



Filling the Gaps: How Modern, People-Centric Solutions Boost K-12 Success



Rob Tibbs, K-12 Industry Principal, UKG

For decades, school districts across the U.S. have been struggling to do more with less:

Budget constraints are established top-down at the state level; academic performance and success have increased in societal significance but not in resource allocation; and the national teacher shortage, combined with rising departures, shows no signs of letting up.

To help address some of these concerns, most districts have adopted an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution to support financial planning and stability. While these solutions work at a transactional level, they lack critical HR functionality that can leave out — and often hinder — strategic human resources and labor planning. Over time, this has uprooted the technology landscape of K-12 systems, leaving many districts and personnel to create new manual processes or cobble together a combination of disparate systems in order to meet their needs and support their people.

The coronavirus pandemic shed further light on these gaps in functionality, as many employees began to work virtually within disparate and clunky systems that don't connect with one another. And for large school districts in particular, the challenge of managing time and attendance data for thousands of employees — already a costly and time-consuming process — is only exacerbated when there's no digital platform in place to automate and reconcile the data.

By strategically investing in a modern human capital management (HCM) solution, school districts can fill these age-old HR gaps and optimize their back-office workflows by consolidating data streams and providing better visibility into key metrics — all while reducing the need for intervention by staff who are already stretched thin. Ultimately, this centralized technology approach is key to improving productivity, better managing labor budgets, and creating a seamless, user-friendly experience for employees from hire to retire.

The national teacher shortage, combined with rising departures, shows no signs of letting up.

Fill critical process gaps to reimagine the employee experience

For an industry historically predicated upon in-person and on-site roles, school districts were upended by the pandemic, as many back-office employees transitioned to remote work and were forced to rethink how they manage their individual functions. The past year has been eye-opening for many districts, as virtual work laid bare the archaic processes and system deficiencies that can have a direct result on employee productivity and engagement.

The strategic inclusion of an HCM solution alongside existing financial and budgetary solutions can break down back-office barriers and create a more efficient and agile workflow for the many people-oriented tasks coordinated by school staff and administrators.

The past year has been eye-opening for many districts, as virtual work laid bare the archaic processes and system deficiencies that can have a direct result on employee productivity and engagement.

Onboarding new employees

Bringing on new employees is an exciting but tedious process with countless tasks, including automating new-hire checklists and communicating important information ahead of day one. For many districts, this is still a manual process, meaning mountains of paperwork for staff. And even if onboarding is done electronically through online forms, it remains a cumbersome process hampered by cobbled-together solutions. By tapping into the power of a true HCM platform, school districts can not only automate and streamline the vast majority of the back-end work, they can also incorporate onboarding into their district-wide HR and employee lifecycle strategy.



Renewing and tracking teacher certifications

Teaching certifications have to be renewed on a regular basis, and when school districts have thousands of teachers — each with their own individual renewal date — tracking these certification dates can be difficult and cumbersome. An HCM platform is able to not only track certifications but also ensure there is an intelligent renewal process in place to properly renew certificates based on teaching field and expiration date and notify the appropriate stakeholders.

Ensuring ample resources for each school year

The allocation of headcount and funding is a never-ending chess match: Staff members, principals, and superintendents all play a role in securing resources at the grade, district, and state level based on a variety of inputs. Because employee resources are directly connected to student counts and state-level funding, the impetus has never been greater for school districts to carefully and comprehensively manage their allocation process. An inaccurate employee count or a misplaced number can actually decrease critical funding for the entire school year — and if planning is left to pen and paper or manual spreadsheets, these human errors can become more common.

Doing nothing hinders long-term, people-centric success

School districts must start managing their workforce like any other strategic asset — because, for so many districts, the workforce is their largest operating expense: As much as 90% of the budget in any given school district is devoted to its people through salary and benefits.

When districts efficiently and effectively manage their workforce through a seamless integration of HCM and ERP solutions, they are able to achieve key benefits across the district, including cost savings, gains in productivity, important steps toward compliance, and better adherence to district policies.



“
Simply put, for most K-12 school districts, if you can't manage your labor, you can't manage your budget. This is why it's so important for HR and finance to work together in a cohesive human capital management platform: A unified view of labor data makes it so much easier to efficiently manage staff across schools and optimize critical — and often limited — resources.”

Kenneth Owen
Chief Financial Officer, Cherokee County Public Schools

Particularly in a post-pandemic era when budgets continue to be strained, the adoption of an HCM solution can help school districts better understand where they have room to minimize back-office administrative time and resources. Consistent and consumer-friendly technology across schools will not only minimize risk of noncompliance — it will create a uniform employee experience that helps attract new recruits, boost engagement, and, as a result, increase retention.

Conclusion

All K-12 school districts are working toward one singular shared mission: To drive student success. By investing in technology that streamlines repetitive and time-consuming administrative tasks, districts can free up their employees to spend more time with students and dedicate more resources toward educating and empowering the next generation.

School systems across the country are at a crossroads: Dissatisfaction with decades of using outdated and homegrown solutions is intersecting with momentum to modernize K-12 districts and bring their back-office processes into the 21st century. If districts don't explore technologies that can empower their employees and optimize their educational infrastructure, they may miss this opportunity and return to an antiquated status quo.

While there may never be a return to complete pre-pandemic normalcy, school districts are already shifting to create a safer and more inspiring in-person educational experience. District leaders must extend this engaging experience to their school personnel in order to ensure their long-term success for generations to come.



Our purpose is people

© 2021 UKG Inc. All rights reserved.

For a full list of UKG trademarks, please visit ukg.com/trademarks.
All other trademarks, if any, are property of their respective owners.
All specifications are subject to change. Project #PS0579