



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

260 Madison Oak Park Illinois 60302 ph: 708.524.3000 fax: 708.524.3019 [www.op97.org](http://www.op97.org)

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TO: Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent of Schools Board of Education

FROM: Laurie Campbell, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources  
Cathy Hamilton, District Administrator for Substitutes and Teaching Assistants

RE: Long-Term Substitute Update

DATE: December 19, 2017

District 97 hires long-term substitutes to cover absences for teachers and teaching assistants that last more than a week due to illness or leaves of absence. The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 provides eligible employees with unpaid leave up to a maximum of 60 work days for birth/adoption or for a serious health condition. The district's collective bargaining agreements with the Oak Park Teachers' Association, Oak Park Teaching Assistants' Association, Oak Park Educational Support Personnel Association and Service Employees International Union have provisions about leaves of absence.

Leaves of absence requiring long-term substitutes vary in length. FMLA leaves can last up to 60 work days while leave provisions in some of the collective bargaining agreements allow for a maximum of two years based on eligibility criteria. Some long-term leaves are as short as ten days.

Leaves of absence can occur with advance notice and with little notice. Staff members attempt to notify the District in advance when an extended leave of absence is needed. The length of the leave, the advance notice prior to the leave, and the subject area taught all impact the District's speed in securing a long-term substitute. Planned leaves are easier to fill than the unexpected leaves. Planned leaves give the District time to post a position if needed. Planned leaves also allow time to review the current substitute pool to find candidates that have the education and experience that best matches the skill set needed for the position.

There are times, however, when unexpected events occur that result in the immediate need for a long-term sub to fill an absence. In the event of an unexpected leave, the immediate goal is to find a substitute teacher who can cover the class starting on the first day. If the substitute is qualified and available to continue on as the long-term sub, then no further search for a long-term substitute is needed. If the substitute is not qualified to sub for the duration of the leave, he/she will remain in the class until the district can find a long-term sub with the appropriate qualifications/endorsements.

Currently, the most difficult to fill positions are long-term substitute teaching assistants. The rate of pay for these the teaching assistant substitutes is lower than market. The administration will be bringing a recommendation to the Board of Education to increase this rate of pay in January.

Once selected for a long-term substitute teaching position, the substitute teacher is supported at the school level. Middle school long-term subs participate in grade level and department meetings during the planning time throughout the school day. Support for long-term substitute teachers is also provided by the International Baccalaureate Coordinator and/or the instructional coach on site. Middle school long-term substitutes attend Wednesday morning professional development building meetings with the rest of the faculty.

Elementary long-term subs attend grade level/department meetings and professional development meetings on Wednesdays along with the rest of the faculty. They receive support from members of their grade level team/department. They work with the Instructional Coach, Gifted and Talented teacher, and grade level lead teacher. All long-terms substitutes are required to attend Institute Days with their teaching colleagues. Administration provides additional support as needed. Starting with the second semester, Human Resources will begin visiting long-term substitute teachers on a regular basis at their work site.

In order to be better prepared for absence needs, the Human Resources Department has been reviewing substitutes listed as active in the District's substitute pool. Review of the substitute pool began in earnest in August of 2017 when the district's absence management system included 332 active substitute teachers. All 332 substitutes received a letter assuring continued employment for the 2017-2018 school year. Substitutes were asked to indicate whether or not they wished to continue substitute teaching in District 97. The letter was sent three times to the 332 substitutes.

As a result of the attempts to confirm the number of substitute teachers, Human Resources staff found that 48 substitutes were no longer available to work and 128 did not respond to the letters. As of October 1st, the District had 156 active substitutes. Between October and November, 45 new substitutes were hired. As of December 1st, the number of active substitutes employed in District 97 increased to 201. Human Resources has established a goal of increasing this number to 220 by the end of the 2017-2018 school year. A larger and active substitute pool serves as a resource for long-term needs and provides sufficient substitutes for the day-to-day absences.

The Board requested data on the use of long-term substitute teachers. Below please find the number of long-term substitute teachers actively employed at various times during the 2017-2018 school year.

- At the start of the 2017-2018 school year (August) - 9
- At the end of the first trimester (November) - 10
- Currently (December) -13
- Projected for second trimester (March) - 12
- Projected for third trimester (June) - 8

*Note: District 97 employees 506 teachers and 111 teaching assistants.*