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Comprehensive Survival Guide for Substitute Teachers

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COMPREHENSIVE SURVIVAL GUIDE
FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Thesis

A Project Report

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

by

Angela Jeanne Satterfield

July 2009

ABSTRACT

COMPREHENSIVE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

by

Angela Jeanne Satterfield

July, 2009

The struggles and challenges of substitute teaching were looked at as well as the rationale for supporting substitute teachers. Existing school district handbooks were examined and the limitations and advantages of these handbooks were given. As a result, a handbook was created with a list of suggestions, ideas, tips, and tools. These are all meant to support substitute teachers in their teaching and the students that they work with in experiencing an educationally productive school day.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

Substitute teaching is one of the hardest jobs in education. These teachers are expected to manage a class of strangers at a moments notice, maintain discipline, and try to teach productive lessons in classes ranging from special education preschool to high school CWP in a loving manner with minimal pay. No wonder it is known as the “bah, humbug!” of education. As a result, the number of substitute teachers is never enough to fill the demand (Duebber, 2000). Few districts offer training to their substitute teachers, so strategies, tools and extra materials are the sole responsibility of the substitute. Some districts that do offer training require the individual to pay to learn the district’s expectations, strategies, and behavior plans.

Substitute teachers can be valuable teaching tools if they are prepared and have an effective toolbox available to them. Many times classroom teachers leave the substitute lesson plans that are carelessly prepared, if any at all, and materials are not available for them to use (Freedman, 1975). It then becomes the responsibility of the substitute to adapt and construct the days learning. This can be an exorbitant task without the right materials, especially when a daily schedule or plan book is not available to discern what is currently being taught in that classroom.

A collection of easily adaptable lessons, games and exercises can drastically change the educational outcome of the day. With a collection of some creative projects in math, writing, art and a simple storybook, the awkward blocks of down time can become

constructive (Duebber, 2000). It can change from a day of videos and generally wasted time to a day of productive classroom learning.

A good question substitute teachers can ask themselves is: what can I as a substitute do/add to be able to teach most effectively during my short time with these students? (Freedman, 1975) This project will help to address that question to not only a substitute but also classroom teachers and administrators.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide substitute teachers with a quality supplemental teaching tool. The handbook contains a variety of suggestions for activities, exercises, and games that can be added to or used as extensions for a variety of curricular subjects. It also includes helpful advice and ideas to make the substitute more comfortable while being a guest teacher. In using this handbook, substitute teachers will be able to create a “tool-kit” that they can use on a daily basis in a multitude of classrooms.

Substitute teachers for grades 2-5 can easily use this resource to make the most of the day during the classroom teacher’s absence. It is also easily adaptable for grades above and below the target age group. The handbook can also be easily used to create lessons if there is extra time after a lesson has been completed or if the classroom teacher has left no plans. The activities that are included can be easily used to extend or supplement lessons left by the classroom teacher. There are suggestions as how to the activities can also be used for a variety of skill levels. Many of the activities can be adapted and used in most subject areas.

It will be reproducible so that it can be easily shared. This will be a useful foundation of resources a substitute can augment and adapt to help make them be successful in a variety of classrooms.

There are also suggestions to assist the substitute in navigating his/her day to make them successful in areas besides just teaching in the classroom. The author believes that the higher the comfort-level of the substitute teacher the more productive his/her teaching will be. Tips and ideas-from remembering to ask where the staff restroom is to finding out what the escape plan is in case of a fire drill-are also included.

The handbook is meant to be the base that the individual can build upon and make their own. Just like there are a variety of learning styles, the author realizes there are a variety of teaching styles. The contents of the handbook try to address a variety of learning and teaching styles. The handbook was created as a foundational tool, the author encourages each individual to add to and adjust it to make it useful to them and to also share it with others who may find it valuable.

Significance

“Students are presently not being effectively educated by a majority of substitute teachers, due to inadequate training” (Longhurst, Smith & Sorenson, 2000, p.2).

Classroom teachers are arriving at school ill because of their lack of confidence in the substitute that will be taking their place. Administrators are more concerned with the problems that can occur when a substitute is employed than the quality of instruction that occurs (Longhurst, Smith & Sorenson, 2000).

“With the demand on teachers to do work and continuing education in the area of standards and assessments, the need for substitute teachers is only going to continue to

rise” (Gonzales, 2002). In Washington State, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) has created enormous influences on what and how subjects are taught in today’s classrooms. Many trainings, conferences and classes are pulling teachers out of the classroom on a regular basis. As a result, the need for prepared substitutes has increased.

According to David Haselkorn, President of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., there is an immediate need for substitute teachers in 73% of US schools that will continue for at least the next 10 years (Gonzales, 2002). There are many days that teachers are notified in the district that the author works in that there are no more subs available on a specific day. This is another reason why a tool kit can be invaluable for classroom teachers too. If they do end up needing to be gone unexpectedly, they can simply instruct the substitute as to the location of their tool kit. This way the stress on the classroom teachers of needing to create plans when they are not there is eliminated, and the substitute can ensure that the students will still have a productive and educational day.

In the past, teacher absenteeism occurred for the same reason it did in other fields such as sickness, family emergencies, jury duty, professional development, and short-term military service. Recently, the addition of widespread school restructuring, school-based management, nontraditional and noninstructional activities such as curriculum design, mentoring novice and preservice teachers, conducting action research, and working on collaborative teams is adding to the amount of teacher absenteeism (Abdal-Haqq, 1997).

One of the most frequent causes that school districts need to rely on substitute teachers is because of the need for classroom teachers to do work in the area of standards

and assessments (Green, 1998; Starr, 2001). A second grade teacher was expected to be out of her classroom one half day a month for the school wide behavior program, one to three days per month for trainings at the Educational Service District as part of a math alliance team, once per month for grade level team meetings, and also out four days during the year for science kit trainings. That doesn't include any personal or sick leave that the teacher may use during the year. With the demand of standards and teacher trainings continuing to rise, the number of teacher absences will increase also (Griffith, 2008). This is just one more reason that having prepared substitute teachers is invaluable.

There are few positive suggestions for the loss of valuable instruction time that are a result of teacher absenteeism. Many students are spending five to ten percent of their class time with substitute teachers (McGerald, 1994). The problem is that the substitute teachers are not equipped with the tools and resources that they need to help ensure that they are having a positive educational impact on students. Students can benefit greatly from a substitute who is equipped to add more content to what is left by the teacher, especially in situations where no plans are left at all.

Substitute teachers need to know and have on hand materials and activities that can be used to help supplement the lesson plans that the classroom teacher has left. Not knowing the content or possibly the grade level that is expected to be taught can have detrimental effects of the substitute teacher's ability to teach. Creation of a handbook or resource kit is a must for every substitute teacher (Longhurst, Smith & Sorenson, 2000).

Limitations

The limitations of this project are as follows:

- 1.) This project contains activities that are appropriate for students in second through fifth grades. Some activities may not be usable for students beyond or below these grades unless adaptations are made.
- 2.) This project is a base for substitutes to build on. The individual, to strengthen and personalize his/her own tool-kit, should add other tools and resources and not rely on the handbook alone.
- 3.) This project lacks behavior management programs. There are several suggestions for classroom management that can be used to lessen poor behavior, but should not be used in place of existing classroom behavior management programs.
- 4.) This project does not include any reproducible worksheets or activities. Any such papers will be the individual's responsibility to acquire.
- 5.) Activities for physical education and music classrooms were not included.

Definition of Terms

Educational Service District: These agencies were created to link the state Department of Education in Washington and Oregon with local school districts. They help to foster equal educational opportunities state wide through a variety of programs and services (N/A, 1981).

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs): These requirements were created as a result of the Basic Education act of 1993. The EALRs describe what students should know and be able to perform with the knowledge they have acquired as they progressed through the public school system. The eight core subject areas they address

are: reading, science, writing, social studies, communication, arts, mathematics, health, and fitness (N/A, 1999).

Handbook: Provides information that can assist with questions that a substitute teachers may have and to pave the way for a successful year as a substitute teacher” (Silsbee Independent School District, 2009).

Substitute Teacher: A teacher who is generally not permanently employed by a school system but who, when the regular teacher is away from school for whatever reason, assumes the instructional responsibility for the regular teacher (Parsons & Dillon, 1981).

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL): This is a test that Washington students in grades 4, 7, and 10 participate in as part of the state's assessment program. It serves as an important measure of student achievements in reading, mathematics, writing, and science for the state's accountability system (Cronin, 2004).

Project Overview

This project begins in chapter one with the purpose and significance of the project. The purpose is to provide substitute teachers with a quality supplemental teaching tool that they can build upon. The limitations are listed, as well as the definition of terms.

The review of literature, chapter two, explains the challenges that substitute teachers face in and out of the classroom. As a result, the rationale for supporting substitute teachers is given. The characteristics are also given of successful substitute teachers. And finally, the advantages and disadvantages of handbooks that school districts currently have available to their substitute teachers are discussed.

Chapter three discusses the genesis as well as the procedure the author used to gather information and ideas for creating an effective substitute handbook. It also contains the implementation of the project by substitute teachers encouraging them to use the handbook as a foundation to build upon and make their own.

The project is introduced in chapter four with a description of how the handbook will support substitute teachers in the classroom. The handbook is divided into seven sections. Each of the seven sections addresses different situations that substitutes encounter in and out of the classroom, and gives suggestions to help ensure the students and substitute have a successful day.

The summary in chapter five supports the project with conclusions and recommendations for substitute teachers, classroom teachers and administrators. The author has concluded that not enough support is currently given to the majority of substitute teachers. To support these teachers, more effective handbooks should be created and made available to them.

The appendix includes the substitute teacher handbook. The first section is a list of tips and ideas to help make the substitute more successful in the classroom. The second section is a list of tools that can be used for the same goal. Next, ideas for classroom management are given to help lessen behavior problems. The next three sections are ideas for getting the students' attention as well as math, reading, and language arts activities. The final section is a list of web sites that the author has found helpful during the nine years she has been a substitute teacher

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter two addresses the challenges of substitute teaching and some suggestions to make the process easier on the students, substitute, and administration as well as limitations of current resources school districts provide. It discusses the qualities of good substitute teachers and suggestions given to school districts and classroom teachers to help increase substitute performance. The information gathered offers a part of the foundation that can be added to create a successful personal teaching tool for substitute teachers. The purpose of this tool is to provide substitute teachers with the instruments that could help them have a successful day of teaching.

Background

By the time students complete their K-12 public school education, they have spent an average of one year's worth of school days with substitute teachers (Pardini, 2002) and over 90 percent of the school districts that replied to a study done by Utah State University reported problems relating to substitute teaching (Jones, 2000). An average of 274,000 substitutes are teaching in classrooms across the United States on any given day (Elizabeth, 2001). At-risk students, in highly impacted low-socioeconomic schools, spend closer to 13.5% of their time being taught by substitutes (Adams, 1999).

According to David Haselkorn, President of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., approximately 70% of school districts across the U.S. have an urgent and immediate need

for substitute teachers. This need will likely continue through the end of the next decade (Elizabeth, 2001).

One of the situations that has adverse effects on students' education is lack of consistency in instruction as a result of having a variety of teachers. The accepted wisdom in schools is that student achievement will increase if they are exposed to consistent progressive instruction by a single teacher throughout a single year. If consistency of instruction is a goal, then frequent changes of instructors, teaching methods, and discipline are factors to be avoided (Moses, 1989).

This would imply that substitute teaching should not be allowed. It would also imply that a teacher's absence would detract from the progress of the pupils. This is not a possibility or true. Substitute teachers fill a vital role in the school, and a majority does a decent job (Moses, 1989).

In the past, substitute teachers were not expected to teach at all. They were the police or babysitter of the classroom. Lesson plans left for them were often carelessly prepared, and often there were little or no materials available for them to use. They were not looked at as teachers, but seen as the focus of jokes or stories (Freedman, 1975).

The problems that substitute teachers face today are the same ones that were reported fifty years ago. The solutions are just as elusive today as they were then. The problems stem more from nonmanagement rather than mismanagement. These findings reiterate the low priority that school districts traditionally place on substitute teacher development (Abdal-Haqq, 1997). A study done by the Metropolitan School Study Council "has shown substitutes to be the most ineffective teachers of all, even when compared with student teachers and teacher aides" (Freedman, 1975).

In the past, one means of gaining long-term employment was to become a substitute teacher. The current economy and school districts hiring new teachers with little or no experience directs potential candidates away from substitute teaching. As a result, retention of substitute teachers has become an important concern for many districts (Gonzales, 2002).

In an article written by Parsons and Dillon in 1981, students in curriculum and instruction courses were asked to write a short paragraph on substitute teaching. Approximately 58% of the students in those courses had negative things to say compared to the 16% that responded positively. The term “baby-sitting” appeared on nearly 30% of the responses, and 25% spoke about an anticipated sense of frustration. In general, substitute teaching is not given a high preference rating as a possible job though many will probably end up substitute teaching (Parsons & Dillon, 1981).

Many people become substitute teachers because it used to be one of the quickest ways to gain entrance in to the teaching profession and actually teach students. Unfortunately, many times this is not the way it works out. The expectations of their abilities as a classroom teacher are extremely low. As a result, many classroom teachers do not leave lesson plans that are engaging or educationally sound for the substitute to follow (Wertz, 2006).

Challenges of Substitute Teaching

The role of a substitute teacher can be very challenging in today’s classrooms. There are many attributes today’s substitute teachers need to obtain to be successful. Excellent organization, interpersonal, decision-making, listening, and group management skills are attributes that can make a substitute successful. These are all in addition to the

job responsibilities, minimum training, and the presentation skills that are needed to be hired. In some respects, substitute teachers need to be better than the teachers they are replacing. They need to be particularly perceptive and to make decisions with limited resources and information (Purvis & Garvey, 1993).

Another problem substitute teachers face is the fact that under half of school districts sponsor any type of orientation or training program for their substitute teachers and only 11% actually evaluate them (Longhurst, Smith & Sorenson, 2000). In a study conducted of 1,728 school districts, there was “unanimity in the low par and uncertain status afforded substitutes” (Warren, 1998, p. 96). Seventy percent of the school districts required no minimum professional training of their substitutes, and 97 percent required no teaching experience at all. Few of the substitutes planned to pursue this line long-term (Koelling, 1983). As a result, many of the substitutes were stressed, apathetic, and showed minimum levels of self-confidence and esteem (Warren, 1998).

“There are many problems associated with substitute teaching. Not all of them, however, are the fault of the substitute teacher” (Parsons & Dillon, 1981, p. 27).

Classroom teachers have stated that substitute teachers are ineffective with classroom management as well as instruction or curriculum. Substitute teachers admitted that these are the most difficult aspects of their job but are eager to learn more about them. They have also stated there are ways the lesson plans that have been left can be improved upon as well as suggestions for more support from classroom teachers as well as administrators (Glatfelter, 2006).

A common misconception is that little learning will occur in a classroom while a substitute is teaching, and for whatever reason, classroom teachers do not leave adequate

lesson plans. Substitute teachers often enter the classroom unprepared for their job. This is unfortunate because most undergraduate students will work at sometime as a substitute teacher (Parsons & Dillon, 1981).

The role expectations of a substitute teacher are ambiguous. They are torn between the dichotomy of classroom members who want to maintain the continuity of their programs and administrators who want classroom management. This is difficult considering most substitute teachers are placed in classroom environments that are unfamiliar (Warren, 1988).

According to John Dewey (1938), "Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced" (p.18). This does not apply to only classroom teachers. Substitute teachers can be just as effective and should be used to their full teaching potential. They may have the same training and sometimes more experience or education than the person they are filling in for.

Overemphasis upon activity instead of intelligent activity can lead to an identification of freedom. This can lead to a student's immediate execution of his impulses or desires (Dewey, 1938). Substitute teachers need to try to create intelligent activities for students to engage themselves in. "These desires are the ultimate moving springs of action" and "the intensity of the desire measures the strength of the efforts that will be put forth" (Dewey, 1938, p.70). Strength and effort are desired, but it needs to be applied to their learning efforts, not into disrupting the class. The substitute's business is to see that the occasion and efforts are taken advantage of.

"Control of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or

interacting parts" (Dewey, 1938, p.53). Cooperation and interacting are key to helping create a positive learning situation. That is why it is important for the substitute teacher to have control of the whole classroom and not just the students. There also needs to be control of the situations and the surroundings. They need to have a plan for even a fifteen-minute block of time.

The weakness of the ability to control a classroom is a result of the failure to plan in advance for the type of work and activities, which will create situations that of themselves, exercise the control over what students do and how they do it. This failure is related to a lack of sufficiently thought-out advanced planning by the teacher. The causes of this lack of planning can be varied. One is the idea that such advanced planning is not necessary and potentially hostile to the freedom of the student. On the other side it is possible to preplan in such a way that is rigid and inflexible (Dewey, 1938).

The solutions to some of the problems fit in three categories: administrative, disciplinary, and departmental. Ideally the administration should try to hire regular or permanent substitute teachers that could be assigned to areas of their expertise. In time, observant citizens will realize that students are spending five to ten percent of their class time with substitute teachers. If that time is not used effectively and educationally lost "administrators will be more than embarrassed if well-planned programs to assist substitute teachers are not in place" (Nidds & Mcgerald, 1994, p.26).

"The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of

further experience” (Dewey, 1938, p.25). This is why it is important that substitutes have the tools they need to create genuinely educative experiences.

Ideas such as staff development for the substitutes would be helpful in familiarizing substitute teachers with the routines and requirements of the district. A district wide disciplinary policy should require that classroom teachers provide seating charts that are current, an all-purpose three-day lesson plan that includes classroom rules, and a list of any students with behavior or medical concerns (Nidds & Mcgerald, 1994). Administrators can follow up by having substitutes fill out a questionnaire that inquires about the quality of the day they and the students had.

A chairperson from each department or grade level should be responsible for greeting and providing up-to-date plans and related supplies. They could also help by telling the substitute where to get assistance and information throughout the school day. There are few positive suggestions or remedies for all the difficulties that substitute teachers encounter, but if the entire administration and staff work together it is possible for substitute teachers to provide quality, ongoing instruction (Nidds & Mcgerald, 1994).

Finally, classroom teachers should make an effort to leave lesson plans for their substitute teachers that are educationally sound and engaging. The lessons should correspond with the unit that is currently being taught. It should also be aligned with state standards. If it is not a lesson that the classroom teacher would teach, do not ask a substitute to teach it. The lessons left should be ones that the students will respond positively to and if possible make them excited about learning. They should include objectives and those should be brought to the attention of the substitute. Most of all, the

lesson should include all of the information that will be needed to carry it out (Wertz, 2006).

Rationale for Supporting Substitute Teachers

There are several reasons to help substitutes do their job better. "The first reason is simply that most substitute teaching is terrible" (Parsons & Dillon, 1981, p.29). For whatever reason few substitutes are able to do more than the status quo. Another reason is that many substitute teachers use substitute teaching as a way to gain a permanent teaching position. The final and most important reason to support substitute teachers is that the students suffer. They suffer because the substitute is not able to experience success in the classroom. As a result the student is simply wasting his/her time. "Worse than wasted time are classroom situations where substitute teachers are faced with unmanageable situations either of their own making or of someone else's design" (Parsons & Dillon, 1981, p.29).

Substitute teachers are an important influence on the students in their care. They are required to manage and teach a different group of strangers at a moments notice. Few schools offer training to their new substitute teachers who are important parts in the educational system (Duebber, 2000).

Students will spend an average of one year of classroom time from kindergarten through twelfth grade with substitute teachers. As a result, the public schools are trying to solve the problem of continuity of instruction when the teacher is absent and a substitute must be called in (Shepherd, 1997).

The community looks at substitute teachers as baby-sitters, pinch-hitters, objects of pity, and warm bodies. The students often see the substitute's entry into their

classroom as a signal to misbehave. Some other problems that they encounter are missing or incomplete lesson plans, and being unfamiliar with district and school policies. Employers also complain that substitute teachers aren't well qualified, especially with classroom management skills (Seldner, 1983).

Good substitute teachers do believe themselves to be more than just baby-sitters. A general expectation is often made that little learning will take place when there is a substitute teacher (Parsons & Dillon, 1981). This generalization could come from the minimum educational requirements, generally 60-90 semester hours that are required for substitute teaching (Warren, 1988). It does not take into account the number of substitutes that are retired teachers or those who are not seeking full-time employment that may have 30 or more years experience.

Characteristics of Successful Substitute Teachers

Byer (2008) has identified four key comprehensive approaches to effective substitute teaching. Diligence, the central component of successful substitute teaching, requires enthusiastically putting a positive assiduous effort into all of their work as a substitute teacher. Being flexible in the assignment can greatly increase the extent to which the substitute can actively accomplish their responsibilities. Substitutes are in an excellent position to earn respect by working diligently with a positive attitude while remaining flexible and adapting to any classroom situation. The final approach is continuing reflection. This provides the method to comprehensively bring the substitute teaching improvement process full circle.

There are several characteristics successful substitute teachers possess. Teachers, students, administrators and even substitute teachers share opinions on several attributes

that are desirable. The basic consensus is that the substitute must be able to adapt to various classroom situations, preferably have some teaching experience and knowledge of the subject matter being taught, and be able to manage classroom adversity (Warren, 1988).

It is desirable that they are ready to use the plans that the classroom teacher left but are also prepared if no plans are available for them (Parsons & Dillon, 1981). Having a task that the students can begin immediately is key to starting off the day successfully. If a teacher has not left something for the students, a good substitute will carry something that he/she can use as a supplement with them (Kaufman, 1991).

Often the distinguishing factor between professional substitute teachers and mediocre or average ones is the amount of resourcefulness and motivation that they exercise (Smith, Murdock, Jones, Goldenhersh, & Latham, 1999). At the 1st Annual SubConference: A National Conference held by The Substitute Teaching Institute from Utah State University (STI/USU) a variety of topics were discussed (Jones, 2000). According to Jones (2000) when school districts assign creative and resourceful substitutes in classrooms, their positive attitudes can have a positive influence on other staff and faculty. The following are the indicators of motivation and resourcefulness:

- 1.) Try to learn something about the students such as likes or dislikes
- 2.) Carry a tool-kit to help supplement lesson plans
- 3.) Make themselves familiar with the curriculum and personnel
- 4.) Work on developing a variety of effective approaches of lesson delivery
- 5.) Demonstrate positive team building skills
- 6.) Attend trainings or inservices to increase teaching skills

Supplementing the plans that the classroom teacher has left with background knowledge from personal experiences is vital. Often the plans left by a classroom teacher can be unclear or incomplete (Parsons & Dillon, 1981). Being able to pull from what the individual already knows about the subject being taught is what can make the difference between an engaging lesson and a waste of everyone's time.

Another factor that will affect the success of a substitute in a classroom is if he/she knows what different grade levels are going to require. No matter what assignment they have chosen, they consider a couple of questions. Are younger students easier to teach? Would he/she rather teach students who are more mature and capable of deeper thinking? (Lovley, 1994) The challenges of each age group should also be considered.

It is also desirable that the substitute takes time at the end of the day to leave the classroom in order. They complete an evaluation or report of how the day went and leave any unused supplies, completed assignments, or other materials where the teacher can easily locate them (Purvis, 1993).

According to Cannon (1984) there are four additional characteristics that good substitute teachers should possess to be successful:

- 1.) They should place an emphasis on creating a positive classroom climate for students to learn, interact, and have fun in.
- 2.) The substitute should perform diplomatically and purposefully by smiling, introducing themselves, and if possible why the regular teacher is gone or when he/she will return.
- 3.) They should try to convey an impression that something important is happening in the classroom.

- 4.) They need to be directive. The students need to be told why and how the activity should be done and what they are to do when they have finished.

Characteristics that are desirable according to the Substitute Teacher Training Seminar of the Community Schools of Frankfort, in Frankfort, IN are (Shepherd, 1997):

- 1.) Ability to follow lesson plans
- 2.) Keeping order in the classroom
- 3.) Keeping accurate records
- 4.) Do not be “conned”
- 5.) Grade assignments if answer sheets are provided
- 6.) Dress professionally
- 7.) Provide a summary of the day’s events

Florida’s Education Standards Commission conducted a survey in the fall of 2001 to collect data on substitute teaching. Sixty-seven school districts participated in the survey. The following, referred to as Twelve R’s of Substitute Teaching, reflects both the professional demands, the practical realities of substitute teaching, and the recommendations resulting from the survey (Tomei & Cornett, 2002).

- 1.) *Routines*- To help contribute to their success substitutes should have an understanding of school and classroom routines.
- 2.) *Responsibility*- Maintaining an effective and safe learning environment for the students is the substitute teacher’s primary responsibility.
- 3.) *Reasonableness*- Common sense can be used to determine what are reasonable expectations of substitute teachers. For example, classroom

teachers should double-check their lessons and not take for granted what would be helpful to a substitute.

- 4.) *Resilience*- Learn from both the positive and negative classroom experiences, but focus on the positive.
- 5.) *Resourcefulness*- Effective substitutes understand good teaching and can apply it when implementing the classroom teacher's lesson plans.

Understanding of effective classroom management practices, the ability to accommodate the different learning styles, and strong communication skills are few of the resources that a substitute can be brought to the classroom.

- 6.) *Retreat*- There are two types of retreat that might be appropriate action for a substitute to exercise. Preemptive retreat is appropriate in situations where a substitute feels extremely ill prepared for a given assignment.

Reactive retreat is used when making a conscious decision not to return to a certain classroom or school where the administrator or teacher does not provide adequate support to the substitute teacher.

- 7.) *Research*- School districts offer limited or no preservice training for their substitute teachers and access to any inservice training is also extremely limited. The Internet now offers a solution to this problem by making extensive resources available that can help to improve teaching skills.

- 8.) *Respect*- Dressing appropriately and arriving on time can help substitute teachers enhance their professional image. Most importantly being

learner-focused rather than teacher-focused is key to fostering professional respect that substitutes desire.

- 9.) *Reward*- This component also has multiple dimensions. It is important in regards to personal rewards in their career as well using appropriate positive appraisal techniques to improve student performance.
- 10.) *Readiness*-The substitute needs to make a commitment to prepare for each day's unique challenges.
- 11.) *Relevance*- Substitutes are facilitators and must remain learner focused. To do this, what is taught and how it is taught needs to be relevant to the students.
- 12.) *Reflection*- There is a tremendous value in both substitute and regular classroom teachers' reflecting on their classroom experiences and then using their analyses of those experiences to help continue to improve their professional practice.

Utilizing the Twelve R's in analyzing successes and failures in the classroom and applying what was learned from that analysis will continue to improve teaching skills and is vital to reflective practice.

Finally, Gresham, Donihoo, and Cox (2007) have identified five strategies that can be used to enhance the substitute teaching experience. They encourage substitutes not to squander away valuable instructional time; their role is vitally to student success.

- 1.) *Survey the Landscape*. After being hired by the school district, substitutes should make themselves familiar with the campuses they will be working at and if possible meet some of the staff.

- 2.) Set the Stage for Success. Mental and physical preparations are key. Early arrival, familiarity with the lesson plans, materials and the students is encouraged.
- 3.) Set High Behavioral Expectations. Professional dress sets the stage. A discussion after greeting the students about the expectations for the day is a great way to make the students aware of what is required of them.
- 4.) Manage with Confidence. The students need clear and specific instructions with praise along the way.
- 5.) Prepare for the Unexpected. There are times when no plans are left. Substitute teachers need to have emergency lessons ready for these situations.

School District Handbook Limitations

There is information that is very important to substitute teachers. They need to know about school district policies, appropriate phone numbers, school calendars and the names of administrators. Procedures such as bell schedules, signing in and out, and other specific routines and responsibilities that they substitute will be expected to perform should also be included. Each school, not school district, should have available its own handbook (Lassman, 2001).

Eleven North Central Washington school districts were contacted and asked what type of information they offer their incoming substitute teachers. There was a large range in the information that was provided in the handbooks that were collected. Not all of the local school districts offer their incoming substitute teachers some type of information handbook. Two of the eleven school districts that were contacted by phone offer only

general district information (Vargas; Davis, personal communication, May 13, 2009).

Most of what was included in the handbooks was general district policy.

Four districts offer nothing at all to their substitute teachers (Hinkins; Bartlett; Houston; Tinker, personal communication, May 13, 2009). As a result, the substitutes in these districts walk into their first assignment in a classroom of strangers with no background information. They have no idea of what is expected of them or what is expected of the students.

Of all of the handbooks that were collected from the other five districts, the Lake Chelan School District (2009) contained the greatest number of sections with information to assist substitutes with their teaching and classroom experience. While a majority of the handbook was made up of sections of school maps, calendars, and general business information, it also contained specific sections that related to performance responsibilities and expectations of a substitute. It also included information, procedures, hints and help for each building in the district along with hints and activities to use in the classroom.

The remaining four handbooks from Montgomery County Public Schools (1997), Eastmont School District (2008-2009), Manson School District (2007-2008), and Wenatchee School District (2008-2009) contained mainly district and business information. Suggestions to help a substitute in teaching and classroom situations were generally limited to simply a single page of classroom tips.

School District Handbook Advantages

School district handbooks can be an invaluable resource for substitute teachers. The Substitute Teacher Handbook of Silsbee Independent School District is a great example. The handbook was created “to provide information that will assist with the

questions that a substitute teacher may have and to pave the way for a successful year as a substitute teacher” (Silsbee Independent School District, 2009, p.1).

Information that can be helpful substitute be successful is vast. Some useful specifics that the Lake Chelan School District Handbook (2009) and the Wenatchee Public Schools Certificated Substitute Reference Guide (2009) both included are classroom management ideas for the different grade levels as well as responsibilities and tips for their substitute teachers. They also both include each school’s report and release times as well as a school district calendar.

One main advantage of a well-put together school district handbook is making the substitute teachers aware of their standards of conduct. Several handbooks include the district wide code, but there are usually differences in what is expected of substitute as opposed to the classroom teachers. For instance, the Silsbee School District (2009) states that criticism of any students, staff, or policies should be made to the building principal in a professional conference.

Making expectations such as dress code and other general instructions known to the substitutes before they start their day can lessen the number of issues administrators have to address with their substitute staff. A list of general “Do’s” and “Not’s” can be very helpful also (Silsbee Independent School District, 2009).

Improvement by substitutes is difficult when they receive little or no information telling them what is expected of them, how to achieve it. It is also important for them to know where they need improvement and if possible how it can be accomplished (Lassman, 2001). The Lake Chelan School District (2009) offers in their handbook a form called the Substitute Teacher Feedback Report. This is a great way for substitutes to

give a summary of their day. It asks questions ranging from if there was a seating chart left for them to any classroom management issues that they may have had. The other section that is invaluable to a substitute is the “Follow-up” option. The substitute can leave their email or phone number if they would like the classroom teacher to talk further with them in regards to their day.

Summary

Chapter two discusses the background of this project by explaining the problems that have been associated with substitute teaching and the training and information that are available to them. It describes many of the challenges that substitute teachers face in the classroom, school buildings, and in preparing for what their day will throw at them. To address all of these challenges, a rationale is given as to why administrators and staff should support this necessary faction of the education process.

Characteristics and qualities of what makes a good substitute are also given. Topics from how to dress to classroom atmosphere are addressed. The Twelve R's of substitute teaching are also addressed to reflect on both the professional demands and the practical realities of substitute teaching.

Handbooks were collected from local school districts. Limitations and advantages were given in regards to the information that is offered. These subjects were also addressed in regard to the importance of what is offered to substitute teachers in general.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

Genesis of Project

As the author sat down to her very first substitute teaching assignment, she realized that no plans had been left for her, none at all. Not only were there no lesson plans, there wasn't even a class schedule to know when students would be coming and going. When a call finally came from the classroom teacher, none of the information such as what classes were taught or when and what was being taught in each class coincided with his actual schedule. Upon checking out of the building, not sure if there would be another substitute experience, the author found that the source of frustration was caused by a teacher who had a medical emergency and was under the influence of narcotics when he called in the lesson plans. The situation was the catalyst that started the process of the author putting together a substitute tool-kit.

The author actually became interested in building a handbook for the project like this about five years prior, in 2003. The author had been a substitute for five years and realized that school districts and classroom teachers were lacking useful teaching supplements for substitutes to use in times of emergency leave type situations. Often, even in non-emergency situations, some lesson plans that were left were inadequate at filling the time that was allotted to given activities. The length of the lesson was usually the area in which the content was lacking.

Tools, games, and activities were collected and used by the author over the last nine years, 2000-2009, and were used to supplement the various lessons when the content

left by the teachers was lacking. Many opportunities for learning were lost because of the lack of materials left by the teacher or carried by the author. The opportunities were easily filled by a small collection of easily adaptable materials that were on hand. Listening to the comments made by administrators about the ineffectiveness of substitute teachers also prompted the idea. The author realized that many substitutes, students, and teachers could benefit from an elaboration on this idea.

Project Procedure

This project is a collection of tips, tools, resources, and quality-learning activities compiled by the author from her personal collection and that of other elementary substitute teachers. A questionnaire was used to ask other substitute teachers a series of questions about what they would have liked to have known or had on hand when they first started substitute teaching. The author was looking for general suggestions or ideas that would be helpful for substitute teachers. There is also usable classroom management ideas and some professional suggestions for the substitute to consider ensuring a successful experience.

All of these components have been compiled to create a usable working teaching tool that will be easily reproducible, easily adapted, and functional by any substitute or classroom teacher.

Project Implementation

This project focuses on new substitute teachers and the development of a supplemental teaching tool. The project offers an organized collection of materials that support substitutes in their teaching efforts. This project will also assist in classroom management with suggestions to help a day run productively. The author encourages

substitute and classroom teachers to adapt this handbook and create a toolbox so it becomes easily usable and a comfortable teaching tool

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

Introduction

This project is intended to provide a handbook with information for substitute teachers to help promote their success in second through fifth grade classrooms. It contains tips, tools, ideas, and activities that can be used in a variety of situations where the lesson plans that have been left are insufficient or nonexistent.

The research for this project was based on peer reviewed articles, books written to help support substitute teachers, school district substitute handbooks, and informal interviews with peers who have served as substitute teachers. The information is to provide support to currently used handbooks that school districts offer or to furnish a resource to those who do not.

Included in the project are seven major sections that are meant to provide a foundation that substitutes can add to to create a “tool-kit” that is compatible with their own teaching style and preferences. The first section is a list of substitute survival tips. These tips are meant to help make the whole process of substitute teaching proceed smoothly with suggestions ranging from “When you get your assignment” to “Wrapping up the day.” The second section is a list of tools that a substitute can acquire to can assist in situations when supplies are not left by the classroom teacher or when additional items are needed.

The next two sections are meant to assist with student behavior in the classroom. While there are no sections specific to behavior management, this is a list of ideas that

helps to address classroom management and motivation. This section was created to assist in reducing the number of behavior situations without creating a specific behavior program. The section on “Attention Getters” was created for the same purpose.

The final two sections are lists of math and reading/language arts activities. They were created to help substitute teachers to fill time with activities or lessons that are related to what is currently being taught in the classroom. The activities can be used to extend existing lessons that have not filled the time that was allotted, or they can be used to create lessons when no plans have been left by the classroom teacher. These are written to be easily adapted to many other subjects that are taught in classrooms such as science or social studies. They are focused on the second through fifth grade, but can be easily adjusted to fit above and below the target group.

The activities are to supplement the plans already left by the classroom teacher. They can also be used to extend or create new lessons. The Appendix includes the handbook with references that would provide for other activities, tips and ideas to expand what has been provided in the handbook.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Serving as a substitute teacher is one of the most difficult assignments there is within the school system. It requires a person to be able to enter a classroom ranging from self-contained special education to honors English or kindergarten to physical education and carry out the daily routine as the regular classroom teacher would. Not only do they need to be ready at a moments notice, they are also expected to incorporate the essential elements into what they are teaching at a mastery level (Silsbee Independent School District, 2009).

Teacher absenteeism and substitute teacher problems top the list of daily annoyances of many school principals. Their frustration is deep and the dilemmas universal. Yet, information from educational journals that addresses the problems is very limited. There are two main worries. The first is the loss of valuable instruction time that is a result of teachers being gone. The other is the beleaguered substitute teacher that is often subjected to exhausting and demoralizing experiences (Nidds & McGerald, 1994).

Substitute teachers are expected to oversee a classroom full of strangers at a moments notice. They are expected to teach a variety of subject matter while following someone else's fractured lesson plans. At the same time, they need to maintain discipline and try to include a sense of humor to keep their students engaged. These expectations and the small paycheck have contributed to the dwindling pool of qualified substitutes (Duebber, 2000).

The realities of substitute teaching show how important it is for substitute teachers to be able to overcome the challenges to be able to create a constructive and effective learning environment for their students. This is made more evident when on a typical school day nearly five million children will spend their day with a substitute teacher teaching in their classroom (Tomei & Cornett, 2002).

Substitute teachers are vital in the process of teaching students. For whatever reason, they rarely receive the appreciation that their counterparts receive. School leaders still need to take an interest in substitute teachers even in small gestures such as answering any questions the substitute may have (Gonzales, 2002).

Ostapczuk (1994) has assembled a number of recommendations to help construct good substitute programs. It is important that the substitute's role and expectations are clear. It is also necessary to improve lesson plans that are left for the substitute to work from. Developing and providing a substitute teacher's handbook on school rules and policies is important. It is also necessary to include strategies and activities to help them navigate their day when the other suggestions are not met.

The more organized and prepared substitute teachers are to carry out the responsibilities and demands of their assignment, the greater the possibility they have to be an effective facilitator in the learning process (Silsbee Independent School District, 2009).

Recommendations

Because many school districts offer little or no training or resources to their incoming substitute teachers, the author has created a handbook of ideas, tips, tools, and suggestions to help enhance and complement their existing teaching preferences. It

contains suggestions for classroom management, which is one of the largest areas of concerns that classroom teachers and administrators have for substitute teachers. The handbook also contains tips and ideas that the substitute will need to modify to fit their teaching style.

Substitutes will need to use this handbook to create and/or supplement the strategies and lessons they are currently using in classrooms. This is a tool that is created to be used as a “base” to be built upon to fit the individual. It needs to be adjusted to fit the requirements of the individual as well the students that they serve.

Conclusions

“I am a substitute teacher. I babysit, push Play on a VCR, and pass out worksheets. I am ignored by faculty and disrespected by students. I am assumed to be inept to hold a full-time teaching position. I am a stand-in, a placeholder” (Wertz, 2006, p. 2). This is often how substitute teachers are perceived. The problem with this perception is that most substitute teachers have, at minimum, the exact same training that classroom teachers have but are assumed that they have sub-par teaching abilities. In reality, the major difference is that they are attempting to teach a lesson someone else has designed.

There are many reasons to develop substitute teacher support programs, both moral and practical. Liability to the student is one practical concern. Case law does hold a substitute to the same standard of care as a classroom teacher. It is only fitting then that movement to elevate the standards of practice in schools be applied to the traditionally neglected substitute teachers (Abdal-Haqq, 1997). On a smaller scale, further development needs to occur for the times that lesson plans are often too brief, not

concise, or not present at all (Warren, 1988). These are situations where an effective substitute teacher handbook that focuses only on the promotion of the success of substitute teachers is invaluable.

Few schools offer any training, or any type of informational handbook, to their substitutes especially at the university level. This lack of education is particularly unfortunate because many undergraduate students will be substitute teaching sometime in their career (Parsons & Dillon, 1980), and students in grades K-12 will have spent an average of one year's worth of school days with substitute teachers (Pardini, 2002).

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APPENDIX A

The Essential Substitute Teacher Handbook

Angie Satterfield

Master's Project

June 4, 2009

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Introduction

Substitute teaching can be one of the most difficult and rewarding jobs. It is their job to create a quality-learning environment and keep the classroom running smoothly. If they are well organized and prepared, they can be vital contributors to the success of the students, classroom teachers, and school districts that they become involved with. Four keys to ensure your success in any classroom are to be yourself, be positive, be honest, and flexible.

This substitute survival handbook is a comprehensive resource tool to help substitute teachers create a quality tool kit that fits with their own individual teaching styles. It includes information, ideas, and activities that will help to insure the success of any lesson. Use the tips and suggestions to have a great start and end to your day, implement the reward ideas to continue the motivation of the students, and utilize the easily adaptable cross-curriculum activities to help take full advantage of every moment in the classroom.

If substitute teaching is new to you, this substitute survival kit is short and to the point with helpful suggestions from many substitutes with years of experience both as classroom teachers and substitute teachers. Just as classroom teachers have their own teaching styles and strengths, you will too. Go through this kit and choose what will fit best with your needs and strengths to make your days the most productive for you and the students that you will have the privilege of working with. Just be sure to never enter a classroom empty handed!

Substitute Survival Tips

When You Get Your Substitute Assignment

- 1.) Make sure to have a calendar that is easily accessible that you can use to keep track of your substituting assignments.
- 2.) You will want to record who the assignment is for, the school it is located in, whether it is a full or half day (am/pm), and the report time of the job.
- 3.) Write down any special notes that are given with the assignment. For example, traveling between buildings will be required, bilingual preferred, special location of sub plans etc.
- 4.) If you are unfamiliar with the location of the school, look up and write down the address on your calendar. Figuring out directions before the day of the assignment will save time and headache later.

Getting Yourself Ready

- 1.) Be sure to dress professionally (erring towards conservative) and comfortably. Wear comfortable shoes and be prepared to be outdoors. You never know if you will end up with recess duty or if you will be needed to walk outside with the students to another activity.
- 2.) If no report time was given, plan to arrive 30 minutes before students arrive in the classroom.
- 3.) Take your substitute survival kit equipped with tools and great ideas to ensure that you have a great day in the classroom.

Upon Arrival

- 1.) The first thing you will want to do is to check in at the office. This will let them know that you are there and so that you will get paid.
- 2.) Ask if there will be any special drills or activities that will be happening that day. For example, a fire drill or a special performance that the classroom teacher may have forgotten to include in his/her sub plans.
- 3.) Be flexible. You may be asked to cover another classroom or switch assignments if an emergency should arise.
- 4.) Ask where the teacher's lounge and restroom are located.
- 5.) Check the teacher's mailbox for lunch cards, attendance sheet, and notices home.

Once You Get to the Classroom

- 1.) Locate the teacher's sub plans and read them carefully! Be sure to check if you have a morning duty that you will need to report to. If not, read through the entire day's plan. Make sure you have everything you need for the day because now is the best time to locate any missing materials. If you are still missing something, this is a great time to use an activity from your survival kit. Also be sure to locate the classroom's emergency plans for things like fire drills, lockdowns, etc.
- 2.) Most teachers also create a list of health concerns, reliable classroom helpers, and students with behavior problems. This list can be very useful if a student starts to display unusual behavior. You need to know who would be a good helper for clarification of classroom procedures, and whom you might want to keep a closer eye on.

- 3.) Introduce yourself to nearby teachers. They can be invaluable if you need clarification of the day's schedule or activities.
- 4.) Make sure your name and the correct date are on the board. This will help with being called teacher and being asked, "What's today?" throughout the day.
- 5.) Find out if there is a reward program already in place or if you will want to use one of your own.

As the Students Arrive

- 1.) Stand at the classroom door and greet the students as they arrive. This seems to lessen the craziness of a guest teacher being in their classroom.
- 2.) If there isn't an entry task left by the teacher, put one up on the board along with a reward. For example, "Write down as many types of snakes that you can think of. I have a candy for the winner." An activity like this can be useful to help keep the students occupied while you take care of attendance and lunch count.
- 3.) Introduce yourself to the class. Point out your name and the entry task on the board.
- 4.) It is always good, especially with younger students, to explain that you may do things a bit differently than their regular teacher.

Wrapping up the day

- 1.) Save yourself time and backache by making sure that the students help clean up the classroom. For example, give them a number of pieces of garbage to pick up off the floor and ask them put up the chairs if need be before they go.
- 2.) Make sure to pass out any notes home and homework.

- 3.) Carefully correct any work the teacher asked you to. If you do not know what grading criteria the teacher uses, do not correct the paper especially when correcting assignments with written out answers. A good rule to follow: Correct the math, spelling and multiple choice and leave the rest.
- 4.) Make sure to straighten up any messes you have made. Leave the materials the teacher left you in the same place they were left and leave the classroom neat and orderly.
- 5.) Leave notes! Teachers like to know how your day went. Things they would like to know include how the lessons went, if you didn't finish the lesson, where you left off, if there any behavior concerns, if there were any especially good or helpful students, etc.

Other Good Ideas

- 1.) Keep a list for yourself of students who are absent for the day. This can become useful in a variety of situations such as a fire drill.
- 2.) Stick to the plans. There's nothing more irritating to classroom teachers than a substitute that decides to discard the plans they have carefully prepared to fulfill their own agendas. Only use your own lessons and activities if the teacher didn't leave plans or if they finish early.
- 3.) Do not ever leave the classroom without there being adult supervision. This is where introducing yourself to a nearby teacher can be useful if an emergency does arise.
- 4.) Leave all notes that students hand into you such as tardy slips and notes from home.

- 5.) Make sure to keep track of and collect all classroom materials that you distribute throughout the day.
- 6.) If there were extra copies of a worksheet, keep one if you think it would be a good addition to your tool kit.
- 7.) Take notes about ideas that you see in a classroom and would like to use in your own classroom someday such as bulletin boards or organizational ideas.

Tools

This is a list of items that can be utilized to create your tool kit. Some or all can be included to fit your needs as a substitute teacher.

- 1.) Tool Kit-A good sturdy backpack is a great choice. Especially one with two large compartments, one for your tool kit and one for your lunch and whatever else you will need for the day. This helps to keep your hands free to carry any items the office gives you and what you will need from the teacher's box.
- 2.) Hand Book-It is a great reference to use when you may need to adjust or enhance your tool kit. Pull it out when you need ideas for an activity or game or simply need help with a new situation that may arise in the classroom.
- 3.) Note Pad/Notebook Paper-Very useful to keep notes for you and to leave notes for the classroom teacher. Not all teachers will provide a means to leave notes other than on their sub plans. It is also handy to have when students run out of their own paper.
- 4.) Writing Instruments-Pencil, pen, permanent marker, colored pencils/pens, white board marker, highlighter. Sometimes these are locked up or hard to locate. By

having your own, you do not need to go through the teacher's desk to find what you will need.

- 5.) Sticky Notes-Not only are these great for leaving short notes for the teacher, but they can be used for several classroom games, activities, and impromptu hall passes.
- 6.) Rewards/Treats-Small candy, pencils, stickers, etc. Just make it something inexpensive that the students will be excited about receiving.
- 7.) Whistle-You never know if you will be the one with recess/playground duty, and a whistle is something no one wants to be left sharing with someone else.
- 8.) Flash Cards-At least a set of flash cards in both addition and multiplication. These are great to pull out for a quick review or game during those short transition times.
- 9.) Scissors-For whatever reason, it seems most classrooms never have a good pair of adult scissors.
- 10.) Tape-You never know when this will come in handy.
- 11.) Tissue-Many classrooms do not have tissue out for the students. By having some in your backpack, it lessens the number of students needing to leave the classroom/hall passes.
- 12.) Mad Libs- These are great for 5-10 minute blocks of time and are good for a laugh during transition times.
- 13.) Dice-Great for games, activities, and for the times you need to break a tie by having students pick a number between one and six.
- 14.) Deck of Playing Cards-Same uses as dice.

- 15.) Short Stories/Books-Just a couple that you are familiar with can be great to read or to use or fill in for various concepts throughout the day.
- 16.) Small Ball/Bean Bag-Make sure it is something soft. This can be used to for a variety of activities.
- 17.) Your Own Journal-All classrooms provide learning opportunities for you too. Add new ideas when you find something that works.
- 18.) A lot of patience! ☺

Ideas for Classroom Management and Motivation

- 1.) Attitudes are contagious! If you go into a classroom feeling that you are going to contribute something of value, academic or otherwise, you too will leave with something in return. A respect and understanding will develop between you and the students.
- 2.) A great way to create an instant connection with the class is to allow them to ask a few questions about you. You can just have them raise their hands or allow them to write their questions down on pieces of paper. You can then draw them out throughout the day as time allows.
- 3.) Set your expectations early. Students will rise to the occasion when expectations are stated clearly.
- 4.) “Can someone please raise their hand and tell me ...(i.e. where I could find the lunch cards?)” is a great way to request information from a large group of students without ten kids blurting out at the same time.
- 5.) Be a clock-watcher. Allow a couple extra minutes for everything. Better to arrive a bit early than late.

- 6.) Know the computer use policy. Unless requested by the teacher it is a better idea to not turn on the computer at all. Especially if you are there for just one or two days. This is a good rule for student use also.
- 7.) Many times an activity will require putting students into groups. Sometimes the classroom teacher will leave groups that they would like students to work in, but just as often they will leave that up to you. Putting students into groups is one of the easiest situations to lose student's attention and focus. Simply counting off the students by the number of groups needed, you will usually lessen the confusion, hurt feelings, and the chaos that will inevitably happen when students choose their own groups.
- 8.) A way to eliminate complaints about having to do an entire assignment is to allow the students to work with partners on appropriate assignments/worksheets. Have one student work the odd problems and the other the even. After they have finished, have them switch papers and correct the others work. This requires them to do only half the worksheet, but in the end they actually work the whole assignment when checking their partner's work
- 9.) A great motivator to keep students on task is to announce early in the morning that if they work hard they can change seats for the last hour of the day.
- 10.) A way to eliminate many troublesome situations is to locate or create a seating chart. Morning attendance time can be a great time to fill out a quick sketch of the classroom's seats with the notebook paper from your tool-kit.

Attention Getters

Attention Getters are exactly what they sound like. They are brief words, phrases, or sounds that can be used to get the attention of all students in a classroom quickly without having to shout or know the names of all the students. They are followed by a specific oral response from the class. I have found that consistently used “attention getters” can greatly reduce the number of behavior problems encountered in a day. They are just as effective in classrooms you will be in only once as they are in long-term situations.

- 1.) Teacher’s Prompt: “One, two, three, eyes on me.

Classroom Response: “One, two, eyes on you.”

- 2.) Teacher: “And a hush fell over the crowd.”

Class: “Husshhh”

- 3.) Teacher: “Giddy.”

Class: “Up.”

- 4.) Teacher: “All set?”

Class: “You bet!”

- 5.) Teacher: “Give me five.”

Class: “Five, four, three, two, one”

Reading/Language Arts Activities

Building Block Vocabulary

During the classroom's silent reading time, have each student write down any new or exciting word from their story on a piece of scratch paper. After reading time is completed, come together as a group and ask the students to share their new words. As you write them on the board, call on students who recognize the word to help define them. Add a word or two from the book you are reading too!

Creative Endings

Find an exciting picture book with a great climactic point. Read it to the class right up to the climax of the story and stop. Now have each student get out a piece of paper and create his own ending to the story. You can do this by having them write or by creating a picture. Try to leave the book out on display while they create own their endings.

Story Starters

A good guided activity that is helpful for filling small amounts of time in between transitions. Have a volunteer come up to the front of the class and give them a story starter and ask them to spontaneously create a story to share with the class. Give them a small amount of time if they need it to help them get started. Examples: "Tell me when... you got to school and no one was here, found a key in your pocket, you were captured by pirates, etc."

Picture Stories

This is a fun activity to try when you come across some exciting or interesting pictures that would inspire a creative writing story. Show the picture to the class and help them

with some starter words to start their stories. It is even better when you several pictures for the students to choose from.

Scrambled Eggs

Take the weeks spelling words and mix up the letters for in each word. Write these “scrambled eggs” on the board and challenge the students to figure out what the words are without looking at the spelling list. You can even have the students scramble the second half of the list and then have a partner solve their list, or you can split the class into teams.

Extensions

There are a couple of fun ways to extend a spelling or vocabulary lesson that has run short. For younger students, you can challenge them to figure out how many syllables there are in each word or what the root word is. They can either raise their hand or write down their answers on scratch paper. More advanced students can figure out what part of speech the words are. Just keep a dictionary handy for any disagreements.

Circle Writing

This activity works best with groups of 5-10 if you want to sit in a circle. If you have a larger group, just have them stay at their own desks. Each student will need a pencil and a piece of writing paper. You can give them a topic or just let them start with a topic of their own, just be sure to remind them, especially older students, that it needs to be appropriate for school. Tell them they have five minutes to start their story. After five minutes, have them come to a stopping point and pass the story on to the person to their right or whatever works for the classroom that you are in. Continue the process as time

allows, but make sure you leave enough time for the person who started the story to read it and if time allows sharing with the class.

Word Race

Write one of the classes current spelling/vocabulary words, word from a word wall, or word pulled out of a story that was recently read and put it on the board. Ask the class to get out a piece of scratch paper and a pencil and get ready to race and see how many words they can make from that one word using each letter in the word only once. Then reward the winner with something from your toolkit.

Story Elements

If there is extra time after you have read a story, a great activity to do is to go over the elements of the story. Ask about the setting, characters (main and supporting), plot, problem, or if the author was trying to teach a lesson.

Short Stuff

This is a quick journal writing activity that is useful for those ten to fifteen minute transition times in between lessons. Write a simple incomplete writing prompt on the board and give the students five to ten minutes to write down their endings. The finished product is usually two to five sentences depending on the skill level of the group. Be sure to leave five minutes so students that want to can share their “short stuff” with the class. Examples: “If I could have a superpower, it would be...” “When I turn thirty I am going to...”

I Wish Poems

This can be a fun lesson where students can be silly or serious. The students will simply write a poem with each line starting with the words “I wish...” A fun variation is to have

each student write one line of the poem and then combine them into one poem by the entire class.

All Torn Up

This is a great art extension activity to do after finishing a story. It is also a good use of all the paper in the scrap box. The idea is for students to choose their favorite part of the story and create a picture of it using torn pieces of paper. No scissors allowed! They simply arrange and glue the scraps into a collage. This activity levels the playing field for all of the students who may be incredible artists but not so great at drawing.

Math Activities

Word Problem

This is a great activity to do with second language learners and students with minimal reading skills. Have students get out a piece of scratch paper and a pencil. Explain to them that they will be able to take notes, but you will only say the problems two times so they will need to be very good listeners. Speak slowly and use as few words as possible. Example: “4 zebras, 6 lions, 2 snakes. How many animals?” Then have the students create their own problems to share with the class.

Around the World

This activity can be used for a variety of skill levels. You just need to find out what basic facts the students are working on and pull those out of your toolkit. One student will stand behind another as you reveal the flash card. Whoever says the correct answer will move to the next opponent and the other student will sit in that chair. If there is a tie, show another flash card. The goal is that the students will be trying to travel “around the world” by beating their opponent in reciting the answer to the math problem.

Storybook Math

This activity helps to engage the listeners and creates a connection across curriculum. Use storybooks, by asking the students before (if the group will need to count as you read) or after (as a challenge) how many people, animals, problems, etc... there were in the story. Give them time to make their calculations then have them share their guesses with the class. This also helps the listeners to remember story sequence as well.

Geometric Pictures

Use the whiteboard or overhead to create a picture using geometric shapes as simple or complex the class needs (keep good ideas of pictures in your journal). Ask how many triangles, circles, squares, etc. are in the picture. You can ask several questions and have the students write them down, or ask one at a time and discuss as you go. For more advanced ages, ask how many right angles, 90 degree angles, sets of perpendicular lines, etc. are in the picture.

M&M Bar Graph

M & Ms are sure way to keep the attention of the group. All you need is a small bag of candy and a piece of graph paper. Figure out a creative hook to get their attention and then have them make some guesses about the number of colors of candies in the bag. After you have talked about/recorded their guesses, open up the bag and pour them out in a container so that the students will be able to see them. Create a bar graph with "Number of Candies" on the left side (y-axis) and "Colors of Candies" across the bottom (x-axis). Label the numbers and colors on the graph, and then start to sort and count filling out the graph as you go. Remind the class that they will get to eat the counters when they are

done! For more advanced groups have them figure out how many candies each student will get if they are split equally.

PIG

This is an addition activity that students can play with a partner or by themselves. Each pair of students will need a die and a piece of scratch paper to help keep score with. To begin, the first player rolls the die and continues adding up the number of dots they get with each roll. Their turn is over as soon as they roll a one. Now it is player two's turn. The first player to 100 is the winner. Once a player has reached 100 (and if they are familiar with subtraction) they can continue the game by beginning to subtracting their way back down to zero.

HOG is the multiplication/division version of PIG that can be played by more advanced groups. It uses the same rules except they students will use multiplication and division instead of addition and subtraction. You will also want to switch the goal from 100 to 1,000.

Math Bingo

Bingo is a great activity that keeps students engaged and can be used at any level. Have the students get out a piece of scratch paper and draw a 3x3 or nine square game grid, filling the squares on with randomly chosen numbers from one to fifty (one to one hundred for older students) in each square. Give the students simple addition and subtraction problems (add in multiplication and division for older students). If the answer matches a number on their grid, they get to cross it out with an X. Make sure to state the problems clearly. Examples: "twenty-six plus eight" or "seven times four minus six." Be

sure to keep track of the answers you have used. Use one of your chosen rewards to give as a prize for the winner.

I Am The Greatest

With I am the greatest, students will be applying their knowledge of place value. Each student will need a crayon (this keeps them from being able to change the placement of their numbers) and a piece of scratch paper and you will need the Ace through nine cards out of your deck of playing cards and the jokers. The ace will represent the digit one and the joker zero. Chose the number of digits that will be in the “mystery number”. Three is a great place to start and then increase as the student’s skills increase. Have the students draw that many lines on their scratch paper. Example: ____ ____ ____ Shuffle the deck of number cards and draw the first card. Students must write that number on one of their lines and continue drawing cards until all of the lines are filled. Chose a student to come arrange they cards you have drawn to create the largest thee digit number that is possible. Any students that have that number on their paper get to declare, “I am the greatest!” Hand out a reward for the last round.

Estimation Station

You can use something from you lunch, or bring something extra to perform this activity. I find food that I will be able to share with the whole group to be the most engaging. A great choice is fish crackers. Put the crackers in a clear container or bag, and let them come up and look at container to help them make a guess on how many fish are in the jar. Give each student a sticky note to write his or her name and guess on. Arrange their guesses on the board from least to greatest. Now have the students help you count up the fish. As you pass guesses that were too low pull them off the board and put them aside.

The next person with a sticky note still on the board is the “Estimation Professor” and gets to help pass out the fish to the class.

Web Sites

The following are just a few of the web sites that can be very helpful to substitute teachers. They contain a variety of information, tools, games, and reproducibles that can be used to enhance your tool-kit.

1.) <http://sti.usu.edu/subs/index.aspx>

This web site has been created by Utah State University specifically for substitute teachers. It has information regarding how to become a substitute, helping you find your strengths as a substitute, and resources available to purchase. It also offers a monthly newsletter that is full of information and suggestions on how to improve you and experiences in the classroom as well as a blog spot to chat with other substitutes.

2.) http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr359.shtml

Education World is useful to classroom teachers as well as substitutes. The previous link takes you to their Sub Station. It is an archive of articles that have been written for substitute teachers that classroom teachers will love.

3.) <http://teachers.net/>

The best option this site has is the ability to search the site for specific lessons. This site is extremely helpful in situations where no lesson plans are left for the substitute. So no matter the classroom that you are in, you can type in the subject that they are currently studying and usually get several options to choose from that are grade level appropriate.

4.) <http://edhelper.com/>

This is the site for reproducible papers. They have everything from math to language arts, and thematic units to all types of puzzles. The only downfall is that they do require a yearly membership for a fee.

5.) <http://www.theteacherscorner.net/>

The Teachers Corner is a great place to go for what they call "Seasonal Items." There are monthly as well as seasonal lessons, worksheets, color pages, and games.