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Technology Cultivates K-12 Success

Creating a Better Work Experience for School Staff in 2021-22

This report is based on a survey of 200 central office administrators in K-12 public schools across the U.S. conducted by UKG. It explores the critical role of back-office technology during the 2020-21 school year and forward-looking opportunities to create a more technology-enabled work experience for educators and staff.

COVID-19 Exacerbates Preexisting Labor Shortages, Teacher Burnout

K-12 public school districts desperately seek skilled talent to fill record-high job openings. Demand for teachers, substitutes, and school staff surged during the 2020-21 school year.

2 in 3 districts had difficulty retaining teachers during the 2020-21 school year and relied "heavily" on overtime to cover unplanned absences.

7 in 10 were impacted by an unexpected increase in teacher retirements and have struggled to replace headcount.

Meanwhile, fewer than **2 in 3** have so far implemented proactive strategies to prevent and address teacher burnout in the 2021-22 school year.

79%
reported a shortage of SUBSTITUTES

71%
reported a shortage of TEACHERS

70%
reported a shortage of NON-TEACHING STAFF

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Critical Focus:
Solving for the K-12 Teacher Shortage

What central office administrators are saying:

63% "We have lost teachers to other districts because they sought a more 'cutting edge' technology experience."

94% "Compared to before the pandemic, teachers now have higher expectations regarding technology at work."

"Our K-12 research finds outdated back-office technology is costing districts more than just time, dollars, and lost grant monies — it's costing them their people and negatively impacting student success. To retain and attract high-performing teachers and staff in a tight labor market, now is the time to leverage ample COVID-19 funding to invest in creating a quality employee experience."

Rob Tibbs,
K-12 industry principal, UKG

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Schools Are Overdue for a Technology Upgrade

Although 93% of central office administrators agree investing in back-office K-12 technology is a good use of taxpayer dollars, nearly a quarter (24%) said it's been more than three years since their district implemented or significantly upgraded back-office systems, and 5% said it's been at least seven years.

Spotlight on Substitutes

Nearly 9 in 10 K-12 districts (87%) have deployed a Substitute Management system, and yet close to 1 in 3 central office administrators (31%) said finding and managing substitutes is oftentimes still a manual process.

"Using a digital solution for substitute tracking doesn't promise a more streamlined process. The key is in the integration of labor data and the ability to automatically link teacher and substitute schedules, timecards, locations, and pay rates in a unified system. For instance, compensating substitutes based on actual hours worked is a crucial step in controlling labor costs and managing compliance, but just half of K-12 districts have the technology foundation to do it."

**Rob Tibbs,
K-12 industry
principal, UKG**

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What central office administrators are saying:

87% "I wish my district was more advanced with regards to back-office technology."

72% Outdated back-office solutions and processes are negatively impacting student success."

67% "My district lacks critical HR functionality to support strategic human resources planning."

So, what's the hold up?

More than 9 in 10 respondents (92%) claim new back-office solutions are generally well-received by teachers, but 3 in 4 said technology adoption is also a common source of stress (76%). Common barriers that have prevented or delayed districts from investing in new or upgraded back-office technology include:

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Limited funding	**57%**
Budget cuts	**49%**
Lack of vision or strategy within the district	**45%**
School board approvals	**42%**
Union negotiations	**37%**
Other priorities take precedence (e.g., curriculum technology, school infrastructure)	**31%**

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An Opportunity to Automate

Manual Processes Plague Public Schools Across the Country

Relying on manual processes to complete core HR, finance, and payroll processes limits opportunity to harness valuable data and leaves room for costly errors and inaccuracies, while outsourcing can itself prove inefficient as third-party costs add up.
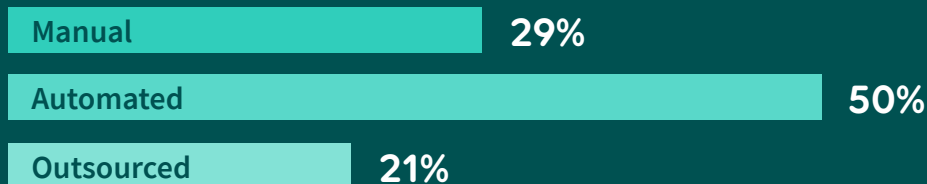
HR Processes

Manual	34%
Automated	42%
Outsourced	24%

Finance Processes

Manual	32%
Automated	49%
Outsourced	20%
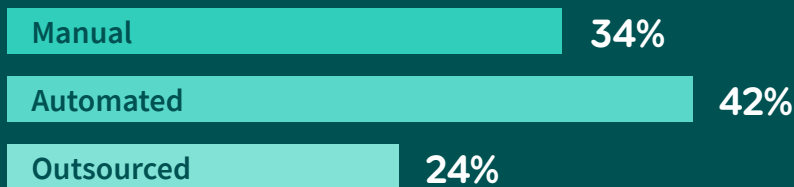
Payroll Processes
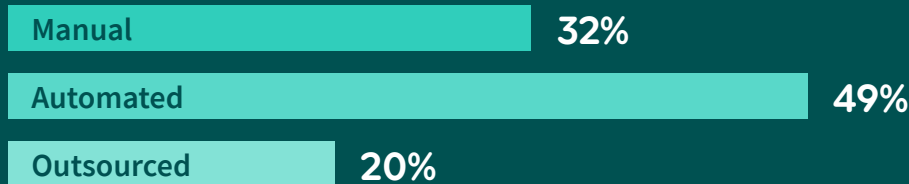
Manual	29%
Automated	50%
Outsourced	21%

Note: Percentages are rounded

Every minute spent doing repetitive, low-value work is a minute not spent on student success.

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Q: Typically, which processes are completed manually within your district?

1 in 2 said

Employee Onboarding

Did you know: **9 in 10 K-12 districts** have an Employee Onboarding solution — yet 83% admit the onboarding process still involves "a lot" of manual paperwork. Bottom line: A digital solution doesn't guarantee an automated, digitized process.

2 in 5 said

Managing Overtime | Personnel Activity Reports | Processing Time-off Requests | Recruiting & Hiring | Tracking Extra Duty Time

Did you know: To request time off, **2 out of 5 districts** still require teachers to manually call, email, or inform their school in person.

Did you know: **2 in 3 districts** estimate 20-40% of their workforce perform secondary jobs outside of their main role, posing a massive administrative burden for districts manually tracking extra duty hours, rates, funding sources, and approvals.

1 in 3 said

Benefits Administration | Certification & CEU Tracking | Employee Scheduling | Finding & Managing Substitutes | Managing Labor Law Compliance | Recording Teacher Absences

1 in 4 said

Calculating Leave Accruals

1 in 5 said

Tracking Employee COVID-19 Vaccinations

Did you know: **1 in 10 districts** do not track COVID-19 vaccinations at all — and among those that do, fewer than half (48%) said records are being tracked consistently districtwide via a central database.
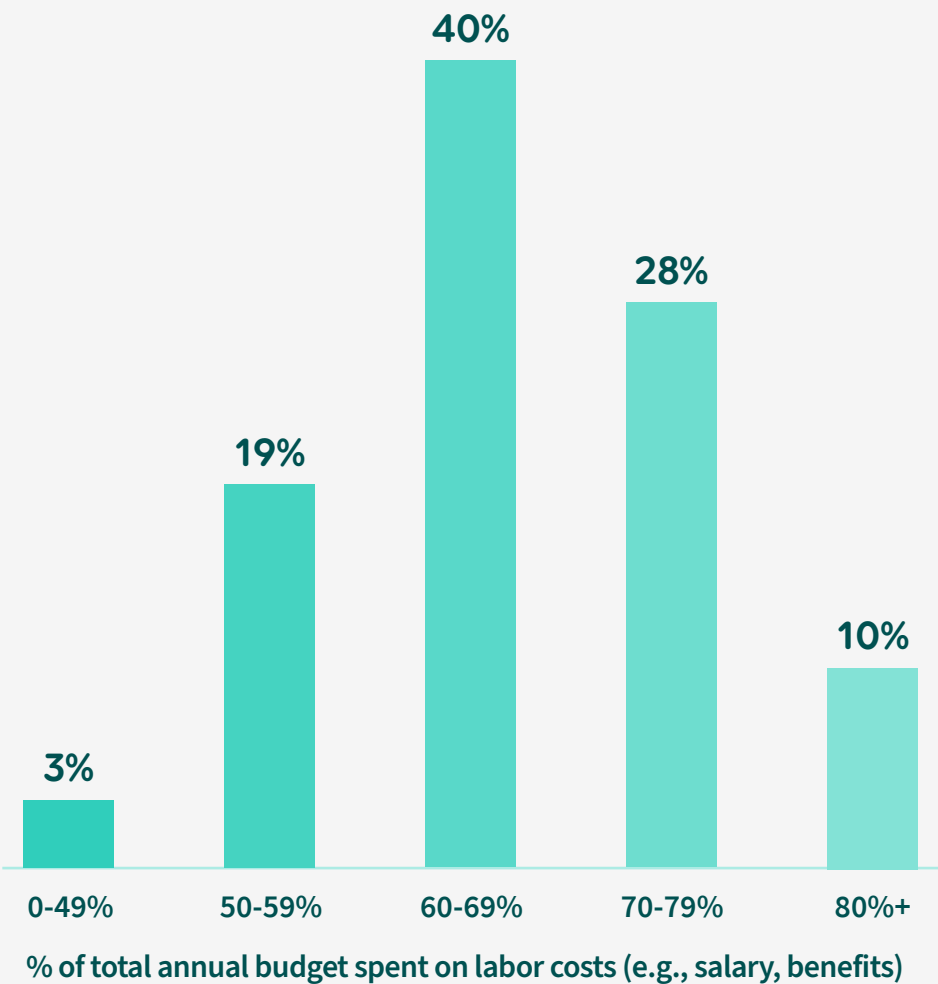
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Is districtwide labor data accessible via a centralized system?

53% YES | NO **47%**

## Although central office administrators reported that labor costs account for the majority of their district's budget:

47% lack sufficient technology to manage labor costs in real time

Just 44% use labor data to maximize funding across their schools

Only 39% use teacher absence data to measure direct impacts to student performance

K-12's Largest Operating Cost: Labor Spend

0-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70-79%	80%+
3%	19%	40%	28%	10%

% of total annual budget spent on labor costs (e.g., salary, benefits)

40%

of central office administrators said payroll errors were common throughout the 2020-21 school year.

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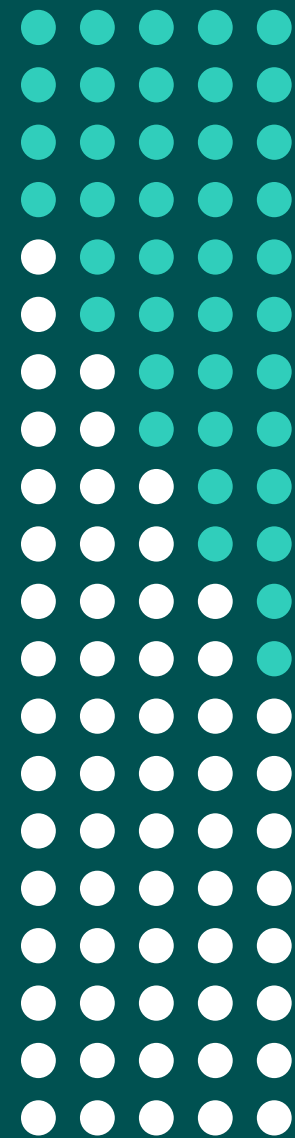
Spotlight on Grant Reporting

Grant compliance and reporting requires extensive data collection, validation, and submission to numerous state and federal funding agencies. This is a complicated and error-prone task when data is tracked manually — especially considering the volume of reporting many schools undertake:

More than a quarter of districts (28%) report to 10 or more funding agencies, while 71% report to no less than five.

28% — 1-4
43% — 5-9
26% — 10-14
2% — 15+

Number of funding agencies

66%
"Decentralized systems implemented across my district have led to inconsistent processes and workflows."

67% said grant reporting is made difficult due to lack of consistency: Each school throughout their district tracks labor data differently.

65% have had difficulty meeting stringent reporting requirements related to COVID-19 relief funds.

72% plan to use at least a portion of their district's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to invest in back-office technology.

"In many ways, public schools are either forced to leave free money on the table or are unaware of the total funds available to them, simply because districtwide labor data isn't centralized, visible, or easily managed."

**Rob Tibbs,
K-12 industry principal, UKG**

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What's the Verdict on Vaccines, Masks, Health Checks for Fall?

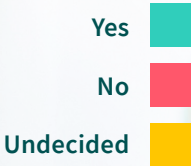**Teachers must disclose whether they've gotten the COVID-19 vaccine**

70%	21%	9%

Substitutes must disclose whether they've gotten the COVID-19 vaccine

60%	24%	16%

All school staff must mask up, including vaccinated employees

69%	18%	13%

All school staff must complete daily health checks

68%	20%	13%

Yes
No
Undecided

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"Public schools have grappled with many challenges since March 2020, though not all are new. Budget shortfalls year after year have continuously required districts to 'do more with less' — which is a rising source of burnout among teachers and staff — and prevented many from investing in critical back-office technology resources. Now, as the nation's prolonged labor crisis affords jobseekers greater career flexibility, these are common factors driving K-12 talent to other districts, out of a career in education, or voluntarily out of the workforce altogether.

With technology to support consistent back-office processes and workflows, with centralization to unify data and simplify reporting, and with automation to streamline day-to-day tasks for administrators, educators, and staff, K-12 leaders can propel their districts forward and create the competitive and rewarding technology-enabled experience sought by today's top talent."

**Rob Tibbs,
K-12 industry principal, UKG**

About UKG

At UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group), our purpose is people™. Built from a merger that created one of the largest cloud companies in the world, UKG believes organizations succeed when they focus on their people. As a leading global provider of HCM, payroll, HR service delivery, and workforce management solutions, UKG delivers award-winning Pro, Dimensions, and Ready solutions to help tens of thousands of organizations across geographies and in every industry drive better business outcomes, improve HR effectiveness, streamline the payroll process, and help make work a better, more connected experience for everyone. UKG has more than 12,000 employees around the globe and is known for an inclusive workplace culture. The company has earned numerous awards for culture, products, and services, including consecutive years on Fortune's *100 Best Companies to Work For* list. To learn more, visit ukg.com.

Survey Methodology

This report is based on research conducted by UKG between July 22 and August 3, 2021, analyzing responses from 204 central office administrators spanning HR, Finance, and Payroll functions within K-12 public schools in the U.S. This study explores the need for investment in back-office technologies in K-12 environments as well as the technology hurdles and staffing challenges schools faced over the 2020-21 school year, emphasizing opportunities to automate, centralize, and simplify processes to ensure a more streamlined at-work experience for teachers and staff this fall and beyond.

For Additional Information:
www.ukg.com/k12insight

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Our purpose is people