



Centralized Supply Educator Recruitment, Training and Deployment Developing a Solution

by **Ginette Bédard**, RECE/EPEI

Every supervisor knows the dread of hearing the phone ring at 6:00 a.m.; you feel bad that one of your team members is unwell but it also means a replacement has to be found. The search begins not always knowing who is available.

From the supply educator perspective there is the frustration that your phone rings five times between 6:00 to 6:15 when you are already scheduled to work somewhere – but last week when you were available no one called! Committing to an erratic work schedule may not be financially feasible and ultimately dissuades individuals from this opportunity.

In 2011, with the financial assistance of a private donor, Andrew Fleck Child Care Services (AFCCS) developed an internal supply educator service by centralizing the recruitment and deployment of supply staff for our own licensed child care sites. We wanted to reduce duplication of recruitment efforts and eliminate the stress educators felt in having to find someone last minute often when feeling unwell. We were able to capitalize on our existing Short Term Child Care Program, where we send a caregiver to the parents' home when the child is mildly ill, when regular child care arrangements are interrupted, or when other family emergencies

My 26 year old daughter is returning to school so I suggested that she re-join the supply educator list. “No Thanks” was her quick response. She disliked being called multiple times very early in the morning particularly when she was already scheduled or had already indicated she was unavailable. When I explained the new tool we were using she was thrilled, and because of it, is willing to be a supply educator again.

arise. This service was already recruiting caregivers, answering telephone requests for care, and deploying individuals to parents' homes so it was an easy extension to offer this service to our licensed locations as well. Our educators quickly came to appreciate that they only had to call one number to have a friendly person take over the process of contacting and deploying a supply educator to their program site.

As expected, we had other centres asking if there was any way that they too could use our centralized deployment system, always wanting to be supportive of the sector as a whole, we started thinking about this as a possibility but we were intimidated by the potential volume of calls and data management.

We had the opportunity to showcase our initiative at the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) 2013 provincial conference and there was the answer to our concerns! How exciting it was to learn about SmartFind Express—eSchool Solutions - an automated supply educator deployment tool being used effectively by the City of Peterborough and by school boards in Canada and the USA for the past 20 years, to manage the deployment of teacher replacements.

We have now been using SmartFind Express—eSchool Solutions since 2014 to facilitate the management and deployment of all of our supply educators; an average of 90 placements a month for eight sites. The tool is extremely robust and customizable and full of features highly beneficial for the early years' sector. Here is how:

- Employees login or call to create an absence, send messages, attach notes etc.
- The centre identifies parameters when a supply educator will be called – e.g. if the absence is due to planned vacation, the absence has to be approved by the supervisor first –



I have finished interviewing one of your graduates from the training course and she was wonderful! I had to email to let you know how great it was to see her confidence. She came fully prepared with all of the necessary paperwork and is so eager to start supplying. Thanks for putting together this wonderful course.

Audrey Richards, RECE, Director

but if the absence is due to a sick day, absence is approved automatically.

- Supply staff manage their profiles and update their availability – so they are only called when available and if they have accepted a job elsewhere they are not called.
- When an absence has been created, the system calls available supply educators and continues to call supplies that are approved by the individual centres until a replacement is found.
- The system follows a certain order in its calling supply educators that is based on established rankings entered by the centre and/or program room and/or educator.
- There is a great variety of reports that can be easily saved in Word, Excel, PDF and printed off.
- There is the option of using the system for maintaining staff attendance records & payroll as well.

Once we became comfortable with the tool, we were ready to share its features with other licensed child care agencies in and around the Ottawa area. We are thrilled that the cost is so reasonable: \$1.00 per month for each employee. So for a centre with 10 staff, the cost is \$10.00 a month or \$120.00 a year! Each centre is still responsible for recruiting, approving and employing their own supply staff; the employee or supply information from one centre to another is not shared but if a supply educator is approved for multiple centres and is already booked by one site they will not be called. Each site also has the flexibility of setting their own parameters; for example, when calls for replacements are made (e.g. calling for available vacancies starts at 5:30 p.m. for the next day but another site might choose that calling but does not start until 6:00 PM when their centre closes).

While the tool has been of great assistance, one challenge continues to be recruiting *quality* individuals interested in being supply educators. To address the growing demand in Ottawa we applied for and received a small amount of funding from the City of Ottawa to recruit and train individuals interested in becoming supply educators. The intention of the funding was to provide introductory training to non-ECE individuals interested

in being considered as supply educators so they could apply directly to any licensed centre in the community. We surveyed our community to identify what skills and information were most important for potential supply educators to have and from there we developed four training modules, in English and French to support the success of untrained individuals. Forty-nine people participated in the training. Since completing the training we have been sending the participants' surveys asking if they are working out. We are proud to share that 50 percent are working as much as they would like. Our hope is that, for individuals who have an interest and enthusiasm to work with children, this minimum training opportunity will support their success and lead them to continue their education.

This year, we have over 200 additional individuals interested in participating and recently we posted the training on our website at www.shorttermchildcare.ca

We are really looking forward to continue working on the training and recruitment of supply educators, partnering up with both English and French child care programs from our community and working even more closely with SmartFindExpress—eSchool Solutions staff.

We are very excited to implement some additional integrated functionality, specifically the *TeacherMatchThrive* Management System which has features to support the recruitment of supply educators in math.

More information about SmartFindExpress—eSchool Solutions can be found at <http://sf.teachermatch.org> or by contacting Karim Kuperhause at kkuperhause@teachermatch.org.

Andrew Fleck Child Care Services has always taken a leadership role in the child care community and in early childhood education. Over the past 100 years, in response to the changing needs of the community, it has developed innovative programs and expanded the organization to provide a comprehensive range of services that meet the diverse early learning and child care needs of families in the City of Ottawa. AFCCS takes pride in being innovative, progressive, responsive and - most importantly - committed to excellence in all its services.

As a newer child care site of Andrew Fleck Child Care Services using SmartFindExpress, I think that this tool is amazing! I get notified if any staff are booking a supply if they are sick; it's easy and user friendly; it's extremely convenient since we can book in a weekly block; it's nice that we can access it from any computer; I like how you can request certain supply teachers, and it's also nice to pre-arrange work coverage with a supply teacher in advance.

Christine Rahal, RECE, Program Coordinator