

Creating a Substitute Plan

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It happens to all of us. You wake up in the morning and don't think you'll make it to your sofa (never mind driving to school to leave plans for a substitute). What can you do? Plan ahead!

Decide on a substitute plan early in the school year. This includes developing a special box of materials a substitute will need and then telling appropriate people about the box, such as a peer, responsible student, or the substitute coordinator. This box should include the following items:

1. **Picture file folder.** Glue a picture of each student in your class or period inside a file folder. Take the students' pictures with a regular or digital camera or use their school pictures and include students' names and medical concerns on their pictures. Having pictures is especially helpful in identifying students and stops older students from assuming other students' identities). Also have computer-generated name labels ready for the students to wear.
2. **Student dismissal list.** If you teach at an elementary school, copy a class roster that denotes how students get home. List students who ride the bus as well as their bus numbers, the walkers or bike riders, and those students picked up by parents. Also indicate the school's dismissal procedures: Do walkers get released first? Are students walked to the buses? The list must include concerns regarding any parent custodial issues of which the substitute should be aware. Your substitutes will be grateful for this helpful list when trying to get students to the right place at the right time during one of the most hectic times of a school day!
3. **Daily schedule.** Specify the time and location for lunch, recess, special activities, exceptional education classes, and breaks.
4. **Emergency plan.** Highlight emergency procedures with brief descriptions on how to handle drills or the real thing in the case of a fire, tornado, or school lockdown. Include responsibilities specific to the substitute.
5. **Procedures folder.** Outline the various procedures students must use when leaving the classroom such as, using the restroom, getting a drink of water, going to the

clinic, or moving to another teacher's classroom. Include your expectations and routines for typical school activities: walking in the hall, returning from recess, and going to or returning from the lunchroom or media center. Place a copy of your discipline plan, including rules and consequences, in this folder.

6. **Daily forms.** Your substitute teacher also needs attendance sheets, lunch count, and other forms typically needed throughout the day as well as an outline of their associated procedures. Include information on your peer teachers and classroom neighbors, as well as a map of the school. You may want to describe the location of the controls for the air conditioner or heater, hidden light switches, or the television remote control.
7. **Feedback form.** Let the substitute fill you in! Find out how the day went during your absence by asking the substitute to give you feedback. Design a form asking questions such as: Where did you have difficulties? Were there any contacts from parents of which I should be aware? On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the behavior of the class? What could have been included in the substitute folder that wasn't? Is there anything else about which I should be aware?
8. **Enrichment activities.** Provide at least three days of activities in your substitute box. Draw from the enrichment examples in your curriculum or activities selected from other sources, like www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson198.shtml and www.guest-teacher.com). When you know in advance the days you'll be absent, you can prepare specific assignments, but for unexpected absences, these activities work well as back-up resources.

A little advance planning on your part can facilitate a smoother day for your students and a substitute teacher during your absence. Let a Substitute Box help run your classroom so that you can focus on getting well, rather than worrying about your students!