

Substitute Solutions Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: What does it mean to "outsource" the substitute program?

A: When a district outsources a service, it means that the district is allowing an outside company to help run the day-to-day operations of a function of the organization (substitutes). With the substitute program, ESS/Source4Teachers will work in collaboration with Denton ISD to increase the absenteeism daily fill rate so that students still receive quality instruction in the absence of their teacher of record.

2. Q: The district is outsourcing the critical job of selecting and placing teachers in classrooms with children. Isn't this a core responsibility of the District?

A: The district is still fulfilling its core responsibility by ensuring that the continuity of instruction continues for our students in the absence of their classroom teacher of record. Our goal is to provide a quality substitute teacher in every classroom, every day, who cares that every student continues to learn and grow in the absence of their teacher of record. Secondly, our substitute teachers are prepared and supported both professionally and personally during their substitute experience. To this end, the district feels that it is helping to better improve and fulfill its core responsibility. The standards for substitute teachers will still be set by Denton ISD. Even though ESS will hire the substitutes; quality management will remain with Denton ISD. Denton ISD will maintain the right to request removal of any substitute who does not meet our standards.

3. Q: There might be viable internal solutions that haven't been attempted or discovered yet. Have we done everything reasonably in our power to solve this problem internally?

A: Yes, we feel that at this point the district has done its' due diligence. Human Resources (HR) has worked through the challenges of substitute fill rates for the past 3-4 years without being able to find a viable solution that would truly support the continuity of instruction for our campuses. The fact is that today, substitute teaching is a tough job. This is not just a Denton ISD concern, this is a state-wide and national concern. We have found that substitutes have choices when it comes to deciding when, where, and if they want to work, not only within the Denton community but within the surrounding communities as well, thus placing a strain on the number of substitutes who are available to substitute within our Denton ISD community. We have also found that substitutes with a Bachelor's or Master's degree sometimes decide they would like to pursue getting a teaching license through an alternative licensure program after substituting for a while.

4. Q: What if the District spent the same amount internally that we are planning to spend on this big service contract?

A: The district has considered the idea of using the cost that will be paid toward outsourcing to do this internally. However, we are not certain that the district could do the same job and/or function at the level of efficiency of operations as with the ESS company. It would probably take the district several years to reach the level of proficiency with similar training and processes. Though this might have potential as a viable solution after a period of some years, even with the districts best efforts, the current company has a history of expertise and success in K-12 substitute staffing as their foundational principle. We believe that the main emphasis should be on the time lost at the campus and district levels, recruitment of substitute staff, advertisement, and disciplining employees needed to operate a successful substitute program. These tasks would add a considerable cost to the district; therefore, it could potentially cost more to manage the program in-house. ESS has the experience, resources, and expertise to come in and provide an immediate solution.

5. Q: How about increasing substitute pay?

A: We continue to monitor our comparison districts and remain within the substitute rate of pay with those competitor districts. We have also tried to increase fill rates for certain critical areas by providing pay increases for those critical areas. In addition, we have also surveyed our substitute pool regarding our pay scale and any other concerns our substitutes might have regarding our need for them to work more often. We have found, after surveying and visiting with our substitute teachers, is that yes, an increase in pay would be good, however, they remain steadfast in their wish for flexibility of choice regarding when and where they wish to work, regardless of an increase in pay. Based on our survey, what mattered most to substitutes were intrinsic values such as how they are treated at the campuses, proximity of the school with the vacancy to where they live, and the positive relationships that were formed at specific campuses.

6. Q: Will current Denton ISD substitute teachers be able to work for ESS?

A: Yes, that was a non-negotiable point between the district and ESS. Current substitute teachers will transition over to the new company without any disruptions in their employment. They will still utilize the same absence management system that is currently in place and will be able to work at their preferred campuses. ESS offers additional benefits to substitutes including direct deposit, weekly pay, health care benefits, monetary working incentives and ongoing training. These benefits have been long-time requests of our district substitutes.

7. Q: There has been a lot of discussion about the fill rate. The district is at a current fill rate of 89%, what is the ultimate goal?

A: The expectation will be a 95% to 100% fill rate with incremental increases along the way to achieve the goal of 100%. Keep in mind that the 89% is an average of all campuses. Some campuses continue to have daily fill rates of 75%, which proves to be major challenges for students, teachers, and administrators. The ESS company will target campuses with specific challenges through intentional recruitment efforts, incentives, and permanent campus substitutes.

8. Q: Why can't the district solve the problem of teacher attendance and classroom fill rates?

A: The district's HR team has been working to ensure we have quality substitutes in our classrooms each day over the past three to four years to solve this concern. The issue could quite possibly be an attendance problem for some employees/campuses, however, our employees have discretion pertaining to their personal absences. We cannot make employees come to school, therefore, we must find a possible solution for our classroom vacancies. Again, our HR team has worked at numerous solutions over the last three to four years with limited progress and success. This is our attempt, willingness, and recommendation to try something different, innovative, and as close to cost neutral as possible for a solution.

9. Q: Will the District be able to terminate the contract if ESS does not meet expectations?

A: Yes, the district will include a clause within the contract that stipulates that the company must demonstrate increments of improved fill rates over specific periods of the contract or the contract will become null and void. The superintendent will make this determination in collaboration with the HR department and, of course, with input from our campus administration, our business office, and other district departments that are impacted by this effort. In addition, there will be periodical check points for monitoring, review, and evaluation all along the way throughout the duration of the contract.

10. Q: How will the District offset the cost of outsourcing substitutes?

A: The company prides itself in staying as cost neutral as possible by applying the same cost that the district is currently spending on their substitute program and applying a 5% mark up to that amount. The 5% markup is considered to help offset the soft cost analysis that is hard to quantify during any given year i.e. (the amount of time, energy, paperwork, and procedural processes within the district departments and campuses that oversee the substitute day-to-day operations within the district). In addition to these soft costs, a personnel unit that is currently employed by Denton ISD will become an employee of ESS. This will have a positive impact on the operational budget. It is our belief that this relationship with ESS/Source 4 Teachers will remain cost neutral.

11. Q: Was this bid put out to other providers?

A: Yes, the district went through a process with our business office called Purchasing Cooperative of America (PCA) with four vendor companies that specialize in providing substitutes. The other three companies held firm to a cost commitment that ranged from a percentage amount of 18% to 28%. HR vetted all substitute companies for a period of over 11 months. The ESS company committed to a percentage rate much less than the others, however, we chose the ESS company for their bid due to their record of credibility, commitment to customer service, and willingness/flexibility to negotiate specific concerns we proposed that were related to our three fundamental non-negotiable criteria. Those non-negotiable criteria were that ESS would provide quality and well-trained substitutes to continue the continuity of instruction in the absence of the teacher; they would provide tangible, personal, and professional development benefits to the substitutes; and they would implement accountability,

review, and monitoring processes of the program on a regular and continual basis for the district.

12. Q: Recently, a proposal was put forth that our district would work with ESS Substitute Solutions to manage our substitute system. In a nutshell, what does this mean for our current substitute teachers?

A: The primary reason for researching and evaluating a solution for the persistent challenges regarding substitute fill rates is to ensure that the continuity of instruction continues for our students in the absence of their classroom teacher of record. Our goal is to help provide a quality substitute teacher in every classroom, every day, who cares that every student, continues to learn and grow in the absence of their teacher of record. Secondly, our substitute teachers are prepared and supported both professionally and personally during their substitute experience.

In summary, the working relationship with the district's human resources department and campus administrators will remain the same throughout this collaborative process with the ESS Substitute Solutions team. The transitioning of current substitutes within the system should be seamless regarding the current workplace options, pay scale, and status. If the board approves this plan, substitute teachers will be receiving more information regarding the transition/implementation process near the end of the current 2017-2018 school year in preparation for orientation sessions for the Fall of 2018.

13. Q: Will current substitutes have a choice in selecting their assignments if they choose to only work on one campus? Will this be a problem if one does not choose to work as often as the ESS company requires?

A: With the ESS Program, substitutes will be expected to continue working every month whether that be one day a month or 20 days per month. If substitutes do not work at all for a three-month period the company will terminate employment as a substitute, however, if the substitute has a valid reason (for example retirees traveling/vacationing for three months, family and/or personal illness, etc.), ESS will temporarily suspend the substitute within the system until they return.

Yes, a substitute can choose to only work in one school if they wish and can also set up their preferences as to which school or schools they want to work. In addition, ESS has their standard application process that works with the districts' current application system "AppliTrack."

Regarding credentialing, ESS will follow all Texas regulations and forms. If the Board approves, ESS will hold several transitional meetings to cover the new substitute onboarding/hiring paperwork process.

14. Q. Will the pay schedule change? Currently subs get paid a month after subbing. If someone subs at the beginning of the school year, the pay doesn't arrive till after October 1.

A: Yes, the substitute employee pay schedule will change. Currently the district pays subs monthly. With ESS, subs will be paid weekly on Fridays and operate 2 weeks in arrears.

15. Q. Will direct deposit be an option? Subs are concerned about the check getting lost or stolen and about the lack of timeliness.

A: Yes, direct deposit is available. Unless otherwise indicated by a sub, payroll checks are direct deposited by ESS.
ESS also offers a cash card that the subs funds can be deposited into if they don't have direct deposit or don't want a physical check. The easiest and preferred way is direct deposit.