



A dedicated on-site recruiting resource

High referrals drive quality and cost savings through a unique on-site staffing program with a district.

The remote Bemidji Area Schools serve the city of Bemidji, Minnesota, with a population of roughly 13,500, plus its nearby communities and rural areas. For years, the school system has relied on Kelly Educational Staffing® (KES®) to deliver an exceptionally unique workforce solution model—featuring a dedicated local resource on-site to manage its substitute teacher pool and to help staff some of the district’s non-instructional roles.

The challenge

Bemidji is deemed the “first city on the Mississippi” and is located on the northernmost lake feeding the Mississippi River, near the Canadian border. The rural school district serves about 5,500 students through 15 schools. Before contracting with KES, substitute teacher placement rates across the district were low—potentially leaving some classrooms without teachers and impacting student achievement.

Retaining and managing a reliable workforce was challenging the district, in part due to its remote location in a somewhat economically disadvantaged area, and partially because the state requires that substitute teachers have a bachelor’s degree. As a regional hub and the largest commercial center in north central Minnesota, the town is host to Bemidji State University and other institutions, but most of those students are not yet qualified—leaving a comparatively small pool of talent for the district.

Results at a Glance

CHALLENGE

- District with 15 schools/5,500+ students in a remote regional hub
- 350+ active teachers, but a relatively small pool of talent for the district
- Demand for degreed substitute teachers impacting placement rates

SOLUTION

- Full-service staffing program to manage ~175 substitute teachers
- Dedicated local resource on-site for effective network; 60% referrals
- Expansion to staffing for certain non-instructional district employees

RESULT

- Improved substitute teacher placement rates to 99+% for 4,600+ teacher absences yearly
- Converted six KES substitute teachers to full-time employees last year
- Converted 20 other non-instructional roles to full-time, saving more costs



The solution

To effectively meet the unique needs of Bemidji schools, Kelly Educational Staffing recommended a solution that deployed its quality substitute teacher management program and featured a dedicated resource on-site to drive more efficient operations to the rural system. KES assigned the job to a proven employee who was also born and raised in the Bemidji area.

A full-service workforce solution was deployed—including recruitment, hiring, payroll, scheduling, on-boarding, and management of HR issues, such as workers' compensation. Personal attention from the KES regional and area managers helped to ensure oversight of an ongoing quality solution for the system. But the distinctive outlook of the local KES manager as a resident—already well-embedded and networked into the small-town culture—allowed Kelly Educational Staffing to truly customize the program to fit Bemidji's needs and bring day-to-day service excellence.

The program's recruiting tactics are designed to work within its rural community structure. The Bemidji Area Schools are already recognized with a great local employment brand, so new sourcing activities have introduced more direct referrals—as high as 60 percent of all sources—from school employees and local businesses. More formal relationships were then established with Bemidji State University and Northwest Technical College to stay better integrated in those local recruiting and referral networks.

The result

KES recognized early that the Bemidji school system would ideally require a specialized solution, so the team implemented a program that capitalized on some of its challenges. By bringing untapped sources of new substitute teachers into its supply, the local KES on-site manager now oversees a pool of 171 available certified substitute teachers to administer a workforce of 369 active Bemidji teachers.

Last year, the program covered more than 4,600 teacher absences with an average substitute teacher placement rate of higher than 99 percent. The same pool also offers the Bemidji schools an economical way to introduce new full-time teaching talent to the district. Last year, it converted six KES substitute teachers to full-time employees, saving the district related recruitment costs.

After several years, Bemidji also expanded the on-site program to encompass placement for other non-instructional district employees—from paraprofessionals and playground paraprofessionals, to custodial and food service personnel, to school nurses. Last year alone, the district converted 20 of those non-certified workers to full-time employees, saving even more expenses. Each new category of skill sets added has contributed more efficiency to Bemidji school operations and more cost savings to the district's bottom line.

THE BEMIDJI AREA SCHOOLS HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR NOTED:

"Bemidji Area Schools have partnered with Kelly Educational Staffing for substitute resources for approximately nine years. The KES team's on-site presence has been the key to the ongoing success of our collaboration."

—Jordan Hickman, Director of Human Resources, Bemidji Area Schools

For more information on how Kelly Educational Staffing can help meet your demand for more effective workforce solutions, contact your local KES branch or visit kellyeducationalstaffing.com today.