



Novice Notes

The music is in the teacher, not the piano.

- LARRY CUBAN, KDP LAUREATE

Pro Tip

When substituting regularly, leave a business card or a note on personal stationary.

Resources

www.kdp.org/teacherresources/substituteteaching.php

Links to various substitute teaching sites on KDP's Teacher Resources page.

<http://k6educators.about.com/library/howto/htbesub.htm>

How-to guide for elementary substitute teachers at *About.com*.

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr359.shtml

Education World's Sub Station: Tips and Resources for Substitute Teachers.

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr260.shtml

Substitute Survival: Tools You Can Use.

**For Tomorrow's
Teacher**



Substitute Teaching

Relay what you have learned into real-life experience.

Substitute teaching, the once-dreaded, fallback start to a teaching career is now a "foot in the door" in many districts and even a longtime choice for some educators. For teacher education students, substitute teaching offers pay-in-the-pocket learning experiences! It's all in how you look at it.

If you decide to view substituting as additional preparation for your teaching career, then strive to be as professional in this temporary position as you would in a permanent placement. You can be the ultimate sub who administrators hire permanently.

Professional Practices

Inspire confidence and assure students and administrators with your professional attitude and practices. Show that you can be a role model.

- Arrive on time or early.
- Dress professionally—like a teacher, not a college student.
- Bring supplies that may not be readily available—tape, scissors, and extra pencils, as well as backup lessons.
- Follow the teacher's plans exactly. Teachers may complain to administrators when their plans are ignored. Conversely, they also let the principal know when substitutes do an excellent job.
- Familiarize yourself with educational jargon, such as IEP, ELL, and intervention specialist, to communicate professionally with colleagues.
- Teach with a keen awareness of students. Implement lesson plans intelligently and perceptively. Watch each student, anticipate responses, and motivate students to do their work.
- Act like a pro. Stand up straight with

your hands behind your back or at your side, not crossed in front of you. Make eye contact, and model each behavior you expect of students.

- Leave a note for the teacher summarizing the day and include your contact information.

Personal Conduct

On and off the job, conduct counts! It reflects your maturity and professionalism.

- Converse in a friendly, professional—but not too personal—manner with students, particularly older ones.
- Acknowledge politely, but change the subject when students comment on you personally—about your hair, clothes, or car.
- Socialize sparingly at football games, the store, or the pizza parlor. Students can lose respect for you as a teacher if you act too casually; then discipline suffers.

Groundwork

Substitute teaching can build classroom skills and help establish your professionalism with students and school staff members.

- Prepare for activity in the classroom rather than supervision. Maintain a flow of activity for students from the moment they arrive. Follow routines to take attendance, group students, and distribute materials, for a smooth-running classroom. Avoid time fillers such as copying items from the board or completing worksheets. They are raw opportunities for student misconduct.

- Be the guest teacher. By your actions, signal to students that you are more than a “real” teacher fill-in. Move about the room, keep on task, complete projects, and direct avid discussions.
- Ask questions about the school. A substitute demonstrating detailed knowledge about school workings or a willingness to be a team player will be remembered.
- Network. A successful day should include a good conversation with a key player in the department you seek to enter.
- Expect success and be ready to start. One day you’ll get a call to teach—and it won’t be for just one day.

Substituting Respectfully

One of the most difficult transitions a teacher—permanent or substitute—can make is from a suburban setting to an urban one. Yet this transition is common, as teacher education majors are overwhelmingly female, Anglo, and suburban or rural in origin, and job openings are most numerous in urban areas. If you enter teaching in an urban culture—or any setting other than what you know from your life experiences—expect a lot of adjustment. Consider the following to aid the transition.

Communication

Variations in idiom, vocabulary, voice inflection, or body language frequently make the simplest communication difficult. Spend time in the culture where you will teach. Become familiar with communication styles. Your effort is important. Students can tell when a teacher wants to be with them and is really listening and trying to understand their communications.

Give Respect

Not understanding the life experiences of one’s students can inhibit mutual respect. Think about what happens when a 20-something Anglo female raised in the suburbs and newly graduated from a typical four-year college enters a microcosm where many 20-year-old females are bilingual, raising children, holding down one or more jobs, and accustomed to poverty? Likely, Ms. Urban Student, functioning on only four hours of sleep, arrives at school after feeding children, taking them to day care, and taking yet another bus to school.

Imagine her reaction to Ms. Substitute, who’s never been married, has no children, may or may not have had a full-time job before, and has never experienced poverty, telling her where to sit and when to talk. This lifestyle difference between Ms. Substitute and Ms. Urban Student often leads to power struggles, which interfere with teaching and learning. Respect and understanding in these situations is essential.

Understand Cultural Clues

Neighborhood violence and school violence are not mutual. As a substitute or new teacher, it is wise to be cautiously trusting of students, but without becoming defensive or suspicious. Good teaching relies on individuals respecting one another and forming decent human relationships.

A respectful teacher responds proactively to intuitions about personal safety by becoming familiar with a school’s surroundings and avoiding naïveté.

Most of all, respectful teachers realize that they do not understand cultural clues and that they must learn the cultural language in any setting to teach effectively.

Adapted from New Teacher Advocate articles, “Substituting Professionally” and “Substituting Respectfully,” by authors Vicky Dill and Peggy Kress.