

Mississippi district celebrating 25 years of high substitute teacher fill rates.



Gulfport School District's pioneering partnership with Kelly® Education, the parent company of Teachers On Call®, meets a variety of staffing needs.

Like any good relationship after a quarter century, the bond between Gulfport School District and Kelly Education continues to grow and mature. In 1997, the Mississippi school system made a bold decision and became the first to hire substitute teachers from Kelly Services.

Originally spearheaded by then-superintendent, Carlos Hicks, the innovative partnership set out to relieve Gulfport's administrators from the daily task of coordinating substitute teachers every morning—sometimes as early as 4 a.m. The district first partnered with Kelly to handle the substitute teacher staffing needs at their six elementary schools, two middle schools, high school, and learning center. Gulfport later expanded the initiative to include food service employees at all 10 buildings.

Since first working with Kelly Education 25 years ago, Gulfport has maintained upwards of a 97 percent fill rate daily, and has held high numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current Superintendent Glen East has witnessed this firsthand since he began working at Gulfport as a principal nearly a decade ago. "Even as Kelly Education services more school districts in the area, they are still doing an outstanding job keeping our fill rate up despite the challenges of the past couple years," he says.

Constant communication is key.

Every day, Kelly Education provides about 20 substitute teachers to address vacancies across the district. "When any of our 480 teachers call in sick, they go to work filling those positions for us," says East. The district also supplies Kelly Education with lists of classroom vacancies days in advance, to accommodate vacations or other leaves of absence.

The superintendent says it's effective two-way communication that is key to this long-term partnership. "Communication is a vital part of our relationship at both the district and school levels," says East. "We appreciate how Kelly Education helps us make sure we are taking care of our students every day."

More than substitute teachers—food services, custodial, and support staff.

Happy with the work in supplying qualified substitute teachers, Gulfport next hired Kelly Education to onboard temporary employees for food services with the option to hire these employees full-time, if needed. The school principals now also leverage Kelly Education to hire teacher assistants or custodians as needed.

More purposeful, rigorous PD.

Gulfport administrators appreciate the quality of Kelly Education employees. Substitute teachers receive more rigorous professional development than they did with the district, which had solely relied on retired teacher assistants to provide training sessions.

"When Kelly initially came through our district, they spent up to five days training substitutes about classroom management, how to handle strong-willed children, the best methods for leaving notes for teachers, and teaching lesson plans effectively," says East. "Their PD is more purposeful because they have more resources." In fact, the superintendent says that the district is often so impressed with Kelly Education employees, they hire them for full-time positions at the end of the school year.

East concludes, "Ever since Superintendent Hicks put this program together 25 years ago, the partnership has morphed and changed over time, but it remains an outstanding solution for us. I see nothing but positives going into the future."



CHALLENGE: Gulfport needed a better way to coordinate hiring substitute teachers.

SOLUTION: Kelly Education has provided the district with substitute teachers and other important personnel for the past 25 years.

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