



# **Hiring Challenges: 2021-2022**

# **Belmont Public Schools**

Belmont School Committee  
Tuesday, 10/19/2021



## A different experience this year

- Traditionally, Belmont has been fortunate when it came to hiring
  - Proximity to the Boston/Cambridge
  - “Feeder system” of nearby universities and schools of education
  - Positive reputation of the system
  - Competitive wages
- This year, something feels different and simply working harder -- our traditional strategy when things are difficult -- is no longer enough. Asked one principal, *“Is this what a market correction feels like?”*

# New year, new challenges

- 2021-2022 is proving to be more challenging on the hiring front for many systems
- Belmont is no longer the exception to the rule
- We are seeing hiring challenges in a way that we have never seen before
- NPR has recently been doing a series on this very issue; while none have been about Belmont, specifically, they all could have been





## BPS Current Openings

- Fiscal Coordinator
- Athletic Trainer
- Cafeteria Worker
- Food Service Workers (4)
- Custodians - Temporary (2)
- COVID Test Program Coordinator
- Nurse
- Nurse Substitute
- Daily Substitute Teacher
- Building Based Substitute (4)
- Lunch Aide (8)
- METCO Professional Aide (3)
- METCO Bus Monitor
- Professional Aide (16)
- METCO Tutor
- These are all in addition to our typical short term, maternity leave, long term openings...



## A few examples...

- Fewer applicants are applying overall
  - Whereas we used to get up to 20 applicants to even LTS positions, some openings currently have zero (0) applicants
- Our “daily fill rate” for daily substitutes -- an important statistic that we look at each day -- is consistently lower than pre-COVID rates
  - This results in Professional Aides being pulled from their daily assignments to cover classes
- Our nominal daily substitute roster is down by 25% from the pre-COVID level
- We are experiencing increased “ghosting” by candidates who apply, interview, receive an offer but do not complete paperwork
- Upon analysis our Athletic Trainer position, which is funded via stipend, pays \$10-15,000 lower than surrounding towns
- Upon analysis our Head Cook positions, which is funded via revolving funds, ranked 36th out of 45 school districts in terms of pay
- We are relying on volunteers more often
- Principals and APs are spending more time communicating with substitutes and juggling coverage
- Principals and APs are filling shortages themselves, instead of leading (i.e. covering lunch duty)



## What are the major barriers?

- Increasing competition from private businesses
  - Wages across the food service industry, especially, have risen elsewhere
    - Dunkin Donuts, for example, is paying \$18 / hour
- Concerns working among younger, unvaccinated students
  - Fewer subs volunteering for elementary openings
- Increased workload (especially school lunch participation rates)
- College degree qualification for Professional Aide positions



## New approaches for 2021-2022

- This year, we have:
  - Increased the number of platforms we are advertising on (Applitrack, School Spring, Indeed, NATA, LinkedIn)
  - Increased our networking/outreach efforts (including a letter to Belmont parents/guardians)
  - Offered higher rates of pay where we have the discretion to do so (daily rates for substitutes)
  - Conducting weekly pool interviews for daily substitutes
  - Hiring multiple part-time people to fill single positions
  - Partnering with MASPAs to share challenges and solutions
  - Added new positions, especially temporary positions
  - Coordinated with the National Guard, per Governor Baker's offer, to assist with testing and vaccination efforts