



# Aesop Q&A for Employees

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#### **Q1: What is Aesop?**

Aesop is an automated paperless sub calling and leave tracking system being implemented that will replace the current system of manually calling subs from a substitute list and manually tracking leaves at the school level.

**Q2: Why are we using Aesop?**

The current system of calling substitutes and recording leaves is inefficient and often results in the same substitute receiving multiple calls to sub for the same day of absence. Aesop can call multiple substitutes at one time, as well as send out e-mail notifications to qualified subs. Aesop also eliminates the need for paper leave requests, and allows you to have real-time access to your leave records.

**Q3: Which employees will be required to use Aesop?**

For the first stage of implementation, all licensed educators, administrators, paraeducators, library staff, school clerical staff, Technology staff, and CCSU staff shall be required to use Aesop to submit all leave requests report. This holds true regardless of whether or not a substitute is needed. For those departments not required to use Aesop to record absences (i.e., EJP, Rink, Property Services, Food Services, and Safety/Security), the Director will need to run reports from Aesop in order to find an approved substitute (since there will no longer be a substitute list to reference).

**Q4: When will employees be expected to start using Aesop?**

Aesop will be used for absences beginning 7/1/11.

**Q5: How do I access Aesop?**

All specified employees will receive a welcome letter directly from the Aesop system. Included in this letter will be the link to Aesop, as well as your username and password. If you are not returning for the 2011-12 school year, you likely will not be receiving the welcome letter. If you don't receive this welcome letter and believe you should have, please e-mail Deb Robbins at [drobbins@ccsuvt.org](mailto:d Robbins@ccsuvt.org). If you believe you received the welcome letter in error, please also contact Deb Robbins. The Aesop link can also be accessed from the right-hand bar of your school's webpage.

**Q6: Do I need to go on-line to record an absence?**

Employees can record their absences one of two ways: either by contacting Aesop over the phone or by accessing Aesop online.

**Q7: Is there a deadline in which I need to submit an absence?**

Yes. For unplanned absences: you must submit absences by 6:30 AM on the day of the absence. If you miss this deadline, you'll need to contact a school administrator (or his/her designee) to report the absence. This deadline time can be changed at the school level at the request of the principal.

For planned absences, please submit the absence at least two weeks in advance (if possible) to increase the chances of finding a qualified substitute. Your "favorite" substitutes list will be accessed if the absence is posted more than two days prior to the start of the absence, otherwise, the absence will be available to all approved substitutes.

**Q8: What if I'm out for only part of the school day?**

Employees have the option of selecting full-day, half-day (AM), half-day (PM), or entering the start and end times for the absence. If you are out for only a quarter day, you will need to select “Custom” and specify the stop and start times for the absence.

#### **Q9: What if I work part-time or an alternative schedule?**

Part-time teachers, or those who work an alternative schedule, will need to enter their schedules in Aesop. When entering leaves, please also be sure to enter the start and stop times for the leaves, since the default values will not apply to you.

#### **Q10: What if I don't need a sub the day of the absence?**

For school year instructional staff, calendars have been set up in Aesop to automatically look for subs only for absences that occur on school days. Subs will not be able to see absences scheduled during in-service and non-work days. If necessary, the administrator (and/or his/her designee) will be able to block the absence from subs.

Some non-instructional staff have been given the option to choose whether or not a substitute will be needed. If you select no substitute needed, the absence will not be visible to subs. Other employees have been set up as never needing a sub (e.g., Coop, School Psychologists, Guidance, Assistant Principals, etc.).

Even if no sub is needed, please remember that you still need to enter the absence in Aesop so your leave can be properly recorded.

#### **Q11: Can I cancel an absence once it is entered in Aesop?**

Yes, you can cancel your absence up to 24 hours prior to the scheduled start time of the absence. However, we highly discourage employees from doing this, as the substitute may have given up other jobs in order to accept your absence.

Likewise, substitutes can cancel their job up to 24 hours prior to the scheduled start time of the absence. Once cancelled, Aesop will begin searching for a replacement. Subs will not be able to accept another substitute job for this same date in which s/he cancelled. These timeframes for cancellations can be changed at the request of the school principal.

#### **Q12: Can I obtain my leave balances from Aesop?**

At this time, you will only be able to use Aesop to record an absence and to get a record of your absences – it will not provide you with your leave balances. Please refer to your pay stub for beginning balances to make sure leave is not being overused. Using Aesop to report leave balances may be a feature that gets implemented at a later date.

#### **Q13: Is pre-approval of the leave required before a substitute can be secured for the absence?**

Administrative approval is required for all leave requests in Aesop (similar to the paper requests currently used). However, with the exception of vacation, floating holidays, jury duty, and professional leave, the

system has been set up to allow substitutes to see the absence and accept the job before administrative approval is received. This is done to avoid any delays in obtaining subs.

For vacation, floating holidays, jury duty and professional leave requests, the job assignment will not be made available to substitutes until the absence has been approved as these leaves should be planned far enough in advance to allow for pre-approval.

For professional leave requests, please be sure to include a note to the administrator (in the box provided) indicating the reason for the professional leave (e.g., name of conference/seminar). This information will be necessary for pre-approval.

#### **Q14: Can I assign a substitute to an absence?**

At this point, as long as the substitute meets the required skills for your position, you can assign your own substitutes. However, please keep in mind that when you assign a substitute to an absence, the sub will not be notified by Aesop. As such, please be sure to contact the substitute directly before making the assignment in order to verify their acceptance of the assignment. Substitute contact information can be found in Aesop.

#### **Q15: Am I able to enter my substitute preferences?**

Yes, employees have been given access to enter and edit their own substitute preferences. This is known as the “Favorite Five”. However, keep in mind that your preferred subs need to have the required and preferred skills for your assignment in order for them to see the absence within the preferred timeframe.

#### **Q16: What are the required and preferred skills for subs?**

In order for a substitute to see your absences, s/he must be approved to substitute in your job category. At this point the following job categories exist in Aesop: Administrator, Clerical/Library, Custodial, Food Service, Guidance Counselor, I.T., Nurse, Paraeducator/Special Education, Safety/Security, Teacher, and Transportation. Some positions will have other required skills (e.g., School Nurse sub must hold an RN license, Bus Driver sub must hold a CDL license, etc.).

For most licensed educator positions, those with the following skills will be given the most preference: (1) holds a minimum of a Bachelors’ Degree, (2) holds a valid VT Educator license, (3) completed the SubHub and Mandatory Trainings, and (4) has a background in your content area. However, these may vary slightly depending on the position. If your preferred sub(s) do not have all of these skills, s/he may not be able to see the absence immediately.

#### **Q17: I’ve entered an absence, but one of my preferred subs is unable to see it. Why is this?**

The most likely reason is that your preferred substitute doesn’t have the required or preferred skills for your position (see above). I would encourage your preferred subs to take the SubHub and Mandatory trainings in order to increase their preference window.

The substitute can also check their preferred schools to make sure your school is listed. If your school is not listed, please have them contact Carol Kogut at [ckogut@ccsuvt.org](mailto:ckogut@ccsuvt.org), or by calling 879-5584.

**Q18: Can I attach my sub plans to my absence in Aesop?**

Yes, you have been given access to attach substitute plans, directions, and other documents for the substitute assigned to cover for you. All employees are encouraged to use this feature so substitutes know where to find this information without having to search through your desk or files.

**Q19: What should I do if I have a bad experience with a substitute?**

You will be asked to rate the substitute upon your return from leave. This process will only take a couple of minutes. If a substitute receives a rating of 2 or lower (from a rating of 1 to 5), the school administrator will automatically be notified. Employees are highly encouraged to rate the substitute for each absence (whether positive or negative). This information is useful in establishing “favorites,” school preferences, and/or for blocking substitutes from substituting at specific schools. Substitutes will not be able to see your comments or scores.

**Q20: Can I exclude certain subs from seeing my absences?**

At this stage, you have also been given access to block certain substitutes from seeing your absences. However, we encourage you to use this feature conservatively, and to talk to a school administrator before doing so. Once a substitute is blocked, s/he will never be able to sub for you – even if Aesop can’t find anyone else. Also, if a serious issue exists with a substitute, we may want to remove that person from seeing any absences within our supervisory union and being able to substitute, which is why it is important to keep us informed of any concerns.

**Q21: If I’ve already submitted a paper leave request for an absence for the 2011-12 school year, do I need to resubmit the absence through Aesop?**

Yes, if you have already been pre-approved for an absence in 2011-12, you’ll need to submit the absence through Aesop so it can be properly recorded. If a substitute has already been assigned to cover for you, you can simply assign the substitute to the absence instead of opening the absence to other subs.

**Q22: Who do I contact for technical support?**

Employees are encouraged to reference the *Aesop QuickStart Guide for Employees*, which is available when you login to Aesop. This guide provides employees with step by step instructions on how to navigate through and use the features in Aesop. Training videos are also available on Aesop that are easy to follow. We will also be holding training sessions at each school for employees – dates and times to be announced.

For on-going support, Helpdesk, IT technicians, and school administrative assistants/secretaries in each building will be trained on how to use the system and can be used as a resource. You may also contact Human Resources for assistance at 879-5584 or e-mail Carol Kogut at [ckogut@ccsuvt.org](mailto:ckogut@ccsuvt.org).

**Q23: How do I enter quarter day absences?**

To enter a quarter day absence (or  $\frac{3}{4}$  day absence), select the “custom” option under *Absence Type*, then enter the start and stop time of the absence. The times you enter must fall within the default times that automatically appear. When the payroll report is run from Aesop, it will automatically calculate the portion of the day for the absence.

**Q24: What if my actual work hours are different than the default hours that appear in Aesop for me?**

Aesop does not allow us to enter a different work schedule for each day of the week (or for A days vs B days). As such, the hours reflected should be the widest range of hours you may be required to work. For instance, if you are scheduled to work 7:45 AM to 11:00 AM on M/W/F, and 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM on T/Th, the default hours indicated should show 7:45 AM as your start time and 3:00 PM as you end time. You will need to choose the custom option each time you enter an absence to reflect your actual hours on the day of the absence.

For part-time teachers, the hours reflected represent the full teacher day (vs your actual work schedule). This was set up intentionally since your half-day would be equivalent to a full-time teacher’s half day in terms of time (and in terms of substitute compensation). If you select half-day AM, Aesop will show the default hours for the first half of the school day (vs half of your work schedule). If these default times for full-day or half day options do not reflect the actual duration of your absence, you will need to choose “Custom” under *Absence Type*, then manually enter the start and stop times of your leave.

If your actual work shift begins earlier or ends later than the default times currently specified, please e-mail Deb Robbins at [drobbins@ccsuvt.org](mailto:d Robbins@ccsuvt.org) with the correct information.

Please remember that it is important to enter the actual start and end times of your leave when creating an absence since this information will be used to inform the substitute of the hours s/he will need to work and will also be used to calculate the portion of the day in which to count the absence.

**Q25: What do I do if I have lined up other employees to cover for me during my absence (e.g., another teacher covers for me for one block during his/her prep period)?**

When entering the absence, under *Substitute Required* select “No.” (This will ensure that no substitute will be able to see and select the job.) Under *Notes to Administrator*, please enter the name of the individual covering for you so they can be appropriately compensated for providing this coverage. If multiple people are covering for you, please enter all their names and when they are covering for you so they can be paid appropriately (e.g., John Smith A1/2, Mary Parker A3/4, etc.).

**Q26: What do I do if I’m going to be out for an extended period of time?**

If you are going to be out for more than 15 consecutive days and require a substitute, this will trigger the need for a long-term substitute. The qualifications for a long-term substitute are typically higher than they are for short-term subs (e.g., licensing requirements for teacher subs, etc.), which will require the need to post the vacancy or manual selection of the substitute from our pool of subs. Because of these additional requirements, Aesop will not allow you to enter an absence that is greater than 15 days. Instead, if the absence is known in advance, please be sure to complete a Request for Family Medical Leave Request

Form indicating the anticipated start date and duration of the leave being requested. This form should be completed at least 30 days prior to the start of the absence to allow adequate time to find a qualified substitute. This form can be found both in Aesop and on your school's website under *Forms*.

The school principal or designee will need enter the absence for you in Aesop as they have the ability to over-ride the 15 day cap. When entering the absence, under *Substitute Required*, the principal or designee must select "No" to prevent non-qualified subs from accepting the absence. Once a qualified substitute is secured, the school principal or designee will then need to go in and modify this absence to needing a sub, and save and assign the preselected long-term substitute to the absence.

**Q27: How and when are people notified when an absence has been accepted by a sub? What if it is less than a day before the absence? Teachers explained that their lesson plans may vary depending on who the sub is.**

Lesson plans can be attached to the absence after it is filled by editing the absence, however, the system will not automatically generate an e-mail to you once the position is filled. You will need to refer back to Aesop to check the status. If the status says "Filled", the name of substitute will be listed. Keep in mind that 60% of absences in Aesop fill up in the first hour.

**Q28: Are absence approvals required for every type of absence except sick days?**

Administrators are required to approve all absences. However, only Vacation, Professional Leave, Jury Duty, and Floating Holidays require approval before Aesop starts to look for a substitute. For all other leave types, the absence becomes available to substitutes before the approval is received.

**Q29: How does the approval process work from the teacher and from the administrator side?**

If the Administrator has selected to receive e-mail notification for approvals, s/he will receive an e-mail from Aesop when an absence is entered that requires his/her approval. Once approved, you will receive an e-mail from Aesop indicating the leave has been approved.

Administrators can approve/deny employee absences, check on substitute status (filled or unfilled), see which subs are available to fill your absence, create or cancel an absence for employee, modify and absence, or assign any sub (even if not qualified).

**Q30: Are teachers required to give explanations for personal days, professional days, etc. in the same way it is currently done?**

Teachers are not required to provide an explanation when using personal days since the master agreement does not limit the reasons in which personal leave can be used. However, for other employee groups, the principal may or may not request additional information and/or supporting documents. Use of professional leave, professional release, and unpaid leaves will require an explanation for all employees.

**Q31: Some people who currently have only "yes" as an option for "Is a sub needed?" sometimes don't need a sub. Can this be changed?**

We have changed everyone who was previously set up in the system as always requiring a sub to being able to choose whether or not a sub is needed. (Some employees are still set up as never needing a sub.) For those who can choose whether or not a sub is needed, the default under *Substitute Required* will be "Yes", but you will be able to change this to "No".

**Q32: Sometimes employees need a sub even though they are not taking a day off. For example, the school nurse goes on a field trip but needs a sub to cover the school. How should they use Aesop?**

In this circumstance, the employee should enter an absence in Aesop using one of the pre-defined “Professional Release” reasons listed. At this point the following Professional Release types are available for employees to select:

1. Athletics/Activities – To be used by teachers who are also coaches that need to leave early for a game.
2. Field Trip – To be used if are attending a field trip and need to sub to cover your teaching assignments/duties at school.
3. Reassignment – To be used if you have been reassigned for the day to cover another employee and need a sub to cover your regular assignment.
4. Testing – To be used if you have been assigned to monitor testing and need a sub to cover your normal teaching assignments/duties.
5. Meeting – To be used if you have been released from your teaching assignments in order to participant in an on-campus, school-based or district-wide meeting (e.g., curriculum committee meetings, planning meetings, etc.)

**Q33: How is an absence of a fraction of a day calculated for a part time employee? For example, if a person who is 80% misses 2 hours of a day for a sick child, what fraction of a work day will that be calculated as?**

Nothing has changed in how we track portions of the day using Aesop. In Aesop, the hours per day for both full-time and part-time teachers are defaulted to the full school day. These default hours cannot be edited by the teacher, and are not connected to the teacher’s actual start and stop times that are listed under personal information. To compute partial day absences, the system is set up to divide the actual number of hours for the absence by the default hours/day then rounds this up to the nearest ¼ day. For example, if your default hours are 7.0 hours/day and you are absence for 2 hours, this would equate to a half-day for leave tracking purposes (29% rounded up to the nearest ¼ day).

**Q34: Some Westford people questioned the work hours indicated for a standard school day in Aesop. Does that reflect what will constitute a work day next school year?**

The default school work hours entered in Aesop are the hours that were provided by the school principal. These hours are to inform the substitute of when to arrive and when they are expected to leave in the event of a full-day, half-day AM, or half-day PM absence. (Custom absences will indicate the hours you enter.) These default hours can be changed at the request of the school principal.

For leave tracking purposes, we have set up each school district with their default hours/day for teachers. The default for Westford is 7.0 hours/day, for EJ it’s 7.5 hours/day, and for U#46 it’s 7.08 hours/day. These default hours will be used to track the portion of the day for any partial day leave. For support staff, the default hours/day entered in Aesop should be the employee’s contracted number of hours.

If you have a question about your work hours or schedule, please talk to your school principal.

**Q35: What should be done about part-time personnel at a school who are called in to sub for a portion of a school day?**

If you are a part-time employee who is also available to sub during your non-work hours/days, you will also need to be set up as a substitute in Aesop (in addition to your employee log in). An Aesop welcome letter will go out in July to all individuals currently on our sub list with their substitute username and password. In order to sub, you’ll need to accept available positions using Aesop, or the teacher can assign you to the

absence in Aesop. Please contact Deb Robbins at [drobbins@ccsuvt.org](mailto:drobbins@ccsuvt.org) if you do not receive this welcome letter and you would like to sub.

**Q36: Can sub plans be added to an absence at a later date or do they have to be added at the time the absence is created?**

Sub plans can be uploaded after the absence is created by editing the absence.

**Q37: If teachers check the Exclude radio button for a sub will that sub be contacted last or will the district information about that sub (qualified and available for that job) override the teacher's exclusion?**

If a sub is excluded from a school/employee they will not be able to view those jobs even though they have selected that school and have the required qualifications. The “exclude” option doesn’t mean the sub will see the absence last, it means s/he will not be able to see the absence at all, even if no one else can be found.

**Q38: If I become sick after my shift starts, what do I need to do?**

Employees are only allowed to enter absences in Aesop until 6:30 AM the day of the absence, so any partial day absences that begin after the day begins will need to be entered by the principal or designee. Please be sure to notify the principal or designee of your need to leave and request that they enter the absence for you.

**Q39: Sometimes a substitute is needed, but not to necessarily cover for any particular employee absence (e.g., long-term sub transition days, additional assistance, floaters, etc.). How is this entered in Aesop so that a sub can be found?**

These circumstances would be considered a Vacancy in Aesop rather than an Absence. Only the Principal and/or his/her designee can enter Vacancies in Aesop. If you have a need for this, please be sure to speak to your school principal.

**Q40: What’s the difference between Professional Leave and Professional Release?**

Professional Leave is for participation in a professional activity that requires attendance *outside* of the CCSU during regular work hours (e.g., conference, seminar, workshop, professional organization meeting, etc.), whereas Professional Release is release for participating in a professional activity *within* the CCSU that is scheduled during the regular school day (e.g., curriculum committee meeting, TAP meeting, team planning, etc.).

**Q41: I entered a half-day absence in Aesop, but really only took a quarter day. How can I change this?**

Employees can only modify their own absences up until the day of the absence. Any modifications necessary on or after the day of the absence must be entered by the school principal and/or his/her designee.

**Q42: What is FMLA Leave?**

FMLA leave is approved leave as defined under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or the VT Parental and Family Leave Law (VPFL) (i.e., leave related to the birth or adoption of a child, leave needed to care for the employee’s own “serious health condition”, leave needed to care for a covered family member with a “serious health condition”, military caregiver leave, and qualifying military exigency leave). For more

information about FMLA/VPFL leave, please refer to <http://www.ccsuvt.org/human-resources/employees/leaves/#FMLA>.

Except in cases of emergency, employees must provide at least a 30 day notice for any FMLA/VPFL leave using the [Employee Request for FMLA/VPFL leave request form](#) in addition to entering the leave in Aesop. If the absence is for more than 15 consecutive days of absence, the principal or his/her designee will need to enter the absence for you after a qualified sub is found.

**Q43: Under what circumstances can I request leave without pay?**

Employees are expected to stay within the leave limits specified in their contract/master agreement. However, in some exceptional circumstances, unpaid leave may be considered when all appropriate paid leaves have been exhausted. Other than unpaid FMLA/VPFL leave, the use of unpaid leave requires approval from both the employee's supervisor and the Human Resource Director via Aesop. Board approval may also be required for teacher requests for unpaid leave.

**Q44: I'm a paraeducator who sometimes gets reassigned to cover for a teacher during his/her absence. How do I enter this in Aesop so that a sub can be secured for my position?**

There are times when we may be unable to find a qualified sub for a teacher in which we may choose to reassign a paraeducator to sub for the teacher, then seek a sub for the para. In this event, the teacher's absence will need to be modified from needing a sub, to not needing a sub in Aesop to keep subs from accepting the assignment after the reassignment has already been made. In order to find a sub for the paraeducator, s/he will need to create an absence called *Professional Release – Reassignment*.

**Q45: I'm out on a work related disability. How do I enter the leave so that my leave time is tracked appropriately?**

If you were injured on the job and need to take time off to recover from your injury, your available sick leave will be used at a rate of ½ day of leave for each day of absence (provided our worker's compensation insurance carry accepts the claim). While sick leave is being used, you'll need to sign over any workers compensation disability payments to the District. Please refer to <http://www.ccsuvt.org/human-resources/employees/leaves/> for more information about workers compensation leaves.

To make sure your sick leave is tracked appropriately, when entering the leave in Aesop please sure to indicate an Absence Type of *Full Day* (since the sub will be needed for the full day) and select one of the following Absence Reasons:

- If the work related disability is also covered under FMLA, please select *FMLA – Works Comp*. Your available sick leave will automatically be used at a rate of ½ day for each day of absence entered.
- If the work related disability is NOT covered under FMLA, please select *Sick leave – Workers Comp*. Your available sick leave will automatically be used at a rate of ½ day for each day of absence entered.

If you do not have any sick leave available, please select one of the following Absence Reasons:

- If the work related disability is also covered under FMLA, please select the appropriate FMLA Absence Reason (e.g., FMLA – UNPAID, FMLA – VACATION, FMLA – PERSONAL, etc.).
- If the work related disability is NOT covered under FMLA, please select the appropriate Absence Reason indicating the type of leave you wish to use (e.g., personal, vacation, leave without pay, etc.)

**Q46: I'm trying to enter an absence that starts in 6 months, but Aesop won't accept it. Why is that?**

Absences can be entered up to 120 days in advance in Aesop. If your preplanned absence begins more than 120 days from the date you enter it, Aesop will not accept it. Please be sure to re-enter the absence at a later date.

**Q47: I've entered an absence in Aesop, but for some reason I'm not able to go back and modify it. Why is this?**

Once an absence has been approved, only a campus user (e.g., school principal or his/her designee) can modify the absence. This includes assigning a sub, changing the start/end times, changing the date, changing the absence type, etc.