assistant principal, and middle school principal, prior to starting his current position in 2016.*

# EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT & SELECTION DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC...IT'S VIRTUALLY POSSIBLE!

by Greg Dietz, Assistant Superintendent of HR;  
Maine Township High School District 207; Park Ridge, IL

According to recent data published by Education Week, over 124,000 U.S. public and private schools have been forced to close their doors due to the Coronavirus. These closures have impacted over 55 million students in the United States alone. To put that number in perspective, if those students stood in a line, while social distancing at six feet apart, that line would encircle the Earth more than 2.5 times! Obviously, it is not just students who are negatively impacted by the Coronavirus crisis, as most educators who've entered the job market have seen their employment search efforts come to a standstill. Fortunately, a growing number of school districts and other educational institutions are harnessing the power of video interviewing technology to create innovative ways to source talent during the global pandemic.

While teachers across the nation are busy implementing e-learning opportunities for their students, savvy school districts are preparing to fill their vacancies by creating “e-recruiting” events. Through the use of video interviewing technology, school districts are able to continue their recruitment and selection processes while adhering to shelter-in-place and social distancing orders. Although school officials cannot bring candidates into their buildings for job interviews during the shutdown, they certainly can take the job interviews to the candidates, albeit in a video-based fashion. Likewise, just because school districts cannot send recruiters to university job fairs doesn't mean they cannot invite educators to participate in their own virtual recruitment events. Those districts that have invested in video interviewing technology have been able to continue to screen applicants and interview candidates using both asynchronous and synchronous video interviews. In addition, they've found that by unhitching their interviewing software from their online application system and using it as a standalone platform, they have been able to launch their own virtual job fairs and set up



“video resume” creation stations within their own websites.

For example, the North Cook Intermediate Service Center, a regional office of education in Cook County, Illinois, has created a “virtual resume fair” for the school districts in its region. Educators from across the country spend about 10 minutes creating a video version of their professional resume that, once completed, instantaneously gets shared with recruiters from 39 different school districts. The links to the job seekers’ video resumes, that are generated by the software, can then be shared with principals and other administrators for their review. Once received, it is up to the individual school districts to determine which job seekers they want to pursue in order to fill their vacancies.

The advantage for the job seekers is that they gain exposure to a host of different school districts while highlighting their skills, experiences, and personality in a way that their paper resumes simply cannot convey to employers. In addition, participating in this type of virtual job networking opportunity consumes very little time and can be completed from the comfort and safety of one’s own home.

In the southern suburbs of Chicago, Dr. Julia Wheaton, from Consolidated High School District 230 in Orland Park, instituted a virtual job fair that consists of three separate portals: preK-8, High School and Administration. Job seekers first choose the portal that matches their job search criteria then record their responses to three written response questions and two video response questions. The recorded interview responses for each fair participant are then shared with recruiters and HR administrators from 25 different school districts. Dr. Wheaton decided to “reverse engineer” the capabilities of the video interviewing software her district uses after having to cancel her day-long job fair due to the Coronavirus. And unlike

the live job fair she had originally planned, her virtual event is open around the clock for multiple weeks for job seekers to access as they become interested in positions that are posted by the participating school districts.

Regardless of whether or not school HR professionals are scrambling to implement their talent acquisition process in the wake of COVID-19 school closures, there are several benefits that video interviews provide to school districts that make the technology so appealing. Those benefits include the following:

- The ability to source more talent in less time, and do it while schools are closed due to shelter-in-place orders.
- The elimination of costs associated with job fair registration fees, printing promotional documents, purchasing district-branded swag and paying travel expenses for recruiters.
- Pre-recorded (asynchronous) video interviews can be created in minutes and implemented from a “work-from-home” environment, then reviewed and evaluated by multiple selection committee members who are all working remotely.
- Job seekers can interview from the comfort and safety of their own homes without taking time away from their current work duties or student teaching.
- District promotional or recruitment videos can be embedded into a pre-recorded video interview to help job seekers learn more about the climate and culture of the district without having to physically visit a school.
- The “sharing” capability of most video interviewing platforms means multiple evaluators can assess the responses from the candidates, all while quarantined or when schools are closed.
- After initial screening interviews are completed in an asynchronous fashion, employers can utilize the two-way (synchronous) video interview option to conduct live interviews involving one or more



- interviewers. Live interviews can also be recorded and shared with other stakeholders for their input.
- Unlike chatroom-type online job fairs, a virtual job fair requires very little administrative oversight and employers need not be present at their computers to communicate with job seekers.
- Another advantage that video interview-based virtual events have over chatroom-type online job fairs is that they don’t just recruit for you for a few hours over the course of one day...they source talent 24/7/365!

While nobody could have predicted the magnitude of the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on schools, those districts that made decisions to invest in video interviewing technology are better equipped to adapt to changing recruitment and selection environments. The old proverb “necessity is the mother of invention” certainly rings true for those districts that dared to stretch the functionality of their video interviewing software to demonstrate that talent acquisition during a global pandemic is “virtually” possible.



*Greg Dietz serves as Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Maine Township High School District 207, a position he has held since 2005. With 25 years of administrative experience Greg’s responsibilities include labor relations, contract maintenance, collective bargaining, talent selection, staff recruitment and policy development. Greg served on the IASPA state board of directors for 10 years as a Member-At-Large and Membership Chairman and was recently recognized as a founding member of IASPA. In 2019, Greg was elected to the national board of directors for the American Association for Employment in Education and serves as the Professional Development Director. A former District 207 Teacher of the Year, Greg is in his 32<sup>nd</sup> year serving students and staff in his school district.*

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# CORONAVIRUS: THE WREAKING WHIP

by Dr. Andrea Anthony, Assistant Superintendent of HR & Student Services;  
Rutherford County Schools; Murfreesboro, TN

Ladies and gentlemen, please don't panic, the wreaking whip is here. What has been the cause of this scourge is the Coronavirus pandemic. A pandemic is a global epidemic and the Coronavirus is the fifth influenza pandemic since 1918. The other four were the Spanish Flu of 1918, the Asian Flu and Hong Kong Flu of the 1950s and 1960s, and the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. The SARS outbreak of 2003 was classified as only a pandemic "scare." Necessary precautions have been made in our human resources arena for the Coronavirus, such as "handshake-free" meetings and virtual university job fairs. Social distancing, protecting high-risk individuals and thorough cleanings must be followed to help slow down the spread of the virus. Meanwhile, the needs of our students who receive free or reduced-cost meals must be met with breakfast and lunch offerings. Human Resource leaders must be transparent and correct misinformation to keep employees and students from over-reacting. HR leaders must keep the doors of communication open and utilize your available outreach communication devices often. All the while, we must protect our school systems against the possibilities of liability. Caution employees from refusing to interact with other employees or students of Asian descent. This could potentially lead to discrimination based upon national origin and ethnicity if this occurs. Follow the confidentiality of medical information and stay up to date on what the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and other health state websites are saying. HIPAA (Health and Insurance Portability Accountability Act) remains applicable even in a public health emergency. OCR's (Office of Civil Rights) bulletin has information on HIPAA allowed disclosures "to prevent a serious and imminent threat" and for treatment and public health activities. This includes threats to an individual's family member/friends.

A better focus of time is clarifying sick and absence policies and reviewing these policies with the employees. Check both your long-term and short-term disability coverage, FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) and leave requirements, OJI (On the Job Injury)/WC (Workers' Compensation) coverage, and disability benefits. Remind employees to wash hands often and cough into their elbow. Clean and sanitize surfaces often and make sure hand sanitizer is visibly available. Don't forget about reviewing or creating a critical role pandemic plan by reviewing your talent bench and making any needed adjustments. Remember to calm the fears of your employees on job security and pay during this time. Remind your employees and students that their health and safety is of utmost importance.

If a school system's work activity has temporarily ceased and employees are not expected to report for work for one or more than one week then the days, the school system's activities have ceased and will not count against the employee's FMLA leave. School system employees who do not regularly report to work when schools are not in session would have deductions for FMLA leave suspended during the closed time. If the employees are expected to report to work, then they would have leave due to an FMLA-qualifying reason, which counts against the employee's FMLA leave. The exception would be if a school system required an online learning platform where teachers provided the instruction. In this case, the teachers on FMLA would have these days count against their FMLA leave. Once the district resumes their schools' services if there is an employee needing FMLA and still eligible, then it would pick up where it was left off. Note, to meet the "serious health condition" under the FMLA leave, the employee must be incapacitated from work, attending work or engaging in regular daily activities. Being hospitalized meets this requirement.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects employees from disability discrimination. It regulates the employers' "disability-related" questioning and medical exams to those with ADA and without ADA disabilities. An inquiry is disability-related if it is likely to elicit details about a disability. This means you can ask about the symptoms of a cold or flu, but you would not ask if they currently have a compromised immune system. It requires reasonable accommodations, absent undue hardship (which would create significant difficulty or expense), to those with disabilities during a pandemic. ADA prohibits employers from excluding those with disabilities from work unless a "direct threat" is posed. A direct threat is defined as a "significant risk of substantial harm even with reasonable accommodation." Remember that reasonable accommodation is a change in the work environment allowing the employee to have equal opportunity or enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) looks at four questions in making this determination of a direct threat.

- What is the duration of the risk?
- What is the nature and severity of the potential harm? What is the likelihood that potential harm will occur?
- What is the imminence of the potential harm?

During this pandemic, we must continue to avoid discrimination based on disability under Title II (of the Civil Rights Act) and Section 504 (of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) to ensure our students with disabilities have access to the education program. If a 504 or an IEP (individualized education program) student is required to stay home for an extended period because of the Coronavirus, education services must be maintained. If schools are serving other students, then the IEP or 504 students must continue to receive a free appropriate public education. Accessible online platforms can allow these students to have access to high-quality educational instruction during extended school closure. If a school district closes its schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then schools are not required to provide services to these types of IEP or 504 during that same period. Once school resumes, the school must return to providing special education and related services to students with disabilities under the student's IEP or, for students entitled to FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) under Section 504, consistent with any plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504.

The CDC has published "Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019." This page included guidance for school systems that do and do not have suspected/confirmed exposure. This page has a closure decision making tree for schools who are contemplating closure. This publication discusses factors in favor and against closure in addition to further considerations. The further considerations include the disproportionate impact of children being out of school whose parents/family members are hourly and low-wage workers and how to continue key services.



The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission created a guidance document entitled “Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act.” The document provides Title I and V (of the Americans with Disabilities Act) facts and pandemic planning information. The World Health Organization (WHO) classified these types of pandemic events into six phases and details the spread around the globe. The highest phase is Phase 6 which informs the public that this is a human to human transmission worldwide and has spread to multiple countries. Phase 6 is when you know that a global pandemic is underway. The Coronavirus has met this Phase 6 threshold and the WHO urges everyone to “Test, test, test.” The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO) are the definitive sources of information about influenza pandemics. Check these resources daily and communicate insights with your stakeholders. Staying informed, as a human resource leader, can help you anticipate and proactively manage the Coronavirus wreaking whip.

WHO PANDEMIC PHASE DESCRIPTIONS AND MAIN ACTIONS BY PHASE

PHASE	DESCRIPTION	MAIN ACTIONS				
		PLANNING AND COORDINATION	SITUATION MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT	COMMUNICATIONS	REDUCING THE SPREAD OF DISEASE	CONTINUITY OF HEALTH CARE PROVISION
PHASE 1	No animal influenza virus circulating among animals have been reported to cause infection in humans.					
PHASE 2	An animal influenza virus circulating in domesticated or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans and is therefore considered a specific potential pandemic threat.	Develop, exercise, and periodically revise national influenza pandemic preparedness and response plans.	Develop robust national surveillance systems in collaboration with national animal health authorities, and other relevant sectors.	Complete communications planning and initiate communications activities to communicate real and potential risks.	Promote beneficial behaviours in individuals for self protection. Plan for use of pharmaceuticals and vaccines.	Prepare the health system to scale up.
PHASE 3	An animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people, but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks.					
PHASE 4	Human to human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to sustain community-level outbreaks has been verified.	Direct and coordinate rapid pandemic containment activities in collaboration with WHO to limit or delay the spread of infection.	Increase surveillance. Monitor containment operations. Share findings with WHO and the international community.	Promote and communicate recommended interventions to prevent and reduce population and individual risk.	Implement rapid pandemic containment operations and other activities; collaborate with WHO and the international community as necessary.	Activate contingency plans.
PHASE 5	The same identified virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in two or more countries in one WHO region.					
PHASE 6	In addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5, the same virus has caused sustained community level outbreaks in at least one other country in another WHO region.	Provide leadership and coordination to multisectoral resources to mitigate the societal and economic impacts.	Actively monitor and assess the evolving pandemic and its impacts and mitigation measures.	Continue providing updates to general public and all stakeholders on the state of pandemic and measures to mitigate risk.	Implement individual, societal, and pharmaceutical measures.	Implement contingency plans for health systems at all levels.
POST PEAK PERIOD	Levels of pandemic influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance have dropped below peak levels.	Plan and coordinate for additional resources and capacities during possible future waves.	Continue surveillance to detect subsequent waves.	Regularly update the public and other stakeholders on any changes to the status of the pandemic.	Evaluate the effectiveness of the measures used to update guidelines, protocols, and algorithms.	Rest, restock resources, revise plans, and rebuild essential services.
POST PANDEMIC PERIOD	Levels of influenza activity have returned to the levels seen for seasonal influenza in most countries with adequate surveillance.	Review lessons learned and share experiences with the international community. Replenish resources.	Evaluate the pandemic characteristics and situation monitoring and assessment tools for the next pandemic and other public health emergencies.	Publicly acknowledge contributions of all communities and sectors and communicate the lessons learned; incorporate lessons learned into communications activities and planning for the next major public health crisis.	Conduct a thorough evaluation of all interventions implemented.	Evaluate the response of the health system to the pandemic and share the lessons learned.



# LIFE AFTER LEAVE: BRINGING EMPLOYEES BACK IN A COVID-19 AGE



by Matthew Swift, Attorney; Robbins Schwartz; Chicago, IL

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress created new emergency paid sick leave rights and expanded the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) rights through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). Our firm addresses the nature of these leave rights in other publications, but this article looks forward in anticipation of questions when employees begin returning from leave. Even in places that have cancelled in-person instruction for the school year, schools can be certain that most staff will eventually be ready to come back to work, regardless of what type of leave they may take. When in doubt, ask your legal counsel about how these principles may apply to your situation.

## My employee wants to come back from leave earlier than planned. Do I have to let them?

As a general matter, schools may not require employees to use up leave that they earned or were given by statute. (One exception is that, when an employee takes FMLA leave, a school may require the employee to use any accrued paid leave concurrently.) FMLA regulations make clear that an employer may not require an employee to take more FMLA leave than the employee’s circumstances require, even if those circumstances change. However, a school may require an employee to provide two business days advance notice of the changed circumstances when those are foreseeable, and schools also may ask for information about the changed circumstances.

## Can I ask employees about their health or their family’s health before they physically return to school?

Employers may ask whether an employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or new loss of smell or taste. In addition, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission acknowledges that, in the current state of the pandemic, having someone with COVID-19 (or



Dr. Andrea Anthony began her secondary education career 26 years ago and is continuously recognized for her leadership and vision. She has served as a curriculum and instruction assistant principal, director of her district’s K-12 summer schools, an executive principal for 12 years and her district’s coordinator of secondary education. She works in the fourth largest school district in TN with 46,000 students and 5,300 employees. Dr. Anthony is involved with her local university’s EPP team, recruitment and job fair team, and the state’s retention team to recruit and retain effective CTE teachers.

symptoms of it) present in the workplace would pose a “direct threat,” that is, a significant risk of substantial harm. A direct threat can justify disability-related inquiries that would otherwise be prohibited. Note, however, that public health authorities’ changing assessments of the spread and severity of COVID-19 could impact whether a direct threat still exists.

Although employers may require some medical information about an employee’s family when necessary to certify a reason for FMLA leave, they usually may not ask for such information for other purposes. Nonetheless, employers may ask the more general question of whether an employee knows they have been in contact with anyone who has shown symptoms of or has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

#### Can I require a doctor’s note before letting an employee come back from leave?

Employers may require an employee to obtain a fitness-for-duty certification from their healthcare provider before returning to work. However, in light of the significant strain on healthcare providers at this time, schools should carefully consider whether such a determination is truly necessary before requiring it.

#### If employees say they can work remotely, but not at school, do I have to let them do that?

If an employee asks to work from home, a school should evaluate the request in accordance with its obligations under state and federal law, which may include making reasonable accommodations. Note that an employee who can telework is not eligible for FMLA leave under the FFCRA. Key considerations for setting up remote work arrangements include: (a) whether remote work is a viable option for the position; (b) online or remote accessibility; (c) expectations for employees; and (d) defining the workday, responsibilities and check-in protocols. For schools with union-represented employees, note that these factors will likely affect the terms and conditions of employment for some employees, so reviewing applicable CBAs and discussing with union leadership should take place.

#### Can I change an employee’s job responsibilities from what they were before they went on leave? If I no longer have work for an employee who is on leave, can I terminate or furlough them?

Schools should consult with legal counsel to ensure that they are minimizing the legal risks of any layoffs or changes in work conditions for employees. The FMLA gives employees a right to be reinstated to their job or an equivalent one after they return from FMLA leave. However, that right does not include legal protection from employment actions that would have been taken notwithstanding the leave.

#### Can I require employees to take special precautions when they physically return to school—daily temperature checks, personal protective equipment (PPE), social distancing in the office, etc.?

Yes, schools may and should consult with local public health authorities about what infection-control measures are appropriate. It is important to apply any precautionary requirements on a nondiscriminatory basis, taking into account an employee’s specific duties. Particularly in light of shortages of PPE, schools should consider creative and flexible options that can help reduce transmission risk. Keep in mind also that some employees may need reasonable accommodations, such as non-latex gloves. Because of the “direct threat” posed by COVID-19, employers may take employee’s body temperatures, which otherwise would not be permitted. As mentioned above, be aware that this could change as public health authorities continue to reassess the dangers of COVID-19.



*Matthew Swift is a member of the labor and employment practice group at Robbins Schwartz. He counsels employers in various aspects of labor and employment law, such as employee discipline, labor relations, wage and hour, and employment discrimination matters. He also represents clients in state and federal courts and advises on Illinois Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act matters. Before he joined Robbins Schwartz, Matthew served as in-house counsel and FOIA Officer for the Illinois Office of the Governor. In that role, he counseled dozens of agencies on compliance with sensitive FOIA requests and advised on current and potential litigation issues.*



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# THE FUTURE OF K-12 HR AFTER COVID-19



by PowerSchool  
Shawnee, KS

Adapting and responding to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations feels like a day-to-day project. However, those in K-12 HR know this global crisis is reshaping our future. Recruiting, hiring, onboarding and managing staff will never be the same after this extended period of remote working, learning and teaching. We're all wondering what the new normal will look like once schools reopen.

While finishing the school year remains the top priority right now, K-12 HR teams are still working hard to keep recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training on track. Fortunately, tools to manage remote operations already exist. Web-based, integrated edtech systems allow teams to handle everything from posting new jobs to onboarding new employees and managing budgets from anywhere. The truth is that schools and districts have been moving toward more flexible, digitally connected workflows for some time—responding to the COVID-19 pandemic only highlights the benefits of integrated edtech.

Schools at the forefront of using online tools find themselves best positioned to meet the unprecedented challenges of these prolonged school closures. Those further behind in the digital shift likely find themselves cut off from files and colleagues while scrambling for solutions. While there's no time like the present, implementing new technology during a crisis isn't the choice most would make. That's why the future of K-12 operations will be shaped by investing in remote operations and distance learning tools. The convenience, efficiency and security of today's most advanced edtech systems are no longer luxuries—they're required.

We reached out to 33-year K-12 veteran, former principal and HR thought leader, Fred Scott, to find out how he expects the current situation to affect school operations going forward. He shared his insight into the current challenges and how schools and districts can grow out of this experience stronger than before.

## What are the most critical K-12 HR concerns right now due to the COVID-19 response?

Scott says he sees four critical priorities for K-12 HR teams right now:

- Shifting to online records and workflows
- Continuing to interview and hire via video
- Finding teachers experienced in online teaching
- Ensuring safe, appropriate video interactions

Electronic records management and video interviews are essential to meeting these priorities.

Scott says, "Districts that were relying heavily on paper-based processes will need to get up to speed fast on online workflows and records management. Those that were exploring video conference software now need it to hire the teachers they'll need for next year."

Personnel management and hiring still form the foundation of K-12 HR, but handling these tasks now requires the flexibility and convenience of online interactions. Scott says schools must quickly put this technology to use, screen and hire candidates with strengths in remote teaching and review current policies around video interactions to ensure student and staff safety.

## What do schools and districts need to start thinking about now to prepare for next school year?

Scott says finishing the current school year obviously takes priority. How that happens will shape preparations for the coming year. He says, "Some schools have already reached out to me about unfinished teacher evaluations. They're wondering how to complete these without the in-classroom observation component. I've advised them to close those out the best they can, but they need to consider this problem going forward." He says this likely means doing teacher evaluations at more frequent intervals so they can be completed within the school year and exploring the use of video observations.

Scott notes that it doesn't take a global pandemic to close a school and necessitate remote operations. "It could be a hurricane, a flood, anything. If a school must suddenly close or is destroyed, learning shouldn't stop. Administrators still need to access records and teachers need to keep students on track."

Now is the time to close the gap on technology and devices needed to support remote operations and learning. From electronic records systems and hiring tools that provide easy, secure access from anywhere to learning management systems (LMS) and online professional development, the technology exists. Scott says the current situation makes it clearer than ever that schools and districts need to take advantage of these tools to serve their students and employees.

## How do you think the response to COVID-19 will create a new normal going forward?

Scott says he sees K-12 HR changing in three primary areas:

1. Hiring—Video conference interviews will become commonplace
2. Teacher qualifications—Distance and remote teaching experience will be highly valued
3. Performance evaluations—Evaluations will become more frequent and collaborative

Video conferencing is already the foundation for student learning across the U.S. To keep hiring on track, K-12 HR teams have little choice but to adopt this technology for interviews. Scott says video provides the face-to-face contact interviewers need, but it still comes with its own unique challenges. Feeling comfortable on camera, interview preparation, and using the applications correctly all take practice. He says schools should be training teachers and HR professionals on this now to keep student learning and hiring on schedule.

Going forward, he says teaching in a remote setting will be a skill in high demand. "Remote learning is very different from remote teaching," Scott says. "I

think the temptation at first will be to ask candidates if they're comfortable with remote learning, but interviewers need to find out if the candidate has ever taught a remote class or if they've received specific training in this area."

As for teacher evaluations, Scott says it's typical for schools and districts to handle these on an annual basis, with cumulative assessments every three years. But right now, schools find it impossible to complete annual assessments if they can't conduct classroom observations for the rest of the year. Scott says he thinks this will bring about two key changes: more frequent evaluations and a more collaborative approach.

With the right tools in place, administrators can complete more observations faster. They can also provide more detailed feedback. The trick, Scott





says, is shifting from traditional models that require in-person observations and use tedious paper forms. “Imagine observing teachers in the video lessons they’re doing with students right now. Administrators could be completing these evaluations right now. One administrator could observe several classrooms very quickly simply by clicking into a new video room.”

The future of K-12 HR is remote operations and distance learning.

During school closures, remote access to records and learning materials is a must. But the benefits of today’s advanced edtech tools go beyond coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools are open, remote operations help districts operate more efficiently. Rather than copying, mailing and filing paper forms, teachers can sign contracts from anywhere and onboarding can go more smoothly. This reduces the workload on staff and ensures that daily personnel management tasks get completed on time.

Distance learning capabilities can help schools and districts keep students on track during shorter duration closures like snow days. Scott says it’s likely that the remote learning that’s starting to happen now will become a more common occurrence in the future if the technology and access gaps are closed.

For K-12 HR teams, the future will be about getting the right tools in place, hiring the right talent and offering teachers the freedom of online professional learning to develop their skills in remote teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic won’t last forever, but its effect on student learning and school operations is reshaping our future.

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# RECRUITING & ONBOARDING SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS VIRTUALLY



by Fred Bentsen, Vice President;  
John McCormick, Senior Writer;  
ESS/Proximity Learning; Cherry Hill, NJ

As the world continues to cope with the challenges presented by COVID-19, most industries have been forced to make major changes in the interest of national health and safety. School districts are no exception, with building closures and remote learning tools being the most prevalent solutions to supporting students during these trying times.

While school districts are finding innovative ways to continue providing quality education to students during school closures, they are also looking ahead to when schools reopen and the impact that the pandemic may have on student achievement moving forward. One of these considerations is the availability of a substantial pool of qualified substitute teachers to properly support district needs when schools are open again. Though districts may not need substitute teachers right now, it's important that they take this time to continue their substitute recruiting efforts. When schools are back in session, district Human Resources departments are going to be overloaded with other responsibilities, including efforts related to hiring full-time district staff. This will greatly inhibit districts' abilities to properly recruit and onboard substitute teachers.

School districts must leverage the resources at their disposal to "catch up" to where their staffing needs are going to be when students return to school. Of course, the current situation complicates things when it comes to traditional substitute recruiting. Fortunately, the digital age presents opportunities to school districts that never existed before, with remote technologies and online services providing creative solutions in these unique circumstances. Here are some good strategies for your school district to recruit qualified substitute teachers now and prepare them for when schools are back in session:

## Getting the Word Out

The most important aspect of recruiting is the same now as it has always been – you need to get the word out that you're hiring. Traditionally, recruiting and hiring events have been a great way to meet and engage with interested candidates. Since events such as these are not currently an option, social media and job posting websites have taken center stage as the best recruiting channels.

Your district's official Facebook and Twitter pages are an excellent place to post messaging advertising your need for substitute teacher applicants. Be sure that you don't overlook other popular social media as well, such as LinkedIn and Instagram. You can even ask your district's current teachers, staff, and substitutes to advertise for your schools on their own social media pages. This way, you'll be capable of casting a much wider net in the social media space. Additionally, take advantage of job posting sites such as CareerBuilder and Indeed, as jobseekers are frequently visiting these sites looking for work. The more places you can advertise your need for substitute teachers, the larger the audience you will reach.

No matter which online channels you use to advertise your need for substitute teachers, you'll want to make sure your messaging is clear – you are still hiring, and you do have fulfilling work opportunities available for qualified candidates as soon as schools reopen. Many Americans are experiencing uncertainty in their employment and this messaging will serve to both reassure and attract candidates.

## Meeting Your Substitute Teachers

There are many online services that can take the place of traditional in-person conversations with candidates. Your district can utilize video conferencing services such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet to take the place of traditional face-to-face meetings. Your hiring managers could use these technologies to conduct one-on-one interviews with substitute teachers as well as group meetings. You could even use these services to conduct question and answer sessions with interested candidates. Many of these services provide a live text chat, allowing your district to host an informational session for candidates to pose questions via chat without requiring the use of webcams. As with your initial advertisements

for substitutes, be sure to leverage your district's social media channels to spread the word about these question and answer sessions to attract a large audience.

These online tools are also a great way to conduct any trainings or orientations you typically provide your substitute teachers. Your training experts could host live video training sessions in groups or one-on-one, or your district team could hold group orientations to discuss district policies, procedures and answer questions. Alternatively, your team could pre-record these training classes and orientations and share them digitally with substitutes, or even post them to your district website or social media channels. The versatility of these digital solutions can empower your substitute onboarding process. In fact, you may even find that these tools can be beneficial, with digital flexibility reducing the screening and orientation process to days rather than weeks.

## Making Useful Resources Available

Once you've recruited a sizeable substitute teacher workforce, it's important to provide them materials to prepare them to succeed in your classrooms once schools reopen. Most obviously, you'll want to make any training and orientation materials you would normally provide to substitutes available digitally. Resources such as any pre-recorded training videos, training guides, employee handbooks and literature about district policies and procedures should be provided so that your substitute teachers will be familiar with your schools before they even step into the classroom.

It's also a good idea to familiarize your substitute teachers with your school district's staff and culture. Creating a digital map of your school buildings that illustrates important locations such as the main office and the teachers' lounge will help substitutes to feel more comfortable on their first day. And, a "who's who" series of videos from key district staff can introduce your substitutes to their go-to contacts and school administrators. Live streaming through Facebook is an easy, convenient way for district staff to introduce themselves to a large audience with interactive chat features for questions, but pre-recorded videos can be just as valuable and reused as needed.

Your substitutes may also appreciate a video introduction to an existing, well-respected district substitute teacher. In this introduction, the experienced substitute could tell the newly recruited substitute teachers what sorts of things to expect and touch on some frequently asked questions. Your new substitutes will appreciate any advice they can get from another person in their shoes.

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*For over 25 years Fred Bentsen has helped K-12 district and campus leaders find dynamic and creative solutions for the strategic and operational challenges they face daily. Fred has led marketing and operations for some of the most successful organizations in education including ESS, The American Productivity and Quality Center, Vantage Learning and The Princeton Review. In addition to serving on the Board for Friends of Texas Public Schools for several years, he is also a regular volunteer in Cypress Fairbanks ISD.*



*John McCormick has spent the past six years with ESS creating and sharing innovative strategies and thought-leadership pieces with K-12 school districts across the country. His specialties in marketing, messaging and recruiting in the education industry have helped ESS to support its district partners and inspire meaningful change in the interest of student achievement throughout the United States.*



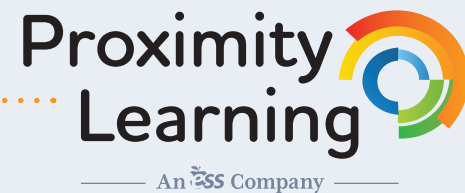
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**AASPA's Annual Conference** is the best place to gain new insights from PK-12 School Human Resources Leaders and gather valuable guidance you can use to help your students, teachers and school district as a whole. This pivotal event helps you stay on top of current trends and issues by bringing together expert PK-12 talent to offer their experienced perspective on navigating the ever-changing landscape of school HR.

In four jam-packed days, top administrators from across the country will give you a deep-dive look into ready-to-use solutions and research-based strategies all in a relaxed and fun environment! Your job is unique. How often do you have the chance to interact with another, much less many other school administrators? This is your chance! Build the relationships that will support you through years to come.



**Wednesday, October 14**  
*Karen McCullough*

**Change is Good - You Go First Keeping Up with the Pace of Change**

Today, change is more complex, more frequent, and more overwhelming than ever before, and you may be suffering a dose of change fatigue. You may not be able to control the changes going on around you, but the good news is, you can control how you respond. Just as you update operating systems and smartphones, now is the time for a personal operating system update, and Karen can help! She is ready to share tools and rituals that will help you not just survive but thrive in this ever changing world. Whether your instinct is to embrace change or to run from it, this keynote is for you! Remember, your life doesn't get better by chance; it gets better by change.



**Thursday, October 15**  
*Adolph Brown*

**Don't Judge a Book by it's Cover**

Dr. Adolph Brown has studied implicit bias for over three decades and has helped thousands of corporate and education professionals worldwide become more aware of the unconscious attribution of particular qualities to a member of a certain social group. Dr. Brown does not offer a training per se, as much as he offers a philosophy and an awareness to embrace when dealing with others. Dr. Brown acknowledges under certain conditions ALL of us have automatic associations that can influence our behavior - making individuals respond in biased ways even when they are not explicitly prejudiced. This is often referred to as "racism without racists."



**Friday, October 16**  
*Heather Younger*

**Changing "I Quit to I Fit" -- Five Powerful Strategies to Increase Employee Relations and Create an Energizing Workplace Culture**

Frustrated by the lack of engagement in your organization? Constantly battling high employee turnover? Is your employees' favorite pastime updating their resumes? In this entertaining and enlightening keynote, Heather reveals the underlying actions organizations can take to create a more engaged and loyal workforce. And it can be done even with budget restraints, remote work environments and adverse situations. That alone is worth the price of admission! Attendees will leave more motivated and energized to get to work in doing what they can do to create more positive experiences for everyone in the workplace.



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