

What is an Educational Staffing Agency?

A comprehensive guide for school decision-makers looking to foster academic success

Educators are the backbone of our rapidly changing world, shaping the minds of future leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers. Technological advancements, societal shifts, evolving student expectations, and school setting demands have re-defined what the traditional learning environment looks like. This progression is increasing the importance of finding and retaining qualified teachers and staff who have the necessary skillsets to help students thrive.

Schools traditionally have longer hiring cycles, limited candidate pools, and strains on already stretched resources, making it difficult for in-house HR teams to keep up with staffing demands.

Educational staffing agencies have proven to be valuable in navigating these complexities by finding quality, qualified staff and providing the necessary support to build a successful and enduring staffing partnership.

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The Evolving Landscape of Education

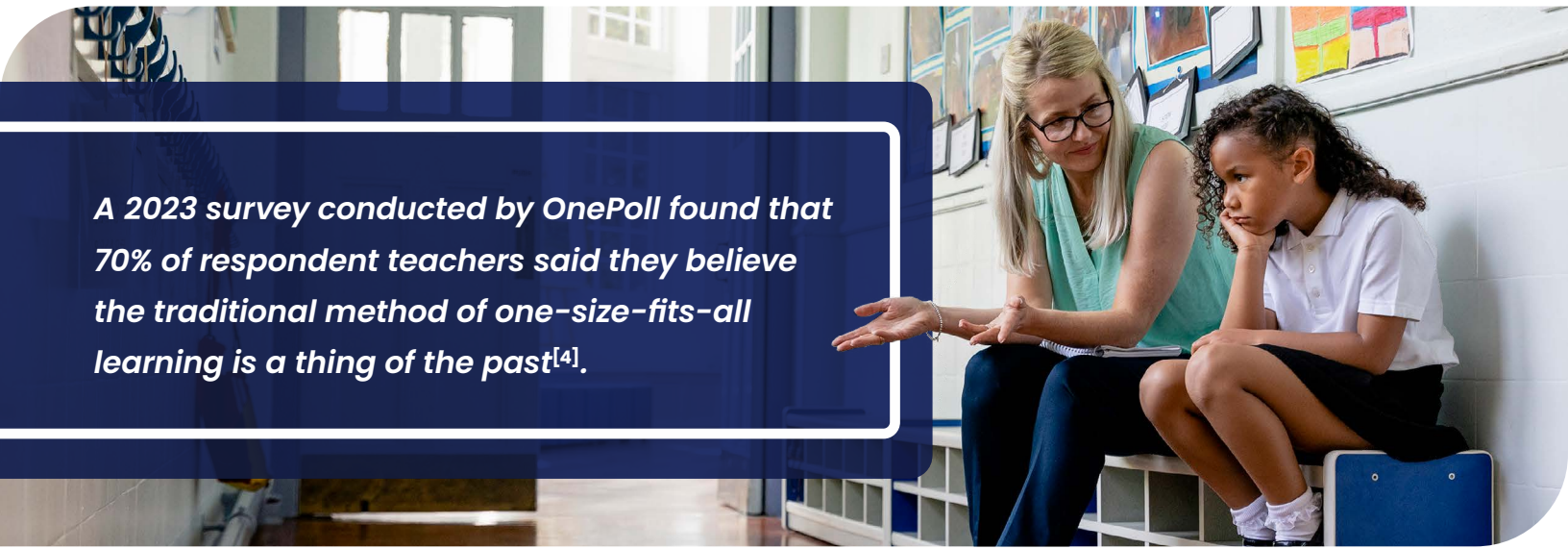
To keep up with the evolving landscape of education, schools and districts will need to adapt and look for contemporary, creative staffing strategies that allow them to tackle these new challenges. There are several key factors influencing this evolution:

Persistent Staffing Shortages: According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 45% of public schools reported feeling understaffed in 2023 and 79% of schools reported difficulty in filling teaching positions with fully certified teachers[1]. The respondents to the NCES survey also reported that the two predominant reasons for their hiring challenges were either a lack of candidates applying to open positions or a limited pool of qualified candidates being available. This underscores the severity of the staffing problems schools currently face and the urgent need for innovative solutions.

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The Rise of Personalized Learning: Personalized learning focuses on providing uniquely crafted instruction, experiences, and support for each student. Unlike traditional classroom models, personalized learning helps educators better create lessons for students with diverse learning styles and backgrounds. The growth of this approach is fueled by evidence that it can help students learn more effectively. Research conducted by the RAND Corporation shows that personalized learning can improve achievement in both reading and math for a broad range of students^[2]. In light of this benefit, personalized learning is becoming more common in schools across the country. According to education non-profit, KnowledgeWorks, as of 2023, 39 states use, or are considering implementing, personalized learning^[3]. Data shows that teachers are in favor of adding support for personalized learning.

A photograph of a female teacher with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a green sleeveless top, sitting on a white bench. She is holding a book and gesturing with her hands as she speaks to a young Black girl with curly hair, who is also sitting on the bench. The girl is wearing a white polo shirt and dark shorts, and is looking at the teacher. They are in a classroom setting with colorful posters on the wall behind them.

A 2023 survey conducted by OnePoll found that 70% of respondent teachers said they believe the traditional method of one-size-fits-all learning is a thing of the past^[4].

The Integration of Technology: As a result of the constraints created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology in schools has widely expanded, making it pivotal in the future of education. According to data gathered by the educational technology company Instructure, the use of digital tools has increased by 763% in schools in recent years. The report notes the number of distinct education technology tools accessed annually has risen from 300 in the 2016–2017 school year to an average of 2,591 in the 2022–2023 school year^[5]. According to a survey conducted by Education Week, these digital tools have helped schools address literacy gaps among elementary school students, use learning management systems to help teachers better manage classroom tasks, and supplement core curriculums with online math instructional tools^[6].

Prioritizing Mental Health & Well-Being: Recent studies conducted by government health agencies show that the number of adolescents experiencing mental health challenges is staggeringly high. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that nearly 20% of U.S. children and young people aged 3-17 have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder^[7]. Additional NIH research conducted for the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, further revealed that an estimated 49.5% of U.S. adolescents aged 13-18 have had a mental health disorder^[8].

This data underscores the growing need for schools to provide comprehensive support services that effectively help their students handle mental and behavioral challenges.

The Drive for Equity & Inclusion: The diversity gap that exists among U.S. teachers is having grave consequences on student success.

According to the 2024 Voices from the Classroom Survey, only 20% of teachers are people of color and 40% of U.S. public schools do not have a single teacher of color^[9].

This is particularly troubling as research indicates that a substantial lack of teacher diversity can hinder student outcomes and contribute to negative student experiences. The Learning Policy Institute discovered that students, especially students of color, get higher test scores, are less likely to be chronically absent, and are more likely to graduate high school and college when they have teachers of color^[10].

Considering this, a 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report further highlights the need for more diversity among teachers, showing that Black and Hispanic fourth and eighth-graders, on average, score lower in math and reading compared to their white counterparts^{[11] [12]}.

02 The Potential Impact on Schools

As the school landscape continues to evolve, it can have wide-reaching implications on educational staffing.



The key potential consequences of these seismic changes include:

Changes in Classrooms & Qualification Standards: When teacher vacancies cannot be filled, existing teachers may be burdened with larger class sizes. This could potentially compromise personalized learning initiatives and put a strain on already overworked educators. Additionally, schools struggling to fill positions may have to rely heavily on substitute teachers creating a lack of continuity that can disrupt lesson plans and student progress. Alternatively, some schools may have to seek out less experienced or qualified teachers to fill classroom gaps, which could further negatively impact student success.

Rise of Alternative Staffing Solutions: The teacher shortage is likely to fuel the demand for non-traditional school staffing solutions. This could include virtual teaching options, shared services between schools, or partnering with a staffing agency that knows how to effectively find highly-skilled educators and school-based professionals.

Exacerbation of Inequities: Teacher shortages tend to disproportionately impact schools serving low-income communities due to the budget restrictions faced by schools in these districts. As shortages persist and potentially grow, they might widen the achievement gap between communities and could perpetuate systemic inequities within the education system.

Need for Specialized Skillsets: As personalized learning grows, so might the need for educators with expertise in differentiated instructions, adaptive technologies, and data-driven teaching methods. These educators can potentially create customized learning plans, leverage technology to individualize instruction, utilize data to track student progress, and adjust approaches as needed.

Furthermore, as the use of digital tools potentially increases, schools may need to consider new staffing strategies to identify candidates who are willing to embrace new tools and methodologies.

Increased Support Demands: Implementing personalized learning, overcoming shortages, and increasing well-being services may require a team approach. This could mean that schools will need to hire more support staff, like paraprofessionals, learning coaches, and tech support specialists, to provide targeted assistance to students and educators. As the need for this team approach grows, schools may have to find ways to quickly and efficiently recruit candidates qualified for these increasingly crucial positions.

Additionally, as schools look to expand their support services, they may need to hire more experienced mental and behavioral health professionals who know how to help students reach their full potential. They also may have a greater need for professionals who specialize in providing individual and group support.

Focus on Diversity & Cultural Competency: Schools should prioritize hiring educators and staff who reflect the demographics of their student bodies. This could mean rethinking staffing strategies, like expanding their recruitment areas, to find a larger pool of candidates from various backgrounds. Additionally, schools may need to focus on providing teachers with training in culturally responsive teaching practices and implicit bias awareness, to help create learning environments that are welcoming and affirming for students of all backgrounds.

The new challenges arising from the evolution of the educational landscape will create opportunities to find innovative solutions, like partnering with an educational staffing agency. Leveraging the expertise of an agency can help schools ease their evolving staffing needs and spend more time focusing on their primary mission of providing high-quality education.



The Pain Points of Educational Staffing

As education stakeholders look to meet the needs of students amid this changing landscape, they should consider adaptive staffing solutions that go beyond traditional approaches.

That is where an educational staffing agency can step in to help. To understand how a staffing agency can help schools, they will need to recognize the major pain points associated with educational staffing:



A Lack of Candidates

Data from an Education Week report reveals the number of people enrolled in a teacher-preparation program decreased by 36% from 2009–2021^[13]. This decline in pursuit of teaching careers is causing the pipeline of qualified candidates to shrink and suggests that schools will continue to face a diminishing candidate pool for the foreseeable future.



The Recruitment Challenge

Finding qualified educators and staff goes beyond simply filling open positions. Schools need to attract candidates who are passionate about teaching and possess specific skill sets that can help them thrive in the unique educational environment. Developing targeted recruitment strategies that resonate with qualified teachers can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive endeavor.



Retention Issues

Even after attracting talented educators, retaining them can be equally challenging. A 2023 Merrimack College Teacher Survey conducted by the Education Week Research Center found that 35% of teachers say they're likely to quit and find another job outside of teaching within the next two years^[14].



Budgetary Constraints

School budgets are often stretched thin, making it difficult to offer competitive salaries and attractive benefits packages that entice high-quality candidates. Limited budgets also restrict schools' ability to invest in training, potentially hindering staff morale and growth.



Time Constraints

School administrators often wear multiple hats, juggling administrative responsibilities alongside their leadership duties. The time-consuming task of screening resumes, conducting interviews, and following up with references can detract from other critical leadership priorities.

How Educational Staffing Agencies Ease the Pain

The pain points of educational staffing can have far-reaching consequences for schools. However, by partnering with a qualified educational staffing agency, schools can alleviate these pressures and focus on what matters most – the success of their students.



The benefits an agency can provide in easing school staffing pains include:

1 Talent Pool

Beyond Your Backyard: Educational staffing agencies have a national reach, meaning your district's location doesn't limit them. This is a game-changer for schools in desperate need of staffing or specialized help, especially those in high-need areas.

Diverse Candidates: Reputable staffing agencies prioritize diversity in their pool of professionals. This helps schools find educators from various backgrounds that better reflect the students they serve.

2 Time Saving

Outsourcing the HR Work: From posting job openings to conducting interviews, staffing agencies take on the time-consuming recruitment process. They also take over the onboarding process by handling tasks like background checks and credential verification. This frees up school administrators to focus on other crucial tasks, such as ensuring positive student outcomes.

Faster Turnaround: Educational staffing agencies have streamlined onboarding processes and vast candidate networks, often allowing them to place candidates much faster than traditional hiring methods.

3 Navigating Tricky Openings

The Specialists: From speech therapists to behavioral experts to special education specialists, staffing agencies are experts at finding the niche school-based professionals that schools often have a tough time sourcing.

Fluctuating Needs: Staffing agencies offer solutions for short-term and long-term challenges, like unexpected absences or maternity leave coverage. This allows schools to maintain continuity in their staffing without over-hiring to meet future demands.

4 Dedication and Understanding

Strategic Solutions: Agencies track trends in education, from in-demand skills to future shortages, which help schools stay ready for any situation they may face. Additionally, agencies can provide valuable data-driven insights into best practices to help schools scale staffing strategies up or down as needed.

Intimate Partnership: Staffing agencies take time to understand their school partners so they can best match them with vendors and candidates equipped to meet their specific needs and culture.

5 Ongoing Support

Professional Development: The partnership with a staffing agency extends beyond initial placement. Many agencies offer comprehensive support and tools, ensuring that your professionals receive proper guidance to help them meet your school's needs.

Flexibility: Many staffing agencies offer the flexibility to fill openings on-demand for various temporary, part-time, or long-term needs – such as substitute teachers. This allows schools to face staffing setbacks confidently without worrying about dedicating extra money and resources to each new challenge.

Educational staffing agencies are not just a stopgap solution. They are critical partners for schools needing to build a flexible, skilled workforce that keeps up with changing demands.

By working with an educational staffing agency focused on your unique needs, schools can create a powerful partnership aimed at helping students reach their maximum academic potential.

05 Selecting the Right Educational Staffing Partner

The success of a school's partnership hinges on choosing the right partner. The best educational staffing agencies function as an extension of your team, helping you navigate recruitment challenges and find the people who will genuinely make a difference for your students.



Here are some key factors for schools to consider when trying to find the right educational staffing partner:

Define Your Needs: Before contacting agencies, carefully define your staffing needs. Identify the specific positions you need to fill, including grade levels, subjects, and any critical certifications or specializations. Additionally, consider your school's unique culture, values, and instructional philosophy to aid in finding teachers who complement your environment. Lastly, think about your long-term goals – anticipate future staffing needs and seek an agency that can scale and adapt alongside your school's growth trajectory.


Research & Evaluate Agencies: Explore potential agencies with a focus on their reputation, experience, and services. Seek agencies with a proven record of accomplishment in the education sector, specializing in placements for your specific school type and location. Evaluate the range of services they offer, inquire about candidate screening processes, interview coordination, and the level of onboarding support they provide. Additionally, inquire about their use of technology for streamlining recruitment and candidate matching.

Agency Interview: Confer with key agency personnel, including recruiters and account managers. This initial interview is your opportunity to assess whether they understand your school's unique needs and whether their communication style aligns with yours. It's also crucial to understand the agency's fee structure and carefully review contracts before signing, ensuring complete transparency and understanding of their services.

Technology & Innovation: Choose an educational staffing agency that fully embraces the power of technology to streamline recruitment and save your school valuable time and resources. Additionally, look for an agency that utilizes data-driven insights to connect your school with candidates whose skills and experience perfectly align with your specific needs. A commitment to continuous innovation signifies a forward-thinking agency ready to adapt and excel in the evolving educational landscape.

Commitment to Educators: A dedicated staffing agency understands that the cornerstone of school success is attracting and retaining high-quality educators. Seek a partner who advocates for fair pay and benefits, as this is essential in attracting top talent who will thrive in your school community. Most importantly, prioritize agencies with a reputation for ethical treatment, exemplified by clear communication, fair contracts, and timely payments.

Legal & Compliance Considerations: Educational institutions must adhere to numerous laws and regulations. Ask the staffing agency about their internal procedures for verifying credentials and certifications, conducting background checks and their general approach to ensuring overall compliance to state and federal regulations. This permits a smooth onboarding process for agency-placed personnel and avoids potential future complications for your school.



Selecting the right educational staffing agency for your school's needs can take time and patience. By closely evaluating a staffing agency partnership, schools can help ease their pain and gain a valuable companion dedicated to fostering a dynamic school community.

06 Building a Strong Agency Partnership

Building a productive relationship with your chosen educational staffing agency is essential. It hinges on clear communication and openness about various factors like requirements, expectations, and any budgetary or timeline constraints.



Let's break down what essential steps schools can take to build a productive and rewarding relationship with their chosen staffing agency:

Foster Open Communication: Establishing transparent and open communication channels with your staffing agency is paramount. Clearly define your needs by providing specifics about open positions, including subject area and desired experience level. Additionally, share your school's vision and current goals to help the agency identify candidates who resonate with your mission. Offer regular and timely feedback on resumes and interviews, even if someone isn't a perfect fit, helping the agency refine its search and better understand your school's needs.

Leverage Their Expertise: Staffing agencies have extensive experience adapting to changing staffing needs, so it can be helpful to keep your staffing agency informed about upcoming projects, changes in curriculum, or shifting demands. This allows them to use their workforce procurement expertise to help find professionals who align with your changing needs.

Utilize Resources & Technology: Maximize the tools your agency offers, such as using their managed service provider or vendor management system to get access to creative staffing solutions for various situations. Furthermore, embrace virtual tools such as online interviews and applications to streamline the staffing process, particularly when screening candidates or seeking staff outside your immediate geographic area.

The most robust agency partnerships are built on trust, communication, and mutual respect. By treating the agency as an extension of your team, you can gain valuable insights into the evolving educational landscape, save time, and find genuinely exceptional staff passionate about maximizing your students' potential.

Embracing the Future of Educational Staffing

The education system is in a state of exciting transformation.

As schools strive to meet the evolving needs of students, innovative approaches to staffing are becoming more crucial. Partnering with the right educational staffing agency is not just about filling vacancies – it's about strategically building a team of qualified, dedicated educators and staff who know how to guide students to academic success.

Remember, the future of education is bright. By embracing innovative staffing solutions, schools can ensure they have the educators and support staff necessary to empower students to achieve their full potential and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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