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*Kelly Services branch employees pictured, from left:
Kim Blackledge, Sandra Grant and Jennifer Williams*

To avoid possible Affordable Care Act fines, Ascension Parish school system turns to Kelly Services® to hire its substitute teachers

Schools contract out substitute teacher hiring

This school year, the Ascension Parish School Board turned the work of hiring substitute teachers to Kelly Educational Staffing®, a division of the national employment agency.

The motivation for the School Board was the difficulty — both financially and time-wise — of meeting requirements of the Affordable Care Act, which calls for providing health insurance for employees who work more than 30 hours a week, which substitute teachers sometimes do.

The move is saving the School Board \$358,000 a year, with other benefits being the recruitment and training of substitute teachers that Kelly Services provides.

“They could provide us with better-trained substitutes and provide those substitutes with benefits relative to the Affordable Care Act,” said Randy Watts, director of human resources for the school district.

Watts estimates the district employs anywhere from 200 to 300 substitutes on a monthly basis, filling in for those of the 1,470 regular teachers who can’t come to work for one reason or another.

With payroll costs, worker’s compensation claims, payroll taxes and insurance costs to meet ACA requirements — an expense by itself estimated at \$799,000 — the district was looking at an annual cost for substitute

teachers of approximately \$3.36 million, said Diane Allison, director of business services for the Ascension Parish school district.

The agreement with Kelly® is for \$3,009,000 annually, she said.

“We’re not going to do it if we don’t save money,” Allison said. And there were the logistical challenges of meeting ACA requirements as well, she said. “In our system, we didn’t have a way to track that easily,” Allison said of those substitute teachers who, over a certain time period, would work 30 hours or more a week.

A department at the Kelly Services’ headquarters in Troy, Michigan, handles that chore for more than 5,400 schools in 35 states, said Sandra Grant, district manager of Kelly Services in Baton Rouge, which works with the Ascension Parish School System.

She points out that Kelly Services “never caps the hours of our employees.”

“That’s beneficial (in a school setting) when the substitute can be there every day, so the kids can get to know them,” said Jennifer Williams, a senior staff support employee with Kelly in Baton Rouge.

By contrast, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, which is still hiring its own substitutes, is trying to cap their workweek

at 29 hours a week to avoid the ACA requirements to provide health insurance. Board members have complained that the cap is causing havoc at schools when the substitutes reach the limit before the end of the week.

Kelly Services, in the educational staffing business since 1997, has developed a number of software systems for users. It has a 24/7 online scheduling system, for instance.

“Now when that kindergarten teacher wakes up at 3 in the morning with a stomach virus, all she has to do is enter her absence online,” Grant said.

Substitute teachers can also accept a job online or by phone app. If the computers are down, for some reason, there’s a scheduling team at Kelly Services national headquarters that mans phones from 4 a.m. to 7 p.m., Central time.

Plus, staff at local Kelly Services branches talk regularly with substitute teachers.

“Every morning, they’re placing some manual calls. They know them; they recruited them,” Grant said.

Kelly recruits by word of mouth, partners with colleges and universities to recruit students and has put up signs along major roads in Ascension Parish.



It also puts out the word to religious organizations and to the spouses of military veterans, Grant said. The company is getting a good response since it began recruiting for Ascension Parish in August, Grant said.

Kim Blackledge, a senior staff support employee with Kelly Services in Baton Rouge, said she's recently recruited a firefighter and retired attorneys as substitute teachers, by word of mouth.

After meeting a number of background checks, applicants take several online training courses — “the big one is classroom management,” Grant said — and must pass an evaluation of the courses, before being hired and going through a three-hour orientation.

“They want to be comfortable from day one” in the classroom, Grant said of the substitute teachers. There's also more than 400 online courses the substitute teachers can take through the school year, some of them on technology being used in today's classroom.

The Ascension Parish school district's active substitute teachers already working in the schools were grandfathered into the Kelly Services system and didn't have to reapply when the agreement between the School Board and the employment company was reached this summer.

While substitute teachers are now employees of Kelly Educational Staffing, their pay is set by the School Board and can range from \$60 per day to regular teacher

pay per day, depending on the substitute teacher's educational background, experience and how many consecutive days they substitute for one regular teacher.

Regular teacher pay ranges from approximately \$43,600 a year to more than \$57,382 a year, depending on years of experience and post-graduate work, Allison said.

Kelly's substitute teachers are also eligible for a 401(k) retirement plan, a service bonus and retention initiatives, benefits they didn't have previously as part-time employees of the school district.

Of the School Board's partnership with Kelly Services, Watts, with the board's human resources, says, “I hear all good things. I hear that the fill rate (of substitutes in classrooms) is very good, and Kelly has recruited very good people, according to the principals I talk with.”

According to Kelly literature, its educational staffing services handles 12,000 teacher absences daily in the U.S. and filled more than 1.7 million classrooms in the country during the 2013-2014 school year.

In south Louisiana, it's been providing substitute teachers for the Jefferson Parish school district since 2005, according to an administrative employee with the school district.

In the Zachary school district, Kelly Services provides temporary cafeteria and janitorial employees, said Adonica Duggan, supervisor of technology and communications.

For Ascension Parish, Superintendent Patrice Pujol says the “partnership with Kelly Services has improved our efficiency in assuring high-quality substitutes in our classrooms, while saving the district time and money by managing the intricacies of the Affordable Care Act.”

ABOUT KELLY EDUCATIONAL STAFFING

Kelly Educational Staffing® (KES®) is a specialty service of Kelly Services, Inc, a leader in workforce solutions and the first staffing provider to develop a comprehensive education talent management solution. Launched in 1997, KES partners with 5,400+ public and private schools across 35 states and has 100 percent success in improving substitute placement rates in all our partner districts. More than 2 million classrooms are filled by a KES substitute teacher each year. KES provides schools with quality substitute teachers and management solutions, in addition to staffing non-instructional positions. Combined with the nearly 70 years of experience Kelly Services has in the staffing industry, KES offers our partner schools unique value and unparalleled experience and expertise. For more information, visit kellyeducationalstaffing.com today.

