A lean HR team serving over 1000 students

The 2017 graduates of Coney Island Prep had a lot to celebrate. As the first senior class of the South Brooklyn public charter school, they had overcome countless obstacles since their journey with Coney Island Prep began in 2009 as fifth-graders. Hurricane Sandy had displaced many in 2012, but by the time they reached their senior year, most had studied abroad, attended pre-college programs, or otherwise distinguished themselves as they prepared for their post-high school careers. Last spring, 100% of them were accepted to college.

BUSINESS ISSUE
Ross Thomason, the school’s Chief People Officer, joined in 2014 as a recruiter after serving as an educator with Teach For America. The mandate at the time: expand from a middle school to a full K-12 while maintaining a lean HR team.

SOLUTION
With a small HR team, Coney Island Prep needed a streamlined process to deliver easily-accessible options for benefits, onboarding, and payroll. The team had to be lean, and efficient, so that busy teachers and staff could quickly meet their HR needs, and then get back to what they do best: serving kids. There was no time or inclination for manually managing the seven disparate systems that the school had amassed in its five years.
Zenefits one-stop simplicity
The charter school chose Zenefits in 2014 for administering staff healthcare benefits. “We love it for our staff because it is easy to use. The back-end for HR is great too; once people enroll, they can manage all their own updates themselves.” They also have the additional advantage of a local Zenefits’ Certified Broker Partner, OneDigital, able to come onsite for supplemental benefits counsel.

As they grew, Coney Island added to their Zenefits People Platform use. HR for storing offer letters and handbooks, simplifying onboarding, logging time off, and managing time tracking for hourly employees. And they also recently brought on Zenefits Payroll.

“Zenefits has greatly reduced the chance for human errors. It is nice to go into one place where the system itself will connect payroll with insurance, tax, and other benefits deductions. If we hire someone in the middle of a pay period, the calculations are already done. When people change benefits or insurance, the system itself will talk to the insurance provider to determine the premium changes. Everything is integrated and pushes into payroll.

People in education appreciate organized things, and Zenefits is that: it’s easy to use.
ROSS THOMASON, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER

As an organization, we are leaning into Zenefits, because it allows us to scale our people function while prioritizing budget for our students.”

No need for instruction
Zenefits was already in place when Thomason moved into the role of Chief People Officer. But this educator recognized that he really didn’t need instruction to use it.

“The intuitiveness, cleanliness of design and customizability was great for me to jump in where a trained HR professional left off. Using Zenefits has been a great win for us to keep the team small but productive.”

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Other benefits for Coney Island Prep with Zenefits
- Easy to pre-schedule end of year terminations
- Simple onboarding every August: all new hires, all at once, all within an hour.
- Electronic commuter benefits saves a team of five people about 8% of their time each week vs manual commuter check delivery.

Looking to a bright future
Coney Island Prep’s staff is bringing alive the school’s mission to help students thrive, encouraging college visits from the time they are in middle school, and even travel abroad programs during high school. Their team of educators is removing obstacles to success.

Backing them up with a growing array of healthcare and commuter benefit options; mobile and online access to their employment information; and reliable, seamless onboarding and payroll; Zenefits is helping remove the administrative obstacles from what Coney Island Prep’s staff does best: deliver on dreams.