

# LR 130

Thursday September 14, 2017

Education Committee

105<sup>th</sup> Legislature

Interim study to  
examine issues  
related to the use of  
substitute teachers

## **LR 130 Introduction**

Introduced by Groene, 42; Ebke, 32; Erdman, 47; Friesen, 34; Linehan, 39.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to examine issues related to the use of substitute teachers. The study shall focus on when and why substitute teachers are used, the use of substitute teachers due to sabbaticals or professional development activities and conference attendance by certificated teachers, how frequently substitute teachers are used for various purposes, the fiscal impact of using substitute teachers, and the relationship between collective bargaining agreements and the use of substitute teachers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Education Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.
2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.

## **Intent of the Resolution**

We introduced Legislative Resolution (LR) 130: an Education Committee study to examine issues related to the use and availability of substitute teachers.

Last year, Senator Erdman's LB568 in the Education Committee and Senator Kolterman's LB415 in the Retirement Committee brought to our attention policy issues concerning substitute teachers in our state's public-schools.

When introducing LR130, I started with the premise that teachers want to teach and they take pride in their classroom results. They would prefer to be in the classroom! Therefore, the questions we posed were intended to identify ways: 1) to maximize teachers' time in the classroom? 2) To assure that there is smooth transition in the classroom from teacher to substitute? 3) To identify policy changes to help lower last year's \$35 million statewide cost for substitute teachers?

Believing that the real-life experiences of local school superintendents were the best source of background information, we sent out a questionnaire to all public school district superintendents and we received responses from forty-seven school districts. At the hearing, we invited testimony from school organizations: Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA), Educational Service Units (ESUs), Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), and the Department of Education (NDE).

When asked how many days teachers are absent from the classroom, the answer was on average 10.5 to 12 days. Life does happen and as expected, illness and the federal Family

Medical Leave Act (FMLA) (up to 12 weeks) accounted for over 50% of the absence from the classroom. Other major reasons were: continued education requirements for certified teachers for professional development and training for state mandates on assessments, curriculum, student testing, school safety, and standard reviews. Also attributed were new training requirements for numerous state edicts, as examples; suicide awareness, bullying prevention, date rape prevention, restraint and seclusion, and concussion protocol.

The trend towards teacher contracts allowing for personal days instead of sick leave and family emergencies was also mentioned as a reason for increased teacher absences.

When asked if NSAA high school activities were a major factor for demand of substitute teachers, the answer was no: those events are mostly scheduled around school days. Some isolated rural districts were affected by travel time to events. Also mentioned were, an increase in junior high activities and all-day club activities of Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA).



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Senator Mike Groene, District 42

## Questions Posed to Public School Superintendents

Dear Superintendents,

This year, Education Committee Chairman Senator Groene introduced LR130—an interim study to be conducted by the Education Committee to examine the increase in need for substitute teachers. As we continue to research this topic, in order to set the agenda for the hearing on Thursday September 14, we are asking for feedback from you on the following:

3. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?
  - Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?
  - Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?
  - What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?
  
2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?
  - What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?
  - What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?
  - Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?
  
3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Please do not hesitate to share any other observations you may have on this issue. We look forward to your reply.

**Responses to Questions Posed**

## Arlington

What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

🗨️ Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

a) The data that I collected from the past school year is fairly indicative of a "normal" year of absences for us.

The data indicates that:

51% of absences is due to illness of self or family (includes maternity)

17% school sponsored activity (includes NSAA)

14% professional development

11% Personal leave

(all other categories <2%)

Essentially, 51% we have little or no control over and the 11% personal is tied to the negotiated agreement. We could "negotiate" some control over "personal leave" but that would be difficult to achieve.

I would like to note that we do "define" our sick leave and I think that tends to limit absences as compared to a PTO leave configuration.

Persons in the education business (in our district anyway) are typically honest people and they don't take sick leave unless they need it for that purpose.

BUT, if they were given PTO (rather than sick) they would likely use it as it has been afforded to them absent restrictions.

🗨️ Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

b) Of the 17% that is coded to school sponsored activity..... 35% of those absences (50/139) are not NSAA activities but things like SKILLS USA, FFA, FBLA, swing choir trips, band trips, class related field trips, HAL extension activities, quiz bowl events.

🗨️ What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

c) We do not track which percentage of the 14% professional development is mandated by NDE and/or are a result of legislative requirements.

I do know that some of our staff training is as a result of NDE initiatives and legislative requirements.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

🗨️ What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

a) For everything BUT activities and professional leave.....  $537/50 = 10.7$  average absences per FTE teacher.

For JUST activities and professional leave.....  $260/50 = 5.2$  average absences per FTE teacher.

TOTAL .....  $797/50 = 15.9$  average absences per FTE teacher

🗨️ What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

.05%

🗨️ Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

c) 12% of the absences did not result in a substitute being hired. Some of that is because an administrator or other internal person will cover it and a substitute is not needed. That MAY be because we could not find a substitute so this was the only option remaining but not necessarily the option we desired. We do not track how often that happens.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

I don't have any ready answers for this right now. The requirements help to assure that we get quality persons working with our students. Because of our proximity to urban areas, I do not 'know' persons and want some assurance that substitutes have met some minimal competency requirements (i.e. Bachelor degree).

The local substitute option has opened up some doors for additional substitutes.

## Arnold-Callaway

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Many of my teachers in both of my schools are nearing retirement, and with age comes health issues. I have 4 teachers in five years that have needed extended periods of absence for joint replacements, and my younger staff are taking maternity leaves. In between those age groups, teachers miss school for many other reasons. Some bank their PTO time and take vacations in the middle of the year, because that is when their spouses (farmers and ranchers) are able to travel. Others take time to care for sick children or aging parents. Other miss a lot due to activities (athletic and academic).



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

I believe more staff members miss now than when I began my administrative career nine years ago. I feel like some of my teachers are much less concerned, and more willing to request days off for no real reason, and when they are taking PTO or personal time, we cannot ask them for a legitimate excuse for being gone, and we aren't allowed to tell them "no" because they are contractually entitled to take that time off.



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

I am less concerned with NSAA activities (most of those are evenings and weekends) than I am with FCCLA and FFA. Those activities take teachers out of classrooms (and students as well) much more frequently than NSAA activities. I feel like the NSAA respects the school day.



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

I do not feel that legislative activity or NDE requirement have had a tremendous impact on teachers time in or out of the classroom for PD.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Union contracts are the primary concern that I have with the amount of days our teachers are gone. NSEA has encouraged our staff to ask for PTO days rather than sick, personal, and professional, and now staff members are much more likely to try and exhaust all of their PTO days than they ever did when we only had sick, personal, and professional. I believe that teachers take an average of five more days off per year under PTO than they did previously. If you could somehow introduce legislation to make it unlawful for teachers to utilize "PTO" (paid time off) which is non-specific in nature, problem solved. It aggravates me since the teachers already receive extended PTO in the name of summer vacation.



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

In one of my schools, the average amount of days off requested is 12 (this is the PTO contract school). In my other district that does not have PTO, but only the traditional leaves available to them, the average is closer to 5 days off per year.



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

District #1, 6.5% of contract is missed due to leave; District #2, 2.7% of contract is missed due to leave.





Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We attempt to find a sub for every teacher when they are gone, but due to our experienced shortage, I estimate we can only find coverage about 80% of the time. The other 20% is covered in house when possible.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Reduce the amount of time that a teacher needs to sit out after retiring so we can access our retired teachers earlier. I have three possible subs that we cannot use until January. The worst thing that could happen to my two small districts right now would be an increase that wait period to three years, which was up for discussion last year, as I recall. That would obliterate my pool of subs.

Otherwise, I am NOT a proponent of reducing the requirements to high school only diploma to qualify for a sub certificate even on a limited basis. There does need to be some training and some postsecondary education in order to fill this role for us. We require more education of that from our Paras, so reducing that threshold would be a very bad thing in my opinion.

We are working hard to use our technology resources to make it possible for a sub to cover for more than one teacher at a time, and that has potential for us. Honestly, the problem is the same in rural Nebraska just as it is with declining enrollment. We do not have enough people in our communities. Working with rural economic development to grow our population is actually the answer to most of our problems.

## Auburn

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

🎬 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Teacher absences are due primarily to illness and NDE mandates / professional development

🎬 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

No - our AD does a good job of scheduling so this does not have a huge impact.

🎬 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

NDE mandates are huge - the vast majority of professional development training occurs during the school year.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

🎬 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

Approximately 6 days per year

🎬 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

3%

🎬 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We don't track this but I would estimate that the vast majority are covered by a sub (90% perhaps).


3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Allow retired teachers to sub!!!! They are by far the most qualified to do this and most of them have the time.

## Bancroft Rosalie

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?


Illness, personal leave, professional development/training, and school activities would account for nearly all of our teacher absences. Maternity leave is the most difficult to fill.

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

More workshops and activities are being scheduled during the school day.

 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes. The NSAA did a survey of schools a few years ago and the results showed that FFA and other non-NSAA activities took students away from school more than NSAA events. My suggestion is that no sporting events other than state championship contests start before 1:00 pm (not sure how that would effect Western schools who have to travel).

 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?


New teacher orientation training (4 days); special education training for teachers (4 half days); Assessment workshops (2-3 days). The last two are to keep teachers up to date with school requirements. Not all teachers go, but we have to send some.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?


Sick and personal days are used when needed. I have no reason to believe anyone uses sick days that are not necessary. Some schools have went to discretionary days rather than sick days, which I believe will lead to more teacher absenteeism.

 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

We have 27 teachers. They missed 145.5 days for sick and personal leave. We did not track absences for school activities or professional development in our software program.

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

It would average to be 6-8 days.

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We hire substitutes for elementary teachers, industrial arts and physical education. All other teachers are expected to have their lessons on our school management system (Canvas) and students report to the media center to do their work. This system works well for us because we have a large media center that can hold up to 60 students.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

The current system that allows local substitute certificates has provided a good supply. Allow local subs to be able to work as much as needed, rather than limiting them to 90 days. It would also help if that person did not have to get a separate certificate for each school they want to substitute at. Can't one certificate work for more than one school?

Allowing retired teachers to sub without limitations right away after they retire would also be nice. Not sure why this is seen as a problem.

## Bellevue

Question #1: What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

1a. Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The rate of absenteeism for teachers in Bellevue Public Schools has remained fairly consistent over the past several years. However, despite this trend our district continues to struggle to acquire substitutes to meet our classroom needs on a daily basis as the pool substitute teachers in the metro area continues to decrease.

1b. Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

NSAA day events and the subsequent teacher absences for coaches and sponsors do not create a significant burden for Bellevue Public Schools, particularly when balanced against the significant benefit to students who participation in NSAA activities.

1c. What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Laws, rules, and regulations (state and federal) create challenges for time management among classroom teachers. Mandates and best practice efforts to ensure student well-being, such as an hour (or more) of suicide awareness training, bullying prevention, date rape prevention, suspension, exclusion and behavior management training, concussion protocols, and drills for bus safety, fire, tornado, lock down/lock out, etc. are necessary, but often require teacher time for planning, training, and communication.

Questions #2 How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

The Bellevue Public Schools negotiated agreement provides a combined total of 10 accumulating days of sick and personal leave per school year encouraging an accumulation of leave days.

2a. What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

In 2016/2017, the average number of days a teacher was absent was 13.9 days. This total would include both personal and professional reasons.

2b. What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

The above absences would have teachers absent from their classrooms approximately 7% of their 188 contract days.

2c. Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Bellevue Public Schools filled 95.2% of the substitute required absences during the 2016/2017 school year. This means that during the course of the school year, the district had 441 substitute required jobs for which the district was unable to secure a substitute. In those instances, a school would have to resort to a "Plan B" approach to cover the teacher's classroom with another certified staff member.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

We would suggest a reduction to the NPERS sit-out period for new retirees from 180 calendar days to 30 calendar days after the start of the new school year before the teacher is allowed work in a school on a

non-contractual basis (this would demonstrate a “break in service”). The knowledge and skills a retiree brings to a classroom are without compare and make them a valuable source from which to attract substitute teachers. Many retirees want to work occasionally because they still love students and the work. They retire because they no longer have the stamina to work all-day every-day all year long, or they need to be available for family members more often than a full-time job allows. We need to get the new retirees into our substitute teacher pools before they fill their newly found extra time with other activities.

## Bertrand

-Hello Senator Groene, Isn't it hard to believe that the year has started and you will be in session in the not too distant future? I put together some "fairly accurate" numbers for our 25.5 certified staff. Due to the many high needs SPED students our small school also employs 10 full time para professionals of which 6 are 1-1 with those SPED students. I'm sure you can see why budgeting is very difficult. I hope these numbers are a bit helpful.

I looked at the different reasons our teachers miss work and put them into 3 categories. 1..Sick/Personal 2... Meetings/trainings...and 3) school activities.

At Bertrand last year our teachers were absent for +/- 290 collective days. Remember, several of my 25 teachers missed 0 days. The 290 days equals about 6.7% and 11.37 of 169 days missed per teacher. With health issues where a teacher may miss 20+ days of school this percentage isn't too bad.

Ok...a little disaggregation now. Of the collective days missed 45% of the days were for sickness and personal days. 42% of the days were due to meetings and trainings for school improvement, academic training, and of course training for assessments/AQUEEST, etc. Only 13% of the days missed were due to activity absences. We cover for a period here and there for teacher/coaches missing to travel but that would not skew the numbers that much. It looks like Golf/Track/FFA take a large proportion of the 13%.

Senator, I am not as young as I used to be and am now 58. I have taught, coached, swept floors, mowed , been a guidance counselor, principal, superintendent, etc. Fairly diverse experience. I can tell you that when I taught in 1982-1991 and coached the only days I missed were for 2-3 track meet days and a day for the flu. We weren't hammered on assessments/school improvement/etc. To be honest, our school in Kansas put out great kids; some became doctors with almost everyone graduating. If you want to know what the change is? Legislative mandates that truly require that we take time to train our people as well as the 5 year school improvement process. I can tell you that we schedule a late start once per month to try to lessen the need for teachers to miss work but it is a demanding process that takes....time. Now we are attempting to comprehend AQUESST and that will also require training. Senator, it seems like there are always needs for more and more training.

I think it is interesting that a few decades ago I felt that I was somewhat successful teaching and coaching and we didn't miss many days. The demands from the legislature and department of education have had HUGE impacts on how we run schools, the curriculum offered, and days missed to attempt to meet the demands placed on us.

Senator, take my data with a grain of salt as I put it together quickly but I felt you deserved a bit of what we face. Meetings and trainings accounted for over 122 teacher days missed last year (or .72 FTE) There are times I get upset with the days missed due to the few activities that teachers are absent for but at least they are "with" students. Meetings and trainings are indirect and usually due to a mandate from above that we are attempting to understand and meet the requirements.

Now. What to do about all of this. Over the past 35 years education (my timeframe) has moved from very few mandates from the legislature/NDE to where we are now. How to solve the direction this is all headed? I don't know. This is really just the tip of the iceberg....there are so many issues under the water that is scares me. I have other observations from over the years but won't bore you with any of that jargon.

## Burwell

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

The three main reasons teachers are absent from school at Burwell Public Schools: 1) Medical which includes teacher or family illness and medical appointments; 2) School sponsored activities will often take teachers out of the classroom as they coach or sponsor activities. These activities include a wide range of activities (sports, FFA, FCCLA, etc.); 3) Professional Development is the next main reason our teachers are missing school.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

At Burwell Public Schools the teachers and board of education negotiate how many days of school teachers can take off and still get paid. It has been my perception that teachers have been able to negotiate more flexibility in how they use the various types of leave. When teachers are gone from school, we try and hire a substitute teacher to fill in during their absence.

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom? 7.21 average.

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms? 8.65%

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?


100 percent. We pay teachers to fill in for teachers during their plan periods if we cannot hire a substitute teacher.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Some of the changes that have been made the last couple of years have been beneficial i.e. local substitute certificates, letting individuals with 60 hours of college credit apply to become substitute teachers. Those type of programs are very helpful.

## Central City


1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Recent history has not increased teacher absenteeism from the classroom. However, life does happen (major illness, babies, life events).

 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

We work diligently to protect classroom time. NSAA events play a factor in teachers missing on occasion, but far less than other groups (FFA, DECA, etc.)


 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?


Professional development events do impact absenteeism. ESU developments, seminars, clinics tend to all be during the school year. We have scheduled more summer training events as a district with stipends, but we need more help from the service units to coordinate better.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

7ish

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Nearly every one.....we have now hired a full-time substitute that is trained in our Math, Language Arts curriculum to minimize teacher absences.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Increasing local sub days was a huge help and needs to be looked at again. Subbing on the 46th or 91st day does not make them bad. Look to expand to 120.



## Clarkson

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Most of our teachers missed days come from maternity leave, sick children, bereavement or major medical situations. Teachers are pretty good about scheduling appointments in the later afternoon or early morning so if any school is missed it is just one period. The other major reason for missed days in Professional Development opportunities where teachers attend. Personally I encourage our staff members to take two or three days of Professional Development days outside what we do here at school.

Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Ours has been pretty consistent over the years.

Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

No not really. With 1:1 systems in place in our school those issues have really disappeared over the years. 10-15 years ago this was a lot bigger factor then it is in education today. BlendED and technology have allowed teachers to work with students in these situations. There are schools who are starting to use BlendED for snow days now so this is a trend that will become more prevalent in the future.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Most of the mandates of Professional Development are now manageable with Pre-Days and in-service days throughout the year.

To me the biggest problem area that I see is the increased bureaucracy and demands put on school systems by both NDE and the Unicameral. Every year there are more demands/requirements that schools need to be deal with. All of these new demands/requirements take away time and resources from teachers and district administrators from educating students. In the past couple of years I have witnessed some quality teachers and administrators retire earlier due to the increased load put on them by NDE and the Unicameral, this trend needs to stop, especially with the increased budget restrictions put on state schools along with our current agricultural situation.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

Our average has been around 11 days per FTE for the past two years. Those numbers are a little skewed considering we have had three maternity leaves and two teachers who have had breast cancer during this time. The maternity leaves are something that is common across schools and needs to be taken into consideration when looking at data.

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

9% but again those numbers are skewed by major life events.

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

About 75% are covered by substitute, the rest are covered internally by other staff members.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

More training for people who meet Local Sub Certificates requirements and increasing the amount of days they are allowed to substitute. Our best substitute teacher is limited on days because of this and if you use them in long term sub situations for maternity leaves it hinders you the rest of the year.

Also try not to put long restrictions or time periods on retired teachers being they are allowed to substitute teach. I know some members are the Unicameral are worried about teachers being able to retire and then come back into the workforce but when they start to look at putting restrictions on retired teachers being able to substitute teach and you force schools to put less qualified people into the classroom it only hurts the students and the educational process. It simply makes no sense.

## Crete

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Given that we have an overall young staff, the majority of our absenteeism is due to illness of the employee, the employee's child or children, or maternity leave. It seems at CPS we are in a baby-cycle and that has increased our days and use of substitute teachers.



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The trend is increased days of using a substitute, but again, the majority of the increase in days would be attributed to maternity leave.



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes it plays a factor. We do have some absenteeism due to NSAA events. We also have lost instructional time for FFA and other non-NSAA events.



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

We do use substitutes to complete committee work. That committee may be working on a new curriculum to meet the standards, learning more about the direction of ESSA, or working on best practices of instructional techniques.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

The Negotiated Agreement can cause an issue of "use it lose it days", especially with personal leave. There is a cap on the number of accumulating days and staff may use a day so they do not lose it. I will say this is a minor issue to no issue at all in overall absenteeism in CPS.



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

12 days, but I am only estimating. The overall average number of days per teacher will be skewed by the number of maternity leave days. I have eight more potential maternity leaves for 2017-2018 school year.



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

12 days is 6.6% of the student contact days.



Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Whether we hire a substitute or use a teacher planning periods to cover a class, 90%+ of the absences will use a substitute.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

## David City

1. We are seeing more teacher and employee absences. Some of it is due to NSAA activities but more often it is training that teachers need or are required to attend per federal or state mandates. We are always trying to stay in compliance which always means more meetings and time out of the buildings for both teachers and admin. Special ed continues to get more complex every year but so do 504 plans and the SAT process and interventions and state standards and assessments are forever evolving. And then you add crisis team training, standard response protocol (SRP) training, suicide prevention training, dating violence training, cyber bullying/social media training, response to intervention training, PBis training, school improvement training, 504 training, SAT training, return to learn/concussion training, return to play/concussion training, CPR/first aid training, technology training, Title I reading training, Marzano training, head coach training in regards to heat days, etc.
2. I do not keep track of average days of absence because it is all over the board. New staff with young children are gone more than older veterans typically because their kids get sick. Teachers get 10 sick days and 3 personal days a year and some use all of them but others do not use a single day. All absences are covered by sub teachers unless it is just a period or two and then we ask staff to cover.
3. The pool is shrinking every year. If the legislature requires a retired teacher to sit out 3 years before they can come back and sub we would be in trouble. And so would several other schools. They are some of our most reliable subs. In fact, I wish the retirement office would get rid of the 180 sit out rule. Retired teachers do not want to create lesson plans, grade papers, attend meetings, coach/sponsor activities, etc. or any of the other things that go along with a full time job. They like to sub because they can show up a little before 8am and leave by 4pm and pick and choose the days or grade levels/classes they want to work.

## Diller O'Dell

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Workshops and school activities. Only about 20% of our absences last year were sick/personal leave.

Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Little change from year to year

Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Somewhat when it comes to Speech, Play Pro, Music and Track Meets. Other non NSAA activities such as Ag, Quiz Bowl, field trips and workshops add up as well.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

School Improvement and increased workshops are major factors.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Very little here.

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

13.75 days on average in 2016-17

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

7.8% overall for 2016-17

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

95%

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Maybe a substitute course could be created for those with less than 60 hours.

## Dorchester:

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

- Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?
- Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?
- What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Professional development opportunities. We cannot afford to bring in trainers or speakers, but can send 1-2 staff to conferences/workshops. We have our staff share their "learning" with the rest of our staff. However, it is difficult to implement research-based, good teaching (strategies) when we cannot send all our staff to the same training or bring in the training to all staff.

Yes, definitely unfunded (but at times necessary) mandates from Dept. of Education and Legislation requirements has made it difficult to train staff.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

- What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?
- What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?
- Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

I do not see an issue with the union's contract negotiations.

We average 5 absent days per staff.

We get substitute teachers.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

We are fortunate (in our small community) to have plentiful, quality subs.

## Dundy County Stratton

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The trend in absenteeism is definitely upwards

Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

That has not been a factor in the upturn. Standards, assessments and other training type activities have driven the upturn. The largest factor in our absenteeism for activities is geographic and related to time zones. Everywhere we go is either further away by geography or by time. That relates to everything from sports to academic functions.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

The time required for standards, assessment, technology training, curriculum development, behavior training, concussion training, suicide awareness training, bullying policy training, etc do not seem like much individually but as a collective list they certainly add up.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

Our teachers miss an average of 14 days (any portion of a day counted as a full day) per year for all reasons.

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

Our teachers missed an average of 8% of their contract days last year for all reasons.

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We are able to hire a sub 75% of the time when teachers are absent. We always put someone with a license in the room. If an outside sub cannot be found, we pay teachers to cover during their planning periods, if several students are gone from a class or two we try have the teacher cover both classes at the same time, we have aides with sub certificates that can be pulled from their aid duties to be a sub teacher.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

In my opinion we have relaxed the requirements about as much as we can. We used to have teachers who had left the profession to raise a family and others in the community who enjoyed the part time nature of the job to call on. Now they all have (need) regular jobs and we can't provide that. Our next hope is the retired teachers. Please don't remove or limit our ability to use those individuals any more.

## Elkhorn

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

The primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence in Elkhorn Public Schools are FMLA leave and sick leave. As a young teaching staff, many of our teachers are beginning their families and request FMLA as maternity leave and/or take sick leave due to their own children's health.

1a. Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

FMLA and sick leave are the predominant reasons for leave which accounts for 46% of all absences throughout the 2016-2017 school year. We have seen a slight increase in leave due to professional development which could include: building collaboration and special education collaboration focusing on common assessments and interventions, curriculum/school improvement work and essential skills development (Elkhorn's PD initiative). As our staff grows considerably each year, the district makes a concentrated effort to initiate new staff members into our culture through purposeful professional development so that curriculum delivery is consistent across all buildings. Professional development accounted for 20-25% of all absences last year. Personal leave has remained consistent over the years at approximately 11% of absences.

1b. Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

The scheduling of NSAA events affect the number of substitutes available due to the demand of substitutes needed by multiple school districts in the metro area. The events do not significantly increase teacher absenteeism more than what would be anticipated.

1c. What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Attendance rates are not significantly affected by mandates from the Department of Education or legislative requirements. Most requirements (suicide prevention training) can be accomplished during in-service days or before and after school.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

The negotiated contract allows for personal leave to be earned at the rate of 2.5 days. These days can accumulate up to a maximum of 5 days. Sick leave is earned at the rate of 10 days per year cumulative to a total of 60 days. There are specific clarifications listed in the negotiated agreement for both personal and sick leave so that the benefits are applied consistently throughout the district.

2b. What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

The average number of days absent from the classroom is 8. This number includes FMLA absences which are typically long-term absences.

2c. Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Elkhorn had a 97-98% fill rate during the 2016-2017 school year. Although our fill rate is high, our unfilled absences per month provides some clarity at what this looks like on a day to day basis. Many times, unfilled absences are filled by teachers within the school sacrificing a plan period to cover a class, combining classes, or restructuring the day.



August 2016 0 unfilled absences  
September 2016 12 unfilled absences  
October 2016 19 unfilled absences  
November 2016 13 unfilled absences  
December 2016 12 unfilled absences  
January 2017 3 unfilled absences  
February 2017 2 unfilled absences  
March 2017 5 unfilled absences  
April 2017 5 unfilled absences  
May 2017 18 unfilled absences

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

One of the biggest challenges for Elkhorn is the number of retired teachers that would like to substitute but need to wait for 180 days per NPERS. If this waiting period could be reduced, it would be helpful to our districts and our students would have exposure to master substitute teachers.

## Eustis-Farnam:

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

I don't really see a trend as some years teachers remain healthy and other years there is sickness. Also, as with any organization, some teachers generally miss more while others have perfect attendance. So, I don't really see a trend.

Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Not really-we do see a need for increased substitutes during the spring sports season.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

We do require teachers to be gone for some trainings that have come from the top down.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

4.75

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

2.6%

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Most

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

We really don't have a problem finding substitutes except at times, mostly in the spring, when we have activities on the same dates other schools in the area have the same thing or same type of thing going on. For example, an area track meet and many of the school in the area are attending the same meet so everyone is looking substitutes on the same day.

Please do not hesitate to share any other observations you may have on this issue. We look forward to your reply.

I don't see this issue as a really huge problem for our school.

## Falls City

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Primary factors for teacher absenteeism in our district include 1) school sponsored activities; 2) illness; and 3) professional development/training requirements.



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The trend follows the above listed reasons for teacher absenteeism. The trend is fairly consistent year-to-year.



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Teacher training for NeSA State Assessments, State Standards Update, and Curriculum all play a role in teacher absenteeism.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Union Contract negotiations provide for absenteeism form work for illness (10 annually accumulating to 45), professional development (2), and personal days (3). These are benefits provided to all certified faculty via the master contract. Especially in the months of April and May, many teachers choose to use their "personal" days (3), sometimes causing high substitute teacher demand, especially on Fridays. Spring school sponsored activities also play a large role in creating this demand.



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

2.7



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

11%



Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Nearly 100%

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates? It's my opinion the substitute teacher requirements are adequate and should not be changed or lessened. With the use of the "local substitute teacher certificate" the requirements are lean enough. However, we have found it's more about the personal qualities and work ethic that makes a good substitute teacher, over qualifications in some instances.

## Hastings

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Breakdown of Hastings Public Schools Teacher Absence Cause:

Illness (including FMLA leaves including "maternity leave"): 42%

Professional Leave: 15%

Vacancy: 13% (Teacher dismissed in October)

Personal Day: 8.6%

Activity Leave: 8.3%

Full Dock (Additional Personal Days): 4.4%

Sub-Dock (Additional Personal Days): 2.4%

Bereavement: 2%

Family Parenting: 1.5%

Other: 2.8%

· Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Some increase due to the number of pregnancies, terminations, and negotiated benefits.

· Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes. But "illness" (including maternity leave) is the most significant factor.

· What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

None. We determine whether our teaching staff will participate in these events. To my knowledge, neither the Legislature nor NDE require the absence of an employee from a school district.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Two years ago, due to comparability, HPS went from one Personal Day per year to two. This has increased our teacher absenteeism overall. However, given that two personal days was the prevalent practice in our comparable array, we agreed to this increase because we felt our Association could "force" us to adopt this practice.

· What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

Approximately 15 days. However, this number is significantly increased by the termination of a teacher in October and by FMLA (including maternity leave) that, today, is generally 12 weeks per pregnancy. In addition, since schools assign staff to cover activities and consider professional leave to be assigned as well as part of the job, this figure is inflated by these professional responsibilities.

· What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

Approximately 8% (14 to 15 days)

· Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Approximately 75% (10 to 11) of the absences are covered by substitutes. We use existing staff and, in some cases, are not required to hire a substitute to carry out a students' learning day.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?


Nebraska does fairly well with this. Local subs should be able to substitute more days for a district than they presently are allowed.

Please do not hesitate to share any other observations you may have on this issue. We look forward to your reply.

I think the concern among educators increased with the discussion of the "lay out" period for retired educators. The substitute teacher shortage will worsen if we further restrict retired teachers from serving as substitute teachers. We actually need this portion of the work force to serve as substitutes immediately. The substitute teacher issue is both a demand and a supply issue. Let's face it, because it is intermittent work, most individuals (excluding retired teachers) generally try to find steadier, more full-time employment that includes benefits. We have a larger demographic factor at work here: as baby boomers retire completely, there aren't going to be enough workers to replace them. With Nebraska's great unemployment record, we are really going to be fighting for workers across about every field one can imagine.

## Hemingford:


1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

For the most part in our district, we have been blessed with younger teachers taking maternity leave, as well as some older teachers have heart issues and orthopedic problems.

 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

NSAA events have some effect at the state level, because of the distance from the Northwest part of our state, and the southeast locations of state events - we are pleased when that occurs, and usually have no class for state championship contests, so no subs are needed. During the regular seasons, our teams must travel great distances now and then, but that is due to our location again. We are fortunate to have several coaches and activity sponsors that are not teachers so a sub shortage is not too great.

 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?


Normally our teachers are encouraged to return to college in the summer, though there are a few opportunities offered during the school year. These are usually for one or two days, with distance also adding a day or two of travel.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?


 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

Our district has 45 certificated educators, including administration, teachers, counselors, librarians, etc. (there are 30 additional para-educators, cooks, bus drivers, custodians, and non-teacher coaches.

One or two times each semester we will have as many as four or five teachers absent, due to illness, or medical appointments. Most days of the school year there are no teachers absent.

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

Teachers have three personal days each year in our 185 day school year. Most teachers will be ill once or twice, and be gone for other events two or three times per year. That equals 4 %.

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Most of the time Subs cover classes when teachers are gone – other times classes can be combined, or other teachers cover another class during their planning period, saving the need for a sub.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

1. Allow even more days on a local sub certificate. (This has been done once already)

2. Charge a sub just once for a local sub certificate, listing two or more local schools on the certificate, saving the current cost of paying a separate fee for each district a person might sub in with a local sub certificate.

Please do not hesitate to share any other observations you may have on this issue. We look forward to your reply.

## Comments/Ideas

Many school districts in rural Nebraska, especially the western 2/3 of the state, are located in sparsely populated areas, with other towns and villages a distance away. The number of available candidates are small. Perhaps a bigger reliance on technology for subbing, as well as primary course offerings would improve that.

Increasing incentives to offer classes over distance education, as well as having retired teachers or people with a local sub certificate being part of an "on call" network for schools in our state might enable schools to do the best we can to have an educator available to interact with when there are few available locally.

## Kearney

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Stats for the 16-17 school years, percentage of teacher absences by type:

42% illness leave (personal and/or family)

18% professional leave

12% personal leave

9% school activity

5% bereavement leave

- Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?
  - Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?  
Yes. Coaches and sponsors are absent for NSAA events
  - What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?  
18% of our absences last year were for professional development which is a sizable amount. For our district, this includes work at the district level for curriculum work.
2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?  
Teacher leave is a negotiated item so it has a significant influence on substitute demand.

- What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

11.3

- What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

6.1%

- Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

98.4%

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Allow retirees to substitute teach sooner (instead of 180 waiting period)

Lengthen the time allow for a local sub certificate



## Lincoln

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom, which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

The largest factor impacting absences for LPS is maternity leave. Teachers are predominantly female and young. As a result many are starting to have families early in their career. There are a variety of other factors that take teachers away from the classroom. Athletics and activities are a factor. This is especially true in the fall and spring.

Professional development can be a factor although we can control this by limiting how many people we allow to attend training and conferences. In fact we do have a daily limit on how many staff can be access professional leave. Sick leave, other FMLA, bereavement leave, personal leave, military leave, workers comp make up the remainder of the leave.

- Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Our average number of absences has remained very flat and consistent over the last five years.

- Last 5 years For LPS: Without Professional Leave

- o All absences - (average percentage of time absent in a year by teachers) last 5 years

- o 2016-2017 was 6.8% of the year

- o 2015-2016 was 6.8% of the year

- o 2014-2015 was 6.9% of the year

- o 2013-2014 was 6.6% of the year

- o 2012-2013 was 6.7% of the year

- Last 5 years For LPS: With Professional Leave

- o 2016-2017 was 7.9 % of the year

- o 2015-2016 was 6.9 % of the year

- o 2014-2015 was 8.2 % of the year

- o 2013-2014 was 7.7 % of the year

- o 2012-2013 was 7.8 % of the year

- o Within these totals are approximately 200 maternity leaves, which would add 40- some days for each individual on average. This would also include other FMLA absence, bereavement leave, situational sick leave, military leave, workers comp.

- o It is important not to confuse overall absences with absences of a teacher that requires a student to be with a substitute teacher. We tally absences by the day.

As a result, even if a person leaves school for a one hour appointment during their planning period when they weren't with students, it would record an absence.

- Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes... The days where we have the highest requests for subs are days when there are significant NSAA events or activities (especially in the fall and spring).

- For LPS:

- o Our top ten sub days are often days when there are several NSAA events happening within the state. We would assume this is not unique to LPS.

- o Note: Schools don't have access to some events during the weekend (golf courses for example) so they must be done during the week. Top ten absence days may also include events such as district music, state student council convention, and state basketball and volleyball tournaments in Lincoln when the

schools are used for tournament sites. Many educators are also parents of students who participate in state tournaments, etc.

- What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom? There are mandates and regulations that significantly impact teachers and staff. Recent mandates have been adopted such as suicide awareness training, bullying prevention, date rape prevention and concussion protocols as well as district suspension, exclusion and behavior management training. In addition, there are required drills for bus safety, fire, tornado, lock down/lock out, etc. These are necessary, but they often require teacher time for planning, training and communication. Districts do not want to pull teachers out of the classroom for these kinds of trainings, so most are completed by staff outside of teaching time (before school starts, plan time, on their own time, etc.). The regulatory load on buildings and employees is therefore increased. Suicide prevention alone takes three hours. That is three hours of time those teachers previously would have had for other instructional preparations. There are NDE regulations that impact substitutes. There are sometimes obstacles or challenges with certification (Human Relations training, Praxis II, etc.) that slow down or prevent the hiring of a sub. Nebraska does not have certification reciprocity with other states, so if a teacher has certification in another state they still have to meet our requirements.

- For LPS:

- o NDE delays in approving certification of new teachers from out of state can cause us to use substitute teachers until certification is approved. Often times NDE does not accept alternative certification from other states even though the teacher has demonstrated successful teaching in another state.
- o New Nebraska teachers are required to complete the Human Relations requirement within the first 180 calendar days if they come to us from out of state. This requires teachers to complete the requirement within the first 180 calendar days (1st semester) rather than being able to wait to complete it the next summer. If they worked on it the following summer it avoids requiring any subs during the school year. Further complicating the matter, if they do not complete the requirement during those 180 calendar days their certificate expires. In those cases we have to terminate them in the middle of the year. This is very problematic for such a simple Human Relations requirement. Many times this content was already in their undergraduate coursework.
- o PRAXIS II. Teachers in Nebraska must take a test of basic skills to obtain certification. Nebraska has always required that educators take the Praxis I or PPST in college. Due to legislation, beginning in 2015, they must also take the Praxis II in order to become certified. There are several different PRAXIS II tests, and each state has its own requirements. A teacher may have passed a Praxis II in another state but Nebraska may not accept that particular test. This happens even when the tests are very similar in content. Navigating which test to take and sometimes retake takes time and is frustrating for applicants. The process can take months to navigate leading to there being fewer candidates (for teachers and subs) in our pools. The NDE certification office works hard to push certification through for applicants, but they also must enforce what is in statute. These regulations were put in place to ensure teacher quality, but anecdotally we cannot verify that teachers are more qualified now than they were before the Praxis II was required. We recognize that all mandates, rules and regulations serve a purpose. The concern is the volume of regulation within the last 5 years that has dramatically impacted the amount of time teachers have. When time is spent on these directives it takes the place of time spent preparing for instruction.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

- For LPS:

- o While not directly related to negotiations with the teachers, several years ago LPS saw a significant increase in sub acceptance rate when we increased the pay for subs. At that same time we also saw a decrease in the number of subs blocking themselves.
- o We also saw an increase in substitutes when the sub orientations were added. Subs seemed to value the professional development and more jobs were accepted.
- o Union contract negotiations are not a large isolated factor affecting the substitute teacher demand. The agreement does outline how much leave teachers can access. Along with a number of additional variables, this can impact the number of subs that we must have available. We usually have enough subs in our sub pool to cover all of the leave requests. The issue is that subs will limit or block their availability. They can be selective. So, while we would have enough subs to fill the absences, they may not always accept the positions.

- **What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?**

In 16-17, teachers, on average, were absent from the classroom (only student contact days) 14.97 days with professional leave included

In 16-17, teachers, on average, were absent from the classroom (only student contact days) 12.66 days without professional leave included

These days include all reasons (sick/FMLA, professional, personal, bereavement, athletic coaching, etc.) These numbers are particularly hard to use in terms of decision-making because this includes maternity. For example one employee may have 40-50 days as a single employee, dramatically skewing this number for the average. In addition this is for both partial and full days. So, an employee could miss just a couple hours for an appointment, but it is counted as a day in this percent.

- **What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?**

2016-2017 was 7.9 % with professional leave (based on 191 days)

2016-2017 was 6.8 % without professional leave (based on 191 days)

- **Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?**

2016-2017 Average number of days out where a sub was needed 9.1 days or (4.8%) of all contract days

2016-2017 Average number of days covered by a sub is 8.7 days (4.6% of their total contract days)

2016-2017 Average Fill Rate for all sub requests is 95.6%

### 3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

- For LPS

- o Local subs were limited to 45 days and now it is 90 days. This has helped, but how was this limit identified? Why 90 days?

- o Concern: Where do we push professional development and athletics? If we move it to later in the evenings, weekends, and summers, we pay for that as well. We cannot mandate those extra days outside the teacher contract. This would also impact families, day care and personal lives of staff.

- o Concern: 183 of our subs subbed 5 days or less. We reported 807 subs, so 22% of subs worked 5 days or less. The complexion of subs has changed. We have fewer teachers that are working as subs for a career while they wait for an opening. In the current unemployment climate our sub pool is increasingly made up of retirees or recently resigned individuals who don't sub as much. In addition, we have used seniors in the education college or who just graduated. These are inexperienced subs that can usually sub for only 90 days a year on the local sub certificate. The retirees and resignations are a greater percentage of our subs and may be more selective on what they will take.

- o Change the temporary certificate to 360 days instead of 180 days (away from the 6-month certificate and make it 1 year). We could hire subs on a temporary certificate while they are completing the Human Relations training for one year.

o Any initiatives that would address the overall shortage of teachers in general would be beneficial. As we get to the end of July/start of August each year there are multiple positions where we do not have a single viable applicant. In those cases we do not fill the position and try to find other ways to cover the coursework or spread out the students.

o The ability to utilize retirees as subs is vital. Any provisions that would prohibit or limit retirees from subbing would be detrimental to an already taxed substitute teacher system. In contrast reducing the 180 days that a retiree must sit out would be very helpful. We recognize that IRS regulations require a break in service, however a shorter break in service would allow us access to these subs sooner.

## Loup City

1) For the most part, our absences are due to individual or family medical leave. This includes being sick (either the teacher or their child/children), doctor appointments, and so on. Another chunk of our absences is due to activities, but we do our best to schedule activities for after school time where we don't have to have teachers leave too early. The activities that we end up having most teacher absences for are Cross Country, One Act, Speech, Music, and Track.

a) On average, our teachers take about 7 days off each year, but that doesn't include professional or activity leave.

b) Professional development time is structured through the ESU to allow for us to send teachers there without it being a burden

to us...plus, they are willing to do on site PD during our in-service days.

c) I don't believe that any mandates are getting in the way of us having teachers in the classroom that I can think of.

2) I think that teachers have expanded what they feel they are entitled to. At the same time, the Board does not always have to give the teachers what they want and can give the administration leeway in the approval process as well. We have a monetary incentive for teachers that still have a leave balance at the end of the year....therefore we will be giving them a "bonus" for being here more often (which I personally feel is a little ridiculous, but should help when teachers are deciding to take a day off or not).

a) Between sick, personal, professional, and activity leave - average days is 18 days per teacher (this includes a maternity leave this year).

b) That is, on average, 9.73% of their contracted days. Some of those days are on inservice scheduled days as well.

c) We will cover them with a substitute teacher whenever possible, but I don't have an exact number. In the high school I would say that we are covered by a substitute teacher 80-85% of the time with the other times being covered by teachers on their prep period (they then receive 1/8th of the sub pay for covering the class during their prep time) or it is covered by the administration.

Elementary is probably covered about 85-90% of the time, with the other times being covered by combining classes (our class size is about 25 per grade and most grades are split...so once in a while we can combine them with the other teacher), not having our "specials" (PE/Music), or covered by administration.

3) I think the certification rules in general need to be revamped and looked at. In particular, when it comes to substitute teachers, I feel that we are missing an opportunity to have some truly great substitute teachers in our schools. I think that there should be training for them and an observation period (I believe there was a bill that was introduced this year that would have covered a lot of this), but that should be on the school. I think with technology the way it is, we can have teachers conduct their classes with a "guide" in the room that may not have to do much instruction, but would still give the kids a day of learning (instead of a "study hall"). When I was in South Dakota, substitute teachers didn't need to be certified...and we had some fantastic people in the community that we used regularly. One of which then became interested in pursuing their degree and working in education. I can think of a half a dozen people that would be fantastic individuals to bring in as substitute teachers, but at this point in time I don't have any way I can do that because they won't meet the requirements of the state to be certified. I don't know the full answer to this, but I think that the certification for subs is a detriment to what we need to/can do in our schools.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS: I don't think teacher absenteeism is the problem. If a teacher is gone too much, then that needs to be addressed by the administration. Just because they have leave days doesn't mean they have to use them all. One of our "Essential Job Functions" on their job description is

regular attendance. We have a teacher that does one act, speech, track, and cross country...he is also our band teacher. I have been slowly stripping away activity responsibilities for him (which is not making him very happy, but I remind him that we hired him to teach music not to be a coach). Again, that is on the school, not on the state.

The Board also needs to take a strong stance during negotiations. We reduced the number of days the teachers get for leave days, included an incentive for not using their days, and other changes that should help.

Another thing we have to worry about is the fact that a sick teacher is not a good situation to have. If they feel like they need to come in sick (which a lot do anyway because they are professionals), then they run the risk of getting their students sick...and others...which then becomes a problem for student attendance and learning.

Again, I think the absenteeism is a issue for the school/district to address, not the state.

As far as certification goes. We had a person that was given a provisional local sub license a few years ago with the provision being that he needed to take the human relations course. His license lapsed and he did not get the class done. He is now not qualified to be a local sub. It doesn't make sense to me how he was ok to do the local sub certificate for one year before he completed the class, but is not good enough now. If the human relations course is so important, they should not give provisional licenses for people that don't have that requirement....otherwise, we should figure out how to better certify our substitute teachers that will make it easier for people that want to help out the school to do so.

## Madison

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

I believe the trend of more teacher absences in our District over the last couple of years has been for childbirth or Major Medical issues. Also, the Federal & State requirements of increased accountability has left us very little choice to add additional professional development opportunities.

🎬 over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

I feel a higher percentage of educators are more willing to utilize days outside the classroom for sick days, personal days along with more professional development days.

🎬 does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

It does have a small impact.

🎬 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

NDE Rule #10 – The School system annually conducts or arranges staff development Sessions. Each year a teacher participates in at least ten hours of staff development activities each year. With the current requirements at the Federal and State levels for accountability along with the different changing diversity in several districts in Nebraska staff development is key to meeting the needs of the students.

How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

🎬 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

12.0

🎬 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

8% this past school year

🎬 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

95%-98%

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

🎬 Extend the amount of days a local district substitute each year.

🎬 Make the process simple for those with a two/four-year degree outside of teaching to become active substitute teachers.

🎬 Provide additional funding for schools so we could offer better pay rates to compete with the business world for workers.

## Millard

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

The majority of the absences come from personal illness, family illness, and FMLA related leave.

1a. Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Stagnant around 6.67% of scheduled work days absent each year since 2010. This percentage represents all teacher leave including personal & family illness, FMLA, professional leave as well as coaching/sponsor duties.

1b. Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes, Millard Public Schools does participate in sanctioned NSAA activities, some of which require teachers that are coaches or sponsors to be absent.

1c. What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

- The Department of Education will, on occasion, pull teachers for events like Curriculum Standards Writing/Reviewing and State Assessment Creation/Standard Setting.
- The same is true at the district level.
- There are also occasionally "committees" at the state level to identify ways to address legislative action or issues. An example of this would be the work at the state level on Civics. The ongoing conversations around a state Civics Exam has, among other things, prompted work at the state level.
- The work at the state level will sometimes result in work at the district level as well.
- Finally there are at times professional development opportunities provided by the state that would necessitate a substitute for a teacher.
- The same is true at the district level; however, we have limited our substitute allocation at a building and district level, so the majority of professional development happens in the summer, after school, or on days with no students.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

The collective bargaining negotiations between the school and union recognize and allow for employees to take appropriate leave to facilitate the needs of their family through illness, childbirth, adoption, as well as family emergencies, while maintaining the needs of the school. Issues such as sick days and personal days are mandatory subjects of bargaining under Nebraska law and may not be altered without collective bargaining.

2a. What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

2016-2017 (11.92)

2b. What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

2016-2017 (6.18%)

2c. Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?



If it is a teacher that requires a substitute, the absence will be covered by a substitute teacher. Some certificated staff do not require a substitute. (e.g. Counselor, Teacher Librarian, Speech-Language Pathologist). Overall absences which require a sub are filled 97% of the time with a qualified substitute (2016-2017 school year).

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

- While the local option substitute provides some options and relief, we would encourage NDE to provide a statewide “temporary substitute license” that would allow qualified individuals who have not completed a teacher education program to do limited day to day substitute teaching in any district in Nebraska at the district’s discretion (i.e. a qualified candidate with a bachelor's degree being granted a license that allows them to substitute teach up to 45 days each semester or students in the 3rd or 4th year of an accredited school of education).

Please do not hesitate to share any other observations you may have on this issue. We look forward to your reply.

- Millard Public Schools has actively worked to reduce professional development substitute teacher usage the last two school years. Substitute usage for teacher staff development has been reduced by approximately 10% each of the last two school years.
- Our ability to hire experienced retiree subs on an as needed basis is advantageous to our students.

## Norfolk

#1) What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

The answer to this question, in my opinion is "It depends". There are many factors which play into a teacher being gone from the classroom. First of all, the demand for continuous, high quality staff development continues to rise as our teachers and schools are being asked to do more and more with data and accountability for student achievement. This type of leave, in the form of School Business or Professional Leave, is used frequently by our teachers to collaborate in curriculum planning sessions, align state and national standards, attend specialized training conferences, learn new strategies to increase their instructional skills with "research based" best practices, and grow as an educator. There are certainly staff development conferences that can be attended over the summer and we encourage attendance at these events, but many times these events are scheduled during the week and during the school year. Increased teacher absences is a byproduct of this scheduling.

Another factor is maternity leave and sick leave. This year alone, we are starting the year with a high number of teachers being pregnant and staff are either starting the year with a long term sub or they already have plans for a long term sub during the school year. This maternity leave number fluctuates from year to year, but it is certainly a factor in securing subs and counting total staff absences for our district. In terms of sick leave, our staff is frequently absent simply because they are ill. These absences are generally a day or two here and there, but there are times when staff are gone for extended periods of time because they are dealing with severe medical issues or handling longer term family emergencies. Finally, leave for activities is also a factor in the number of subs requested throughout the school year. We have a high number of extracurricular activities in our district and our activities program is excellent at providing a diverse range of opportunities for students of all abilities to get involved. We believe that it is an extension of student learning that provides students with many life skills. However, with these activities, come competitions and other performance events. These events are often scheduled after school, however, due to our location, our students and staff may need to leave during the school day in order to travel to these events. And, some events are full day events, such as District Music, Band, Speech, Debate, Golf, and Track.

These circumstances all play a factor in teacher absences.

# 2) Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Our teachers are very dedicated and committed to being present for their students on a daily basis. Great teachers don't like to miss school because it is generally more work to be gone and prepare for a sub. Our teachers are insistent on securing good subs and they are very vigilant about making sure that learning continues every day. If there is an absence trend present, it is probably for professional development and FMLA leave.

#3) Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes, this is largely due to our geographic location. We are a Class A school that is two hours away from the majority of the schools we compete against. As mentioned earlier, when we have to leave for an event (even if the event starts after school), we have to plan extra time for travel. This means that activity sponsors and students will miss at least part of the school day, which in turn means more subs. Usually, the busiest time for activity subs is in the spring when we have sports like track , golf, baseball, district music contests, etc. that need subs for longer periods of time.

#4) What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

There are many variables that impact teacher absences in terms of state mandates. First of all, the various assessments and standards revisions that occur each year play a major factor in teacher absences. In order to stay current and ensure that information is relevant and valid, we need to continuously revise our assessment system and curriculum. When we do that, we need to train people on the process and this takes time and this training takes professionals out of classrooms.

Additionally, teachers attending conferences on things like NeSA, MAPS, rubric writing, C4L, school safety, AQuESTT, standard reviews, etc. take instructional time out of the classroom and this necessitates the need for more subs. District work on things like a staff evaluation instrument or an Instructional Model Task Force or a Wellness committee also take staff out of classrooms. Although these are district initiatives, usually the impetus for these initiatives comes from state or federal mandates.

Finally, high levels of accountability and compliance with federal programs also increase the need for subs. Training on Title I, Title IX, SPED, HAL, and other programs are robust training opportunities, but that again takes time and teachers out of classrooms.

#5) How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Contract negotiations certainly has an impact. In our district we have a very generous personal leave and sick day policy. Some staff utilize the majority of these days each year and some staff save these until they have something special planned or have an emergency.

#6) What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

We are in the process of moving to a new online sub system that began in the middle of the last school year, so we only have solid data from March 1st until the end of the school year last year (5/25).

During that time period we had 674.6 total certified absences. We have 308 certified staff members, so that works out to be an average of 2.1 days of absences per staff member. (Please keep in mind that this average includes several maternity leaves, which really inflates that average.)

#7) What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

N/A

#8) Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

The vast majority of time that a teacher is absent during the school year, we secure a sub for them. There might be times when there is a counselor or a media person, etc. who is gone and we might be able to postpone (or alter) that activity/assignment for the day or get someone else to cover internally, but if the regular core content classroom teacher is absent, we try and fill the absence 100% of the time.

#9) What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

I think we are on the right track by increasing the number of days that Local Subs can work.

Bringing the total number of days to 90 helps greatly in our district because of the sheer lack of people in the overall sub pool.

Allowing some staff development opportunities for substitutes and being able to pay them for their time would be helpful in developing substitutes' professional toolboxes and sharpen their abilities to work in specialized classrooms like our Life and Autism rooms.

We have to be careful about how much we refine the parameters for subbing because we need to balance getting great people in front of our kids vs. just bringing in bodies to fill spots. Our students need (and want) quality subs and we should always try to meet that expectation. I believe there is a “sweet spot” for requirements for subs, but it will take focused collaboration and creative problem solving to consistently refine the requirements so that they remain in the best interests of students, the subs themselves, and our schools.

On one hand, let’s have requirements that make sense and are practical and do what they are intended to do. For example, does the Human Relations training and the fees associated with becoming a sub have the positive impact they are intended to have? If so, continue; if not, let’s not be afraid to change.

On the other hand, we need to continue to have a high level of expectations and training /experience required so we don’t just get anybody walking in of the street to sub. Unfortunately, there are times when it feels like we are just filling a spot and that is the reality of the situation.

One other thing to consider might be to create a substitute teacher workforce advisory committee made up of teachers and principals across the state that could come together and brainstorm diverse ways to address our sub shortages. Having more voices and ideas in the room may lead to some innovative solutions.

## North Platte

What factors are causing the perceived increase for the need of substitute teachers?

There are less students entering the educational field. The requirements for subbing in Nebraska are stricter than other states. I wouldn't necessarily say it is perceived due to the five-year trend data that our district has reviewed. The district has 1/3 of the substitutes we did five years ago. Our fulfillment rates are lower than they have ever been. The district teacher absence rate is at or above the National average.

Do scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

These have played a factor for teachers who are elementary or middle school teachers with coaching assignments. The high school is able to fill the positions by teachers with open periods. This is not ideal but it is a solution for teachers to give up their plan period to cover another class. Middle School events during the week have created lower fulfillment rates. It would be great to be able to have middle school (junior high) events on Saturdays.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

The annual NETA conference is during April and during a very busy time for soccer, track, tennis, golf and the district is not able to send teachers because of all the other activities. Our district has limited out of district PD in an attempt to limit teacher's time away from the classroom.

How do union contract negotiations concern employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days' play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Annually teachers are given 10 sick days and 3 personal days. The district pays for unused personal leave at the sub rate to encourage teachers to save them. Sick leave may be accumulated up to 75 days. We have teachers who use up their leave (13 days) every year and are docked for absences without leave. The district has teachers who believe that they can also use the sick leave bank if a catastrophe hits rather than save their own days.

We are noticing that more and more of our young mothers are taking the full 12 weeks for FMLA as allowed. This is created a longer period of time to find subs and limits our pool when they are assigned a long term job. We will start the school year with 8 teachers out on maternity leave.

What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

We think the extension from 45 to 90 days for local subs is going to help a lot. An online qualification for anybody with a BA would be helpful, now they have to take a 3 credit education course from a college. Could we look at other options such as STEDI.org certification?

## Ogallala

1. With the advent of state testing and state standards I feel the need for teachers to attend in-services has increased. With the pressure of the testing and schools wanting to perform to the highest level I believe that more and more schools create in-service times that require use of subs to allow those teachers to train and align curriculum. Every time state tests are changed this occurs, think about how many times over the years the state testing has changed.

Other than that I believe that the rate of teacher absenteeism is about the same.

NSAA activities,

In my opinion again these are about the same as in years past. There may be a few more track meets during the school week than in the past but I would not say it is a highly significant number. As for NSAA activities and that amount of school missed due to those, there would be a big difference in this between the Eastern portions of the state than in the West because of the travel time that western schools have to endure. However that does not mean subs are hired, usually students are also gone from school and not just the teacher/coaches so other teachers in the building would cover for those that are gone due to the activity.

Mandates,

I believe if you look back at the first paragraph that addresses this part of the question.

2. The only thing that I can think of here would be the districts that look at days as PTO, or paid time off rather than sick and personal days. Over the years I can honestly say that I have had very few teachers that took advantage of sick leave (maybe 2 in 20 some years) to where they never had any left at the end of each year. I have had many more that never took any sick leave or ever used personal days, but when a district calls it PTO, I believe that it may be much more tempting to take those days off.

Again, I believe there is such a discrepancy between employees it would be tough to answer this question. We did have a couple of long term subs in our district last year due to FMLA.

The third part of your question would be it depends, if it is only a part of a day usually we cover those situations with another teacher in house. Many times we cannot find subs and are forced to combine classrooms, other days we hire subs when they can be found.

3. I would suggest completely getting rid of the local substitute number of days. In other words let them sub in that local district the complete 180 days if necessary. I believe we need to keep the 60 hour requirement or an associate's degree at a minimum. Maybe also allow the newly retired teachers to sub as many days as needed to help.

**Response to Senator Groene's Request for Information  
LR130 Interim Study to Examine the Increase in Need for Substitute Teachers  
Omaha Public Schools**

**Question #1: What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?**

**1a. Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?**

The rate of attendance for classroom teachers in Omaha Public Schools has seen a slight but steady increase over the past several years. This translates to more substitute teachers while the metro pool of substitutes has decreased overall as the number of teachers entering and graduating from universities with teaching degrees has decreased nationally and regionally.

**1b. Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?**

NSAA day events and the subsequent teacher absences for coaches and sponsors do not create a significant burden for Omaha Public Schools, particularly when balanced against the significant benefit to students who participation in NSAA activities. Overall these events represent a very small percentage of all absences.

**1c. What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?**

Laws, rules and regulations (state and federal) that increase teacher workload create challenges for time management among classroom teachers. Many factors and/or unintended consequences of the mandates cause the workload increase such as increasing documentation and training requirements. This along with other factors including increasing students needs, especially in the area of mental health, and the ongoing shortage of substitute teachers is having an impact on teacher attendance and teacher recruitment.

Concerns arise from NDE certification requirements for new staff coming from other states. There are three issues that arise:

- **Human Relationships Coursework:** Every teacher preparation program in the United States includes training about the importance of developing effective relationships with students and their families. However, NDE has specific course code requirements that our Nebraska Colleges understand and address, but often this content is imbedded in multiple courses in universities in other states and not explicitly recognized by NDE.
- **Alternative Certification from other states:** Teachers gain certification in other states through alternative pathways. Many times, these certifications are not recognized as valid by Nebraska regulation either forcing teachers to return to a teacher education program or not teach in Nebraska. This limits our overall pool of teacher and substitute candidates. This also has a major impact on our diversity hiring as a much larger percentage of alternative certification programs are diverse candidates than those in traditional university programs.

**Questions #2 How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?**

The Omaha Public Schools / Omaha Education Association union contract with teachers provides a combined total of 12 days of sick and personal leave to use within limits at their discretion.

**2a. What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?**

In 2016-2017 the average number of days was just over 12.2 days absent per teacher per year.

**2b. What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?**

The above absences would have teachers absent from their classroom approximately 6.4% of their contract days.

**2c. Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?**

In 2016-2017 OPS filled an average of 83% of requested substitute needs each day during the school year. In cases where a substitute teacher was not available individual buildings arranged class coverage through a variety of internal plans.

Please note that while teacher attendance is a concern for Omaha Public Schools, the primary issue is the small pool of highly qualified substitute teachers. Our best substitutes tend to be recently retired teachers who have been in the classroom. Recent retirees have classroom management skills and are current with the curriculum that is used so that instructional time is not missed due to the teacher's absence. While many substitute teachers are excellent, the fact that the pool of substitutes is limited means we may hire substitute teachers who are not as effective as we need. We need more high-quality substitute teachers so that we are not forced to use a lower-quality substitute teacher who happen to be compliant with certification regulations.

**3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?**

- The overall teacher shortage is a huge factor in substitute recruitment and availability. As we hire deeper into our pool of teachers we leave less and less teachers available to substitute teach. We would encourage state level support in recruiting teachers to Nebraska in general including a review of licensure requirements to teach in Nebraska. We would encourage a strong look at if and how certificates based on alternative licensure programs from other states are recognized.
- We would also encourage programs to help with retaining our teachers and encouraging them to not leave Nebraska (i.e. state-wide home ownership incentives for teachers, etc.) or the profession.
- While the local option substitute provides some options and relief, the need to take each individual to our local board of education prior to certification is burdensome. We would encourage NDE relax the State Substitute Teacher Permit requirements to allow more individuals to acquire this permit that would allow qualified individuals who have not completed a teacher education program to do limited day to day substitute teaching in any district in Nebraska at the district's discretion (i.e. a qualified candidate must have a bachelor's degree). Districts would still make individual hiring and assignment decisions but this would increase the overall eligible pool of substitutes.



- Current restrictions on teacher retirees and their ability to return to the teaching field post retirement are a challenge as well. We would encourage an exemption that would allow all retirees with an active certificate to take day to day substitute jobs after a 30 day break in service. The knowledge and skill level that a recent retiree has creates an excellent substitute teachers. Many retirees want to work occasionally because they still love the work. They retire because they no longer are able to or want to work each and every school day. We need to get the new retirees into our substitute teacher pools before they fill their newly found extra time with other activities.
- Schools with high poverty rates (as defined by the rate of free and reduced students attending) tend to have more difficulty in obtaining qualified substitutes. With this in mind a state incentive for substitute teachers who work a set number of days at identified sites would be beneficial to all districts.

Thank you for seeking our input. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or seek clarification about any of our comments or statements.

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## Ord

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

In the last few years, the primary factor for a teacher's absence in our district have reflected 3 major issues; A. Medical Related – Either teacher health or family related. B. Professional Development related to either State or Federal requirements. C. Extra-Curricular Activities

- Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The top 3 trends related to teacher absenteeism...

1. Health Related – (Pregnancy, cancer, doctor)
2. Professional Development related to State or Federal Requirements.
3. Parentally Related Endeavors /Family Obligations

- Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Most events that are scheduled for our students don't start until after 3:00 and we have our "access class" scheduled from 3:00-3:27, therefore NSAA events are rather insignificant unless they are day long activities like speech, drama, or academic related events like quiz bowl (which is not NSAA).

- What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

1. Accreditation – Either Advanced Ed or NDE Frameworks
2. Updates/Changes to State Standards
3. Safety and Crisis Management Training
4. CTE Changes in requirements for Counselors
5. Changes in college requirements mandating counselors to be at meetings
6. Curriculum Alignment Requirements

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Teachers have negotiated the agreement with the Board of Education. Teachers have 10 PTO days in the negotiated agreement. This basically allows 1 day per month for absence for any purpose they so choose. This has been in the negotiated agreement for about 15 years.

- What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

The average number of days FTE teachers are absent at Ord Public Schools is 7.3.

- What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

Total contract days teachers are absent from their classrooms 8.65%.

- Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

100% of the days a teacher is absent from the classroom are covered by substitute teacher. This may also include a teacher within in the building that has a plan period.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

## Osceola

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

A lot of training that is mandated is a big reason in our school. Most sporting events have little effect on time out of the classroom, but activities such as Quiz Bowls, Speech, One Act, and Band are events that usually take at least one teacher, sometimes two out of the classroom. These are the two biggest factors at our school. Also teachers thinking that sick leave needs to be used or they "lose" that benefit (Thought planted by their union).



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

My budget for subs just continues to increase.



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Very little in our school as most events are scheduled for after school. Exceptions would be the fine arts events such as Band, Speech, and One Acts.



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Having to send teacher to write, evaluate and review state testing has taken more teachers from the classroom than I am comfortable with. Then they change the test in a year and the time spent is wasted. Due to the new tests comparisons of data is no good.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Negotiated agreements have language in them that is difficult to change once added part of the agreement. Example is that teachers can literally be gone 25% of their contract if they accumulate 45 sick days. Personal, Professional and Bereavement leave, just add to that total.



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

11.75



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

6.4%



Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We don't track that information. We use our regular teacher to cover if a teacher misses just a couple of periods by paying them a small stipend to give up their prep periods if they are agreeable.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

I really don't have any good suggestions. Watering down the requirements will not help schools.

**Response to Senator Groene's Request for Information  
LR130 Interim Study to Examine the Increase in Need for Substitute Teachers  
Papillion La Vista Community Schools**

**Question #1: What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?**

**1a. Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?**

The rate of attendance for classroom teachers in the Papillion-La Vista Community Schools has been between 94% and 96% every year since 2001. Stated another way, that means about 4% to 6% absence among classroom teachers each year since 2001. There has not been a dramatic increase or decrease in the overall attendance rate for our teaching staff. However, as our district grows, this percentage translates to more substitute teachers while the metro pool of substitutes stays flat and has perhaps decreased as the number of teachers entering and graduating from universities with teaching degrees has decreased nationally and regionally.

Illness and FMLA accounted for 57.2% of the classroom absences during the 2016-17 (5.89 days per teacher on average). FMLA is largely due to maternity/parental leave. With a growing district and many young teachers, many are starting or adding to their families. On the other end of the spectrum, as the baby boomers and their parents age, there are more serious health conditions to address for which teachers may exercise their right to FMLA. These absences tend to be shorter versus the longer weeks of leave we see with maternity-paternity leave.

Other reasons for absence from the classroom included an average of 2.0 days per classroom teacher for professional development. This includes conferences, trainings, curriculum and assessment writing and revisions. These absences have decreased over the past five years as the substitute pool has decreased and as our school district experiences greater limitations on our financial resources.

Teachers were absent from their classroom an average of 1.28 days per year to address personal business, .65 days per year to coach or sponsor NSAA activities, and .47 day per year collectively for bereavement, jury duty and other miscellaneous leave.

**1b. Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?**

NSAA day events and the subsequent teacher absences for coaches and sponsors do not create a significant burden for Papillion La Vista Community Schools, particularly when balanced against the significant benefit to students who participation in NSAA activities.

The bigger impact of NSAA events on our substitute teacher availability arises when parents whose children are participants in NSAA events that occur during the day, e.g. state volleyball, state softball, state basketball, state wrestling, etc. request personal leave to attend. Our teachers must take personal leave to attend these events. Contract-based personal leave stop-gap restrictions help with this situation. However, fewer substitute teachers are available on these days as they are high need days across the metro area schools, and many substitutes enjoy watching their own children/grandchildren compete so are not available to pick up subbing jobs on those days.

**1c. What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?**

Laws, rules and regulations (state and federal) create challenges for time management among classroom teachers. Mandates and best practice efforts to ensure student well-being, such as an hour (or more) of suicide awareness training, bullying prevention, date rape prevention, restraint and seclusion, and behavior management training, concussion protocols, and drills for bus safety, fire, tornado, lock down/lock out, etc. are necessary but they often require teacher time for planning, training and communication.

Concerns arise from NDE certification requirements for new staff coming from other states. There are three issues that arise:

- 1) Human Relationships Coursework: Every teacher preparation program in the United States includes training about the importance of developing effective relationships with students and their families. However, NDE has specific course code requirements that our Nebraska Colleges understand and address, but often this content is imbedded in multiple courses in universities in other states. Teachers have the needed content but not the specific course code on a transcript. Out of state teachers have options for submitting an essay or taking an online course but doing so delays and distracts from a focus on our classrooms. Making sure the right class is on the transcript to fulfill the Human Relations requirement can cause delays which translate to substitute teachers in the classroom while the issue gets sorted out.
- 2) PRAXIS exams of basic skills: Teachers are required to take a test of basic skills to obtain certification. There are MANY different PRAXIS exams. Different states require different tests. A teacher from out of state may have proficiently completed a basic skill test in a different state, but Nebraska requires a different test. Sorting through which test is needed for each state and each endorsement area is challenging for our out of state candidates and often delays certification. Again, this can necessitate using a substitute teacher until all situation is sorted out. The NDE Certification Office is very busy and they work hard to enforce the rules in a timely manner but it takes time and effort which can lead to substitute teachers in the classroom.
- 3) Alternative Certification from other states: Teachers gain certification in other states through alternative pathways. Sometimes those pathways are not recognized as valid by Nebraska regulation. We have had teachers who were rigorously screened and deeply reference checked with years of successful teaching experience who were not able to be certified by NDE unless they returned to college and took an additional year of coursework. This is a serious burden for the teachers and frankly most choose not to do so and we lose strong teachers. Sorting through the analysis of credentials is time consuming and then if the issue is not resolved we are back to the candidate pool looking for a different teacher. If school starts before a new teacher is secured, we would place a substitute teacher in the classroom.

On top of the safety, security and certification issues listed above, each time curriculum, assessment and program standards are changed by the Nebraska Department of Education, often at the behest of the Unicameral or the U.S. Department of Education, there are work groups of teachers convened. This is a good thing in terms of listening to the teachers and gleaning their expertise rather than relying on those who are not in the trenches, and we want some of our PLCS teachers at the table to help draft the new protocols for the new requirements. However, this often occurs during the school day necessitating a

substitute teacher. In addition, there are district level revisions needed once the state protocols are in place. The revisions are most successful when teachers drive the work at the local level. Again, we strive to do much of this work during non-student contract days so that the classroom is not impacted, but often there is more of this work to do than non-classroom duty time allows. Doing all of this well for over 11,500 students and more than 1,700 staff members requires significant planning, training and communication. Occasionally, (an average of 2.0 days per teacher per year) we pull teachers out of the classroom to assist with the planning, preparation and communication.

Each mandate has or once had good reasoning behind it, and was important to someone. Schools are an easy place to ensure a captive audience of students. However, it is the totality of all the good ideas, and the significant planning and preparation to meet the intent of the mandate (versus jumping through a hoop) that is very time consuming and taxing to teachers and school districts.

**Questions #2 How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?**

**2a. What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?**

**2b. What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?**

The PLCS union contract with teachers provides a combined total of 12 days of sick and personal leave. This is "prevalent practice" across our comparable array of school districts. Teachers do not have vacation days to use when school is in session, and they typically have only 2, 3, or 4 days of paid time off to use at-will (PLCS calls this personal leave). Despite being granted 2 to 4 days of personal leave by the contract, our average personal leave use by teachers is only 1.28 days per year. As we analyze use of personal days, they are most commonly used for the weddings of family or close friends or funerals of friends, followed by big events of family members such as graduations, major anniversaries, or major birthdays of elderly parents/grandparents.

Many districts, including Papillion La Vista Community Schools, have restrictions on how many teachers can use personal leave on a given day. This limits classroom absences and ensures instructional continuity. Teachers were part of setting these parameters during contract negotiations. The issue for our district is not that teachers are abusing their leave, or that the negotiated contract has granted overly abundant leave. This issue is that life happens and sometimes life's events do not mesh well with the school calendar.

Teachers are provided 8 to 10 days of sick leave per year. Only 5.89 sick days are use on average by teachers. We believe this is appropriate as we certainly do not want teachers to work while sick and spread illness to students and colleagues.

When teachers are treated well, when they are appropriately supported, and when they are challenged to do meaningful work, they are more likely to only use leave when needed to address the normal life events of individuals and families. In addition, if there is atypical use of contract leave (personal and sick), it is addressed in a timely manner by an administrator who seeks to identify the problem and to help find a solution that allows the teacher to be in the classroom providing effective instruction for students.

Best wishes as you investigate the challenges and craft effective solutions. Thank you for seeking our input. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or seek clarification about any of our comments or statements.

Sincerely,

Renee Hyde  
Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources  
Papillion La Vista Community Schools  
420 South Washington Street  
Papillion, Nebraska 68046  
Office Phone: (402) 537-6204

## Pawnee City

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Illness of teachers or their children, and doctor/dentist appointments, are certainly the most common reason for absences. Bereavement unfortunately is something that every teacher seems to need at least once every year. Also, with several younger female teachers, pregnancy leave seems to be a common occurrence. Teachers have the right to take personal days also, which the district has no control over since it is part of their collective bargaining agreement. However, very few teachers abuse it in my opinion. Subs for teachers sponsoring extracurricular activities is also a reason for absences.

Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Most NSAA activities require teachers to need a sub very minimally. Coaches for activities like volleyball, football, basketball leave so late in the school day, that we usually cover for them in house. Activities such as play production, speech, cross country, wrestling, and quiz bowl may each have a teacher out of the school with a sub 3 to 5 time per year. Track & Field is far-and-away the biggest NSAA event requiring subs. I would suspect that track & field requires as many substitutes as all other activities combined.

What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Professional development is sometime unavoidable for teachers during times other than on school days. However, by working with our ESU and collaborating with surrounding school, we've been able to build nearly all of our scheduled professional development into the school calendar on non-instructional days, and therefore not requiring subs.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

For negotiated contract personal days, it may be 2 to 3 days taken per day. Most teachers prefer to bank their time into sick leave or take buy-back for unused days (which is much cheaper than the costs of getting substitutes and keeps regular quality teachers in the classrooms).

What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

For negotiated contract personal days, it is probably around 5%.

Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

We cover in-house as much as possible, especially for partial day absences. But if a teacher is going to be gone all day, we want to get a sub. Substitute shortages however require the counselor, high school principal and I to cover classrooms quite often also.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?


Allow certified "local substitutes" to have an unlimited amount of substitute days in each registered district. If they are good enough for 60 days, then why are they not good enough for 61 days, or even 185 days for that matter? Good subs are good subs, and principals know the difference. I also would



recommend taking away the special coursework requirement to become a local sub (i.e. a course in human development and a course in the education field). I think any individual with 60 college credit hours, who can pass the background check, should be approved to be a local substitute.

## Red Cloud


1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

For Red Cloud ... we have found that in the past 10 years teachers are more likely to miss school because leave days are "owed to them." More and more staff are taking days they wouldn't have in the past.

 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

In the past (way back when) there were set days for activities. Example: Tuesday was JV activities, Thursday was JH activities and Friday was HS activities. Now with the number of activities allowed there may be activities every day of the week with the exceptions being Wednesday and Sunday. Not only are staff missing days for activities, but students are as well.


 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

Most professional development offered by the DOE is during the week and takes staff away from the classroom. Additionally, they typically do a hard sell that "you need to have staff at this training."

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Each year, the teacher's union pushes for more and more leave days. With our area Union representative being on the state school board this becomes very uncomfortable.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Require administrators to substitute teach a certain number of days each year.

## Rock County

Primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom:

📺 Over the past year our teachers were absent for the following reasons:

- o Sickness – either themselves or immediate family
- o Personal days
- o School Activities
- o Professional Development

📺 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

o Yes the scheduling does play a big factor. The distance we have to travel requires our staff to leave before the school day is finished so some sport activities can begin by 3:30 or 4:00. All track/Cross Country activities take most of a day. Fine Arts' activities usually take staff away most of the day.

📺 Mandates from NDE, Legislative requirements, and Professional Development (PD)

o All of the trainings and assessment activities take on average a full day for each teacher that attends and usually we have to send at least two teachers per activity. Most PD takes place during the school year since teacher contracts prevent schools from hosting and requiring teacher PD during the summer without additional pay.

📺 How does union contract negotiations play into the effect of substitute teacher demand? Data based upon 2016-17 school year:

- o Average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom –  
17.25 days
- o Percent of total contract days teachers are absent from their classrooms –  
10%
- o Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher –  
100% of the days

📺 What changes could be made to the substitute teacher requirements to widen the pool?

o Our pool of substitutes is adequate on most days but there are some professional development days where every school in the area is trying for the same subs for the same PD.

📺 Observation:

o Why can a teacher retire at the end of May and start substituting for the same school district in August? In some cases they are hired as long term subs right away. Shouldn't teachers need to sit out the 180 days that the Retirement System requires before contracting/substituting for a school?

## Seward

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

🎬 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms? **I don't know if anything for Seward has changed dramatically over recent years, but here are the top reasons staff is gone. 1.) reasons would be illness/ sick kid at home 2.) Personal leave 3.) Leaving early for NSAA event or NSAA event. 4.) Professional Development**

🎬 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent? **It does, but in my opinion, I don't it is our biggest issue with teachers being absent. There is a lot of life lessons with activities and it we can't have everything on Saturday as we already have a high number of events on Saturday.**

🎬 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?  
**Very little effect. Maybe 2-3 teachers for 3-4 days. A lot of NDE work is done in the summer.**

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?  
**It does have somewhat of an impact because of how the negotiated agreement allows 10 days unspecified leave.**

🎬 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?  
**12**

🎬 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?  
**6 %**

🎬 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?  
**95%**

**It is important to note that maternity leave can have a big impact on the percentage for us along with long term illness.**

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

**Our district has the option of looking at local sub certificates if needed. We have not had to use this route at this point but may need to in the future as we continue to struggle to find subs. One issue that would help would be if recently retired teachers could sub even a couple days a week right away before sitting out so many days.**

## Shelton

Question 1. I feel the primary factor for teacher absenteeism is in-service training for the various school improvement activities dictated by NDE. The vast majority of substitute pay is dedicated to teacher training. In one way or another, the training is tied to testing, school improvement process, Title, or special education mandates/training. In 30 years of education this is the area that's really grown. I know a lot of this is due to the U.S. Dept. of Educations mandates and it trickles down hill to the school districts.

If we do miss time in school for NSAA activities, it's usually the later part of the day. We tend to cover those classes "in house" with other teachers. This isn't really a big issue with our district. Most activities are at night or on the weekends.

Question 2. Our teachers missed a total of 381 days for 2016-17 school year. That averages out to 10.88 days per teacher. The days and percentages are:

Teacher In-service training: 171 days

Personal Leave: 68

Sick Leave: 142 (includes 2 teachers who took a total of 41 days maternity leave)

Maternity leave are absent an average of 5.9% of the school year.

All 381 days were covered by substitutes.

We really don't have any issues with our teachers union when it pertains to sick days, personal days, and the definitions for what they can be used for. I don't think it's come up in negotiations for years.

Question 3. I think the local substitutes have helped us. We still have a shortage every now and then. The ability to allow retired teachers to substitute immediately after they retire would be beneficial, especially at the beginning of the school year. Talking to some of our retired teachers that sub for us, they want to help out but they don't want to do it all the time. If they're taken away for our substitute pool, we'll be in a world or hurt.

## South Central

The two (2) main reasons for teacher absenteeism from the classroom are NSAA events and NDE requirements. We currently play nine (9) winter basketball games on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. In the past, I have asked our athletic director to move those games to Friday and Saturday nights. He told me we were getting resistance from other schools. Our athletic director retired this summer, so my first mission was to get those basketball games moved to the weekend. I contacted schools and all but one athletic director told me 'no'. They said their coaches don't want to give up a weekend and they want to give their kids rest. I believe the NSAA, or legislature should mandate that cross country meets, golf meets, volleyball and basketball games be moved off of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. We have to schedule substitutes when coaches have to leave early for ball games. Plus, I have a hard time finding route bus drivers, because our regular drivers drive activity busses. Track meets, wrestling tournaments, and speech contest also should be required to be held on Saturdays. These three events take the most teachers out of our building. We currently have only one Saturday track meet. The reason is school's won't schedule track and wrestling meets on Saturdays. NDE mandates cause some teachers to go to trainings during the school year, but this isn't as big of a problem. The amount of subs we are required to hire to replace these teachers to go to workshops throughout the year has grown enormously.

I don't see NSEA contract requirements as a problem. The problem is the NSAA sport schedules. Schools now play 30 plus basketball games and 30 plus volleyball games. Schools used to be limited to 16 events. The number of games have grown out of control. All of the State Football Play-off games are scheduled during the week instead of on weekends. All sub-district NSAA events are scheduled on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursdays instead of Friday and Saturdays. Last year our sub-district basketball game began on a Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. We had to dismiss students at 1:00 to get ready, ride the bus, and have a snack before the game. We had to get substitutes for all of our coaches and parents couldn't even go to the game. Our kids our missing so much school due to NSAA events. We started a career pathway program with pathways in advanced manufacturing, business, graphic arts, architecture, precision agriculture, health care, education, and next year we will also have culinary arts. We offer over 200 college credits in those pathways. Our kids don't want to miss their college courses and pathway courses. Last year, we had less than ten boys and girls out for track because all of the track meets were held during the week.

During a sports season, our coaches will need subs for up to three half days per week for basketball and volleyball. Wrestling and track coaches will miss one full day per week during season.

We have plenty of substitute teachers for normal school days. We have shortages when we have to send our coaches to games. If the games were required to be played on Friday nights and Saturdays, we would not have any problems. If the NSAA let schools schedule football games, we would not have to travel two hours one way for games. We could go back to schedule the teams that are a town away. Then we could play volleyball on Fridays and Saturday like it had been. If the NSAA stopped scheduled state playoffs and district events on Monday's and Tuesday's, and Thursday's, we wouldn't need so many subs.

Thank you so much again for conducting the study. I really believe we have enough substitute teachers if we were able to move our activities to Saturdays. Many would point the finger back to us and say you have the power to schedule those events on Saturdays. I am working hard to move events to Saturdays,

but it is difficult finding other schools to participate in events with us. Also, we could cut back on the number of games we play. I agree that this is also under our control.

## Stanton

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

(Sick child or themselves, school activities, maternity)



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

(Teachers are taking more personal and sick leave)



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

(Yes, especially in the spring, but this also includes FFA, FBLA, music, sports, etc.)



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

(Special education training, most training is not mandated but is a necessity)

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

(Average 12.5 days/year)



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

(Average 6.7%)



Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

(83%)

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

(Since many substitutes are retired teachers, don't increase the sit-out period before they are able to substitute, we just substantially increased the rate per day)



## Stuart

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Mandates from the Department of Education and Legislative requirements.



Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Professional development in-services on topics, such as: curriculum/assessment, behavioral issues with students, special education issues, safety issues, etc.



Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

I have been in administrator for more than 20 years and absences teachers/coaches have during a school year are no more than they were 20 years ago.



What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

These mandates require teachers to be absent from school more than any issue and it has become worse each and every year.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?



What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

On average, each teacher was absent 14.35 days, but maternity leave is part of this figure. Remove maternity leave, it would be around a 10 day average.



What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

8.2%



Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher? 67.78%

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

Do not force retired teachers/administrators to sit out six months or a year before allowing them to come back to sub for a school district. I would rather have them in the building than a 19 year old or someone who has no educational training to monitor a classroom.

## Sutherland

Factors causing increases for substitute teachers -

☞ Personal Days – (union contracts) - the number of personal days for many years was 2; through NSEA push with teacher negotiations the number has increased to 3-5 in many districts.

☞ Childbirth FMLA allows up to 12 weeks and the father also has leave rights.

☞ Child sickness – staff staying home with ill kids.

☞ Staff Illness/Injuries, which sometimes leads to long-term leave.

☞ The number of professional development trainings/conferences has increased over the years.

- o Trainings for state standards.

- o PBIS and other added programs over the years create absenteeism.

- o Staff on external visits for AdvancED evaluations.

- o Curriculum trainings have increased.

- ☞ Bereavement days

- ☞ School activities

- o Our district has a FFA program, which creates a lot of absences.

- o Staff absences to watch their kids.

☞ NSAA scheduled activities are just district and state activities, which does not play a big factor. Each school district schedules their regular season activities.

Allowing retired teachers to begin substituting immediately after retirement would be beneficial. Also not having a limit on the number of substitute days (NDE limits days) for a “Local Substitute Certificate” would be helpful.

## Wahoo

Thank you for reaching out for data from the districts in our State. The information I will share is specific to Wahoo Public, as that is our point of reference. I do know we compete for substitute teachers not only with surrounding small communities, but also Lincoln, Omaha, and Fremont because of our location relative to each of these larger cities.

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

At the current time, we have two driving factors for most of our teacher absences. The first is illness. However, this may include personal illness, a sick child, or maternity leave. With a large number of family-aged teachers, illness is going to be a huge factor, regardless of whether it is the teacher or a teacher's child. The second is NSAA-sanctioned activities. We are lucky enough to support many activities for our students and have great participation. However, with the number of activities and limited amount of time in a day, this does require students and teachers to leave during the school day. With that, substitute teachers must be hired to cover those classes missed.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?


A great majority (+90%) of teacher absences are covered by substitutes. Unless it is a short time (1-2 hours) or a large number of teachers absent, in-house coverage is not in the best interest of our students. On average, our teachers are out of the classroom less than 10 days during a 185-day contract. This includes illness, personal, and professional leaves. The negotiated agreement encourages our teachers to be here, through bankable sick days and accumulated personal time.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

The piece that we find most difficult most often is the required Human Relations course at a college level. There have been changes to make coaching certification more user-friendly. If there were a way to make the Human Relations course more user-friendly (offered online, offered in-house within a district, allow an ESU you to provide the class), it might be easier to get more teachers certificated to teach.

## Wayne


1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

The trend is that there are more teachers absent from classrooms, most of the absences are professional in nature for professional development, school improvement, and school activities.

 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

Yes. Some activities require more absences than others. Golf and Track are the main activities that require teachers/coaches to be gone.

 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?


Often times teachers need to attend professional development for training, especially training on assessments. School districts are asked to send representative teachers to help with assessment development. School improvement and data training workshops are also reasons teachers miss. Most of these are important to have teachers attend, our district only sends staff when we feel it will be beneficial to our students.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?


Teachers receive 10 sick days per year, accumulating to 55. Of those 10 days, 4 may be used for personal days. A teacher can also use bereavement leave with their sick days.

 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

10 days. This includes work related absences and illness/personal days.

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

Approximately 6% on average.

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

Most days are covered by a sub. If a teacher only needs to miss a period or two an administrator or teacher covers the class.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?


It is important to make sure that substitute teachers are of high quality so I don't believe requirements should be less. One consideration might be to make available workshops for substitute teachers prior to and throughout the school year. This might give them some basic training that would help them in the classroom. When we have a sub we want the educational process to continue as much as possible.

## West Point-Beemer


I believe that there has been a narrative for the past several years that are impacting our teacher pool. I have been in education for the past 30 years. I recall living in western, serving as an elementary principal, When we had a teacher opening I would receive over 100 applicants. Last year we had an elementary opening and I received four application.

There has been a negative narrative for the past ten years, both nationally and state. If we are going to preserve our public education system, I believe the narrative needs to change.

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher? **We have some teachers that never miss a day, we have others that stay home with a cold. Over all I believe school activities play a large part of this issue.**

 Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?  
**We have made policy changes to try to eliminate over use of personal days.**


 Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?  
**Yes, ie, Golf, Softball, track meets have the greatest impact.**


 What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?


**I believe that tenure, and the entitlement attitude of educators in general has an impact on teacher and administrator attendance. With that being said, national average is that new teachers stay on the job for three years, they can make more money working elsewhere. Example: My daughter began her career as a nurse this past year, she is starting at \$60,000 a year. it will take a teacher 15 years of service and obtaining a master's degree to reach this salary. Please don't get me wrong, I believe that teachers are underpaid, but with the current pay structure there is little a board can do you change it. I do not believe that you should get a raise just because you have another year of experience, nor do I believe that all college course work makes you a better teacher.**

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

**It all has a great impact, but it reverts back to the individual teacher.**

 What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?  
**6.6 per person**

 What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?  
**7 days**

 Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?  
**all**

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

**This is a great question, Currently, we hire teachers out of there endorsed area to substitute teach, you may have a middle school English teacher covering for a high level Science teacher, thus the impact on**

instruction is less than desirable. I believe that substitute teachers could really be anyone. Perhaps the requirement I would make is in pay differential if the substitute has a teaching degree or not.

## Westside

1. What do you believe to be the primary factors responsible for a teacher's absence from the classroom which necessitates the need for a substitute teacher?

Illness, including personal, family, and FMLA, is far and above the primary reason for teacher absence and need for a substitute. On average, a teacher is out 5.64 days a year due to illness. Illness is higher than all of the other reasons for absences combined.

- Over the recent past, what is the trend in teacher absenteeism from their classrooms?

Although we find no discernable trend line, we do find the number of illness days relating to FMLA regulations allowing staff to be out for up to 12 weeks with maternity leave, medical situation or chronic illness of a family member has had an effect on teacher absenteeism.

- Does scheduling of time and days for NSAA events play a factor in teachers being absent?

This is very minimal. The district works with NSAA and is very proactive to assure classrooms are covered.

The average teacher requiring a substitute is out .35 days per year for NSAA events.

- What mandates from the Department of Education, Legislative requirements, or the timing of professional development opportunities affect a teacher's attendance in the classroom?

There are several mandates that require professional development.

These include Mandt, suicide prevention, concussion protocol, blood borne pathogens, CPR, CPI, safety procedures and dating violence prevention.

Also, when standards are updated/changed, additional curriculum writing and development is required.

2. How do union contract negotiations concerning employee personal days, sick days, and their expectations on the use of these days play into the effect of substitute teacher demand?

Westside Community Schools works diligently with our WEA through our negotiation process to address issues concerning teacher absenteeism.

Through these discussions we have proactively managed and addressed unfilled jobs resulting from the substitute teacher shortage.

- What is the average number of days FTE teachers are absent from the classroom?

During the 2016-17 school year, our teachers were out of the classroom an average of 9.10 days.

- What percentage of total contract days are teachers absent from their classrooms?

During the 2016-17 school year, our teachers were absent 4.76% of their contract days.

- Of the days a teacher is absent, how many of those days are covered by a substitute teacher?

When school is in session with students, coverage is required for all classroom teachers. We cover all positions through the use of substitute teachers or by having certified staff cover from within.

3. What changes could be made to substitute teacher requirements that would widen the pool of candidates?

- o Allow retired teachers to substitute as needed after retirement (recently retired teachers are some of the best substitute teachers as they have current knowledge of curriculum and instruction methods)

- o Continue to provide flexibility in obtaining the State/Local Substitute

Permits – for example: additional days, review Praxis and Human Relations, accept other State Certifications (reciprocity)

## Wilcox Hildreth

Most Teachers Absence Days are due to 1) staff members missing for childbirth, 2) illness 1-2 days, 3) Long-Term illness or injury due to cancer or a spouse with terminal illness

Trends vary from year to year due to young staff having children during the school year, or other illness related issues

Scheduling of school activities does affect teacher absenteeism, but not any more than 20 years ago. Mandated Professional Development activities have increased over the past ten years. We try to limit PD, but many of these are mandated.

2. Union contracts: I'm not sure what you are requesting here. Teachers become ill and have the right to be absent from their work.

a. Each teacher was absent an average of 14 days over the nine month period.

b. Teachers were absent about 7.9% of the contracted time

c. All classes were covered by a substitute, but some of the substitutes were teachers who are currently on staff and were not paid. 90% of the time the class was covered by a paid substitute.

3. We currently allow people without teaching certificates to substitute as long as they receive a Local Substitute Certificate. If we allowed retired teachers to substitute immediately rather than waiting 6 months, this would help.

ONE MAJOR FACTOR KEEPING KIDS FROM ATTENDING CLASS IS THE INCREASE IN STATE/FEDERAL MANDATED ASSESSMENTS-THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ASSESSMENTS HAS BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.



## **Potential Next Steps**

- I will continue to work with interested parties to identify, remove or implement statutory and or regulatory changes necessary to ensure that substitute teacher needs of local school districts are met.