



Washington County Public Schools

CASE STUDY

The Challenge:

Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) is a district committed to building a community that inspires curiosity, creativity and achievement. In partnership with community members, WCPS educates and enables all students to fully access opportunities afforded them in a rapidly changing and diverse global society.

For WCPS, having teachers who are well trained, engaged and dedicated to student success is the most critical factor in achieving its goals. On the days when certified teachers can't be in their classrooms, qualified substitutes must be on hand to provide instruction for students.

But the district struggled with an outdated professional learning program and a substitute management system that left the district with fill rates as low as 82%. District leaders were determined to find new solutions.

"It was bad here in November and December. We were seeing 40, 45 absences going unfilled. That's just totally unacceptable for a district this size."

– Lindsay Darr, Coordinator of Human Resources: Teachers Personnel

The Results:

The urgent need to find a new employee absence management system was a factor in choosing Frontline. Already familiar with Frontline Recruiting & Hiring, the Human Resources department launched Frontline Absence & Time shortly after winter break. Although principals and district administrators were initially reluctant to change systems mid-year, they were impressed to see that within a week of switching over to Frontline Absence & Time, their fill rate shot up to an astonishing 99%.

Additionally, growing dissatisfaction with the professional growth learning system led the district to transition to Frontline Professional Growth in the spring. After first testing it with a group of 100 new teachers, they launched the new system district-wide. They have been thrilled with the increased visibility into the efficacy of their professional learning, and are able link evaluations with relevant professional development.

"We had our full rollout for every single summer PD, and we offered over 130 classes. I had zero issues with enrollment, with taking attendance, with switching out people, with adding people."

– Joni Burkhart, Coordinator, Professional Development and Evaluation



District Background

LOCATION: Hagerstown, MD

K-12 ENROLLMENT: 22,545

FACILITIES: 45

26 elementary schools (grades Pre-K-5)

7 middle schools (grades 6-8)

9 high schools (grades 9-12)

3 special programs (grades K-12)

STAFF:

Certified staff: 1,766

Classified staff: 1,179

Administrators: 218

DEMOGRAPHICS:

5% of Washington County students report a home language other than English and identify over 17 different primary languages.

Caucasian/White: 68.17%

Asian: 2.3%

Hispanic: 8.4%

African-American/Black: 13.12%

American Indian/Alaskan Native

American: 0.13%

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 0.07%

Solutions Used

Frontline Absence & Time

Frontline Recruiting & Hiring

Frontline Professional Growth

The Solution:

The superintendent's motto is, "Students first in everything you do, students first, students first."

Frontline is proud to partner with WCPS in putting students first. Frontline Recruiting & Hiring helps the district bring great educators into the district. Frontline Absence & Time ensures that when a teacher can't be present, a qualified substitute is available to support uninterrupted student learning. And Frontline Professional Growth directly affects teacher practice in the classroom by supporting effective learning opportunities and evaluations.

GETTING THE RIGHT TEACHERS INTO CLASSROOMS

The HR team depends on Frontline Recruiting & Hiring to evaluate candidates and make applications available for principals to review. As candidates are interviewed, the results are stored in the system, visible to principals but not applicants. Frontline has customized the notes section, allowing administrators to set up search parameters. By narrowing down the list of applicants to those with specific qualifications, principals can easily find the best candidates for each opening.

As soon as a candidate accepts a position, HR uses Frontline's system to send out new-hire packets. All the forms are completed before new employees come in to sign contracts, shaving 45 minutes off the process for each person. That adds up to huge time savings for the HR staff.

Since Frontline Recruiting & Hiring was so easy to use and did not require extensive training, it provided a positive model when it came to deciding whether to try Frontline's solutions for employee absence management and professional growth.

MANAGING TEACHER ABSENCES

Just after the school year began in the fall, Washington County schools struggled with low substitute fill rates, declining from 95% to between 87% and 82%. Technical glitches prevented substitutes from accessing the system to accept jobs and teachers were often unable to enter absences into the system.

Since the launch of Frontline Absence & Time early in the spring semester, the substitute fill rate has consistently stayed close to 99%. The increase is due largely to the ability of substitutes to easily search and accept available jobs rather than having to monitor a stream of early-morning phone calls.

Ms. Darr said the absence management system is so intuitive and straightforward that she doesn't need to spend time training groups of employees how to use it. She simply points employees to the help button on the right-hand corner of the screen and has them watch the videos on how to use it.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LEADS TO STUDENT SUCCESS

When the professional development team used their previous system, setting up courses and reports was a tedious, time-consuming and often confusing process. Course evaluations provided limited data for administrators and were not used consistently.

As soon as Frontline Professional Growth went live, in-district instructors were quickly trained on how to create activities, confirm attendance and include workshop/course evaluations. Frontline Professional Growth auto-generates course numbers, eliminating confusion and resulting in far more accurate reports. And with the touch of a button, administrators can see which teachers have completed classes and how professional learning ties into their classroom observations.

"Any time you say to principals that we're going to change something, you always have a little bit of anxiety. Now since we have been through it, they are able to look up all of this data – they absolutely love the system."

– Joni Burkhart

Ms. Burkhart and her team use reports from Professional Learning Management to share insights on teacher participation and feedback regarding activities. Reports are easily customized, and data can be broken down by school building or other criteria and shared with district leadership and building administrators. A new emphasis on the effectiveness of professional learning has set a cultural shift in motion within the district, creating direct links from the classes teachers participate in to the evidence of implementation in their

classrooms. And teachers can select recommended courses based on their needs, connecting their professional learning with classroom performance.

"It's becoming a normal process for everybody to schedule, complete, do and evaluate PD and then implement and follow up. When you can get that, then student learning becomes your priority, which is totally different than how we've done PD before because we didn't have the tools."

– Joni Burkhart

Teachers and specialists use the online system to share or recommend professional learning activities to other teachers. Instructors use the evaluation results to keep district and building leadership informed regarding which professional learning activities participants found most valuable. They can gain insights that guide content adjustments or develop follow-up activities based on that teacher feedback. The superintendent has been actively involved in the process and depends on weekly reports to inform him on the effectiveness of the district's professional growth model.

Ms. Burkhart was surprised when, shortly after Frontline Professional Growth was launched, a report showing the presenter's evaluation results showed up on the superintendent's desk the day after her class was completed. Thrilled with the positive feedback and feeling empowered, the presenter was eager to share her success with district leaders.

"You can customize the system to meet your needs, so it works for your building and your teachers."

– Joni Burkhart

In Professional Learning Management, users can choose different views – from a holistic view down to individual teachers. The Employee Evaluation Management tool is just as versatile. Administrators can schedule an observation or just drop in, and use the tool to focus on a single domain or all of them. They can run their own reports and edit their work to make corrections throughout the process, adding a sense of personalization to the system.

"With Frontline Professional Growth, you're able to innovate, create and sustain your practices. Because the technology is so good, it's creating people who are more aware of what they're doing in a process-oriented way, which is making them better at their jobs."

– Joni Burkhart

Not only are professional learning opportunities more easily evaluated and documented, but evaluation data about teachers has become more accessible. Teachers have electronic access to their observation and evaluations, increasing their awareness of the critical attributes their evaluators are looking for. At the same time, administrators are becoming better observers and scoring more accurately.

CULTURE SHIFT

"People have gotten so used to the observation and evaluation tools, it's become part of what they do every day. They're ready to go, and the system has just become normal. It's how we do business now. Frontline is a part of everything that we do here."

– Joni Burkhart

Being directly involved with the oversight of the professional growth program, the superintendent focuses on his message of "Students first" and opens discussions by asking how each learning opportunity for teachers translates to improving student growth. As beginning teachers advance their ratings from basic to proficient throughout the school year, he is pleased to share their successes.

Excited about the improvements already taking place, Ms. Burkhart is looking forward to expanding the district's teacher evaluation program with Frontline's Collaboration & Coaching application. Mentors will work with first-year teachers to reflect on their practice and view video clips of master teachers demonstrating specific instructional practices. As teachers continue to enhance their instructional skills, the students in Washington County School District are sure to be well-prepared for the future.



About Frontline Education

Frontline Education is an integrated insights partner serving more than **12,000 K-12** organizations and millions of educators, administrators and support personnel in their efforts to develop the next generation of learners. With more than 20 years of experience serving the front line of education, Frontline Education provides actionable intelligence and insights that enable informed decisions and drive engagement across school systems. Bringing together the best education software solutions

into one unified platform, Frontline is pioneering a human capital management approach that meets the unique needs of education. The Frontline Insights Platform makes it possible to efficiently and effectively manage the administrative needs of the education community with solutions including Frontline Recruiting & Hiring, Frontline Absence & Time, Frontline Professional Growth and Frontline Special Ed & Interventions.