



When You're Away: Planning for the Substitute Teacher

Like it or not, you are not invincible nor does your teaching career happen in a vacuum isolated from the rest of your life. Things happen. You get sick; you are called away for jury duty; or you are even subpoenaed appear in court. There are any number of reasons when you may've to take one or more days from work but the work of your classroom continues. So, the smart thing to do is to make sure you are prepared for a substitute teacher.

When you establish a classroom with momentum and flow you don't want it disrupted any more than it has to be when you are away from work. So, as you develop your plans for the substitute teacher, make sure you provide as much detail and specificity as possible so the substitute doesn't waste valuable instructional time trying to figure out what to do or where materials are.

Make sure you have plans in place to cover an absence of one day and possibly at least two days and be sure to update any lesson plans regularly to reflect content that is being taught and changing dynamics in your classroom. Make sure you leave a copy of your plans:

- On your desk where they can be found (in the event you know you are going to be absent);
- With campus administration to help the substitute teacher get situated;
- with your department or grade-level head in the event the substitute teacher needs assistance; and
- A cloud folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, One Drive) so you can access them away from work.

Some guidelines to help with a seamless transition in your classroom when you are away include:

Give complete information about materials.

In stating assignments, give titles and authors of texts and laboratory manuals, as well as numbers of pages, problems, and experiments. Be sure to leave copies of texts, answer books, and laboratory manuals for the substitute. Don't just say, "The kids know where everything is."

Include meaningful assignments in your plan book. Busywork often results in a wasted period for the students and the substitute.

Include a current schedule of the daily activities, including when students go to lunch, special classes (library, art, music, PE), and when administrative tasks have to be completed (lunch count, attendance, etc.)

Post the names of students who assist you as the attendance secretary, monitors, and clean-up crew.

Keep an up-to-date seating chart that gives the full name and grade of each student. Insist that students always occupy their assigned seats.

Prepare your students for a substitute by instilling good work habits and a code of conduct that is conducive to order and accomplishment. Talk about your absence with your students ahead of time if it is planned. Younger students need to be reassured that you will return. Older ones need to know that you will be updated about their behavior and progress.

Say THANK YOU. Substitutes are professionals, just like you and have the same goals for your students. Also, substitute teachers often accept substitute jobs close to when the school day starts; so, they deserve a big THANK YOU for giving their time to your students.

Let your principal know if your substitute does a good job because this will determine if they ask the substitute to come again.

Substitute teachers are difficult to find under the best circumstances and ones with degrees and/or experience are even more difficult. The more information you provide the substitute the better he or she will be to keep the flow and momentum in your classroom going. It also increases the likelihood they will want to return to your class in the future. Remember they have choices and if a substitute teacher has an unpleasant experience in your classroom, then chances are they will not want to return to it.

The two pages at the end of this section contain forms you can use to help organize your substitute teacher kit. **Interactive copies** of these forms are available in this survival guide.

Your Substitute Teacher Toolkit

- Seating charts
- Who to contact (w/ contact information) for help (principal, secretary, department head, custodian, nurse, etc.)
- Names of teachers next door
- Modification information if necessary
- Strategies for differentiation
- Names of teachers in special classes (Library, Music, Art, PE)
- Basic daily/weekly schedule
- Classroom map illustrating
- Alternate schedule for early dismissal and/or pep rally days
- Supervision schedule (yard duty, bus duty, hall duty, lunch duty, recess duty, etc.)
- Building floor plan including exits, emergency drill routes, and procedures
- Lesson plan or a generic plan for the “unexpected” absence
- Detailed lesson plan if absence is planned
- Materials and activities students enjoy (crossword puzzles, etc.)
- Student helpers assigned
- Who to contact if additional copying is needed
- Class rules and expectations
- Bus numbers for students who ride buses home
- Information about students who go to after-school day care off-campus or on-campus; walk home; or are picked up by a parent/guardian.
- Individual student schedules such as special education or other pull-out programs
- Names and schedules of education support personnel and/or volunteers
- Procedures for regular and early dismissal
- Parent contact list (if problems arise with certain students)
- Pad of paper for the substitute to leave notes of the day’s events
- If possible, a lunch menu (some schools publish a lunch menu by week or month)
- If the absence is sudden, make sure the substitute knows how to access textbooks and other instructional materials. If it is a planned absence, make sure you leave them on your desk.

Substitute Teacher Information Sheet for Elementary School

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____ Subject: _____ Room: _____

Principal: _____ Assistant Principal: _____ Secretary: _____

Counselor: _____ Nurse: _____ Custodian: _____

For additional information, ask _____ in Room _____

These students will be able to answer basic questions about classroom policies and procedures:

Student: _____

Student: _____

Student: _____

Schedule		
Time	Day 1	Day 2

Duty Time and Station(s): _____

Children who may need special attention:

Children who come and go at special times:

Additional Information:

Substitute Teacher Information Sheet for Secondary School

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____ Subject: _____ Room: _____

Principal: _____ Assistant Principal: _____ Secretary: _____

Counselor: _____ Nurse: _____ Custodian: _____

For additional information, ask _____ in Room _____

These students will be able to answer basic questions about classroom policies and procedures:

Student: _____

Student: _____

Student: _____

Schedule		
Period/Time	Day 1	Day 2

Lunch Time and Location: _____

Duty Time and Station(s): _____

Children who may need special attention:

Children who come and go at special times:

Additional Information: