



Cost Savings Strategies

FRONTLINE
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Overview

The Aesop system presents your district with significant time and labor savings through its automated substitute placement service. But Aesop offers your district more than just automated substitute placement. To a district that wants to cut costs from its current processes, Aesop's rich functionality represents a valuable asset, not an additional financial burden. Aesop works with your district's current business and HR processes to make them better, more efficient. Here are just a few useful applications of the Aesop system that are quick and easy to execute, yet could represent significant savings for your district.

Deny Fraudulent Claims for Unemployment

Did you know that in many states substitutes are able to file for unemployment benefits? Rules vary, but it's not uncommon for districts to pay thousands of dollars through their state system for an individual sub's claims over the course of one year. A sub's claim is based on their report that the school district did not offer work opportunities in a particular period of time. If in fact the district did offer work and can show proof, expensive claims can be avoided. Claims may also be denied if it can be shown that a sub has made themselves unavailable for work at certain times or places.

Aesop offers districts detailed reports of outbound phone calls to subs and their response to each call. Administrators can see how substitutes have configured their availability in Aesop, as well as when and how they may have changed their availability for work. This documentation is extremely valuable for districts when responding to claims, and is included in Aesop at no extra charge. With powerful reports upon demand, Aesop empowers school district administrators to minimize the expense of substitutes' unemployment claims.

Eliminate Paper-based Leave Reports

It's common for school districts to have multi-part paper forms which employees use to request particular types of leave. Such forms are typically routed through the school building and perhaps to the district office, gathering approvals and signatures before accumulating somewhere in a pile. This paper flow may take several days or more and may require transmittal between multiple sites. But some districts have found a better way.

A relatively new feature in Aesop provides a robust, completely paperless leave accounting system at no extra charge. Employees can originate leave requests on their personalized web site, including explanatory notes if necessary, and have their request automatically routed to one or more designated approvers. Principals or other supervisors can easily view and approve or decline leave requests, singly or in batches in their e-mail program, adding comments as appropriate. Employees can track the status of their leave requests on the web, which of course is not possible with any kind of paper-based system.

Aesop's built-in leave approval system offers significant efficiency improvements which can produce cost savings for your school district.

Manage Employee Absences

New research clarifies the significant impact of teacher absenteeism on school district budgets and student achievement. When a teacher is absent, not only does your district pay the substitute's compensation, but the quality and consistency of classroom instruction invariably suffers, even with a well prepared sub. More than half of all teacher absences are considered "discretionary." Many factors influence teacher absenteeism, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which all districts should measure and evaluate to spot important trends.

Other research by the Substitute Teaching Institute (STI, now STEDI) revealed that districts using an automated sub placement system could significantly reduce teacher absenteeism. When school principals had access to detailed absence reports, teacher absence rates fell by 14%. "Principal access to teacher absence monitoring technology (i.e., substitute management system) appears to result in nearly 14% lower teacher absenteeism," reported Geoffrey Smith, Director of the Substitute Teaching Division (STED) at Utah State University. The question is, how much is 14% of your annual budget for substitute pay?

The benefits of effectively managing teacher absence are compelling. Aesop provides detailed and flexible reports for this purpose. Your district can save money and improve student learning as you build a positive culture of attendance and accountability. The dollar cost savings in substitute compensation could easily exceed the cost of Aesop itself, even before considering Aesop's other benefits.

Simplify Professional Development Scheduling

NCLB and other teacher quality initiatives have greatly increased the volume of professional development activity. A teacher's training event will often require them to be absent from the classroom and the resultant placement of a substitute. There are various procedures for scheduling professional development activities and securing subs as needed. In some districts the entire process has been distilled into a single step for the employee.

A web-based program from My Learning Plan® provides advanced PD registration and much more. Now, Aesop can be integrated with My Learning Plan so that when an employee registers for a training event and needs a sub, an absence request and job opportunity are automatically created in Aesop. This saves time for employees who would otherwise need to make two system entries, or if PD absence requests are handled by one person.

Linking your PD management and sub placement systems together is just one more way that Aesop can make your school district more efficient.

Streamline Payroll Operations

Most school districts have payroll staff who manually enter voluminous records of employee leave and substitute work history into their payroll system. This task may consume hours or even days of tedious manual effort each pay period. The process is inherently inefficient and prone to error. More and more districts are trying to improve this routine by uploading a complete electronic file into payroll. A long process may be collapsed into minutes, providing dramatic efficiency in the district payroll function.

Aesop enables this efficiency by routinely capturing complete records of employee leave and substitute work history. This data is easily exported from Aesop into many popular school finance programs. Data extracts may be configured for other payroll programs as well. There is no additional cost for this Aesop service. Ask if Aesop is already integrated with your payroll program. In an era of accountability, payroll system integration has quickly become a “best practice” for school districts of all sizes.

Conclusion

There's no question that cost pressures have increased for school districts everywhere. Meeting the challenge of a shrinking budget may require new approaches. A modest investment in new technology might provide larger cost savings elsewhere, and improve overall district efficiency.

Aesop is surprisingly affordable for districts of all sizes, and easy to implement because there is no hardware, software or phone lines at the district. Please contact us for more information about any of the cost-saving strategies above, or to request pricing, references or an Aesop demonstration.