Case Study: Lake County Schools Modernizes Their Absence Management with Red Rover

About Lake County Schools

Lake County Schools is the 18th largest public school district in the state of Florida, serving approximately 47,000 students and 6,000 employees at more than 50 learning sites. Their mission is to provide every student with individual opportunities to excel. The district aims to be a dynamic, progressive, and collaborative learning community where every student will graduate with the skills needed to succeed in post-secondary education and the workplace.

Overview

In today's dynamic educational landscape, managing teacher absences efficiently is crucial to ensuring smooth classroom operations. This case study delves into the experience of a district's transition from a conventional absence management system to Red Rover, a modern and user-friendly solution.

Lake County Schools, a prominent district in central Florida, faced significant challenges with its previous absence management system. The system's complexity and lack of user-friendliness resulted in inefficiencies and increased administrative burdens. The district was aware that they needed a more streamlined and intuitive solution—one that would empower teachers, substitutes, and administrative staff alike.
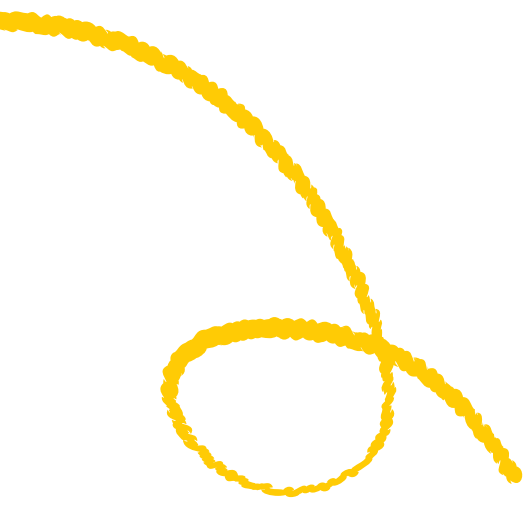
Jamie West, the district's Non-Instructional Recruitment Partner, joined Lake County as an HR specialist three and a half years ago, in the summer after COVID. Her current responsibilities include overseeing substitute management, most notably the Grow Your Own program that helps substitutes transition into full-time teachers. "It's one of my things that I really love doing," she says. West also recruits and trains for non-instructional roles such as bus drivers, food service workers, custodial teacher assistants, and more.

At the time when West first joined the district, "We did not have a person managing the substitute system, because we didn't have substitutes in the classroom—there was nobody really in the classrooms at that time! And so when I came in, I needed to hit the ground running and create a system," she recalls.

And, she adds, "at the time, the absence management system we were using was very complex. It wasn't user-friendly."

West had previously been a substitute teacher herself, and had personal experience with the software that the district was using. From the substitute's perspective, she "knew what it looked like to be able to log in, pick up jobs, decline jobs, put in days off, things like that." Thus, she was even more keenly aware of the current system's limitations. West decided to seek a new, modern solution that would be user-friendly for everyone—HR administrators, school secretaries, teachers, and subs.

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Non-Instructional
Recruitment Partner
Lake County Schools

The Transition to Red Rover

Faced with the limitations of the older system, the district undertook an evaluation of available solutions. Red Rover emerged as the preferred choice due to its impressive features, user-friendly design, and robust customer support. The decision to transition to Red Rover was driven by its promise of enhanced communication, automation, and efficiency.

West elected to do a mid-year transition in January of 2023, so that she could push the data and make the changeover happen seamlessly over a long holiday weekend. "It was smarter for us to do it in the middle of the school year, so that way the teachers and the school staff were not so bombarded with learning like five different pieces of software at once [during back to school]. That's too much. Pre-planning is already stressful enough."

The transition went quickly, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. For some, West says, it was "an adjustment, which is [the case for] any new software." No one, however, wanted to return to the antiquated system they had been using.

Key Features and Benefits

Red Rover introduced a range of features that immediately resonated with the district's needs and priorities:

User-Friendly Interface: "Red Rover's intuitive interface was a breath of fresh air," says West. With its straightforward navigation and minimal learning curve, "teachers and substitutes quickly embraced the new platform."

Mobile App: The mobile app included with Red Rover provided teachers and substitutes with unparalleled flexibility. They could now manage assignments, accept jobs, and communicate on the go, streamlining the entire process. The prior software used by the district did not have an intuitive notification system, and the app for subs required a paid subscription. "Subs don't like that," says West. I wanted to make their lives easier."

Automated Notifications: Red Rover's automated notifications transformed communication for Lake County. Schools and substitutes alike benefited from real-time alerts, reducing response times and minimizing disruptions.

Data Analytics and Reporting: The platform's robust reporting capabilities allowed schools to generate fill rate reports and gain insights into absence trends. This data-driven approach empowered schools in the district to make informed decisions. "My number one favorite thing is the data—the analytic and reporting settings that they have," says West. "For so long, schools weren't able to go in and pull their own fill rate reports. That wasn't a capability that we could access [with the former system]. Now they're able to pull reports at the school level, and you can clone those reports and share them."

Verification of Absences: Red Rover's feature requiring teachers to verify absences introduced much greater accuracy into the payroll process. The improved data quality had a direct impact on efficiency.

Integration with Existing Systems: Red Rover's seamless integration with the district's existing systems, such as ClassLink, enabled effortless single sign-on access, further streamlining operations. It also integrates with Skyward, which Lake County uses for payroll processing.

Improved Payroll Efficiency: "The reduction in manual transactions through Red Rover significantly streamlined payroll processing, translating to saved time and improved accuracy," says West.

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Workflow and Efficiency Improvements

Red Rover catalyzed several workflow and efficiency improvements within the district:

Time Saved: Tasks that used to take a full day, such as payroll processing, have been whittled down to an hour or so. "It's really nice how quick it is...it saves hours and hours and hours twice a month," says West. "I mean, that adds up—and it keeps you from doing other things."

Reduced Call Volume: The system's user-friendly design and improved communication resulted in a substantial decrease in calls from schools seeking assistance.

Enhanced Communication: Red Rover's reliability and ease of use fostered better communication between schools and substitutes, ultimately leading to improved classroom operations.

School Training: Schools within the district were now empowered to independently manage absence assignments and training, reducing the need for district-level involvement.

Downtime Prevention: Red Rover's minimal downtime ensured uninterrupted operations, a notable contrast to the district's previous experiences.

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About Red Rover

Red Rover's modern, intuitive absence management and time tracking solutions simplify and improve life for administrators, employees, substitutes, and students.

To learn more, visit RedRoverK12.com or call us at (717) 897-6837.

Exceptional Customer Service

Lake County has been impressed with the overall level of customer service from Red Rover. West appreciates the fact that she can reach out via email, phone, or live chat and receive answers from an authentic human being in a timely manner. In the chat, she can always see where she is in the queue, and can also attach a name and a face to the customer service representative who is handling her inquiry.

"The fact that they are so customer-centric has helped with implementation... if they don't have the answer, they will figure it out and get back to you as quickly as they can, which I really respect," says West.

In a few instances, she says, the representative has indicated that they need to consult with someone internally to solve the issue. But "literally within an hour, I'll receive an email about whatever the process is or whatever needs to be changed," she says. "So it's been really, really helpful."

Conclusion

The transition from a conventional, outdated absence management system to Red Rover proved to be a turning point for Lake County Schools. Red Rover's innovation, ease of use, and efficiency enhancements revolutionized absence management, creating a seamless experience for teachers, substitutes, and administrative staff alike. With its dynamic features and commitment to excellence, Red Rover has redefined how absence management contributes to the success of a district.

When West describes Red Rover, three key words come to mind: Innovative. Intuitive. Modern. She says, "It's really nice to be able to have a system that is not only budget friendly, but well worth every single penny that we paid for it."