

# Help Your Sub **BE A STAR!**

"Awesome!  
Now, we can goof  
off today!"

"I don't have  
to listen to you—  
you're not my real  
teacher."

"That's not  
how Mrs.  
Jones does  
it."

## Don't let these be the words your substitute teacher hears!

**E**ach day, substitute teachers cover approximately 10 percent of the nation's classrooms (Ostapczuk 1994), and they often are criticized for providing inadequate educational experiences (Jones 1999). Because effective use of instructional time is imperative, it is up to teachers, as well as districts, to help substitute teachers

keep students engaged and learning. To encourage effective substitute teaching,

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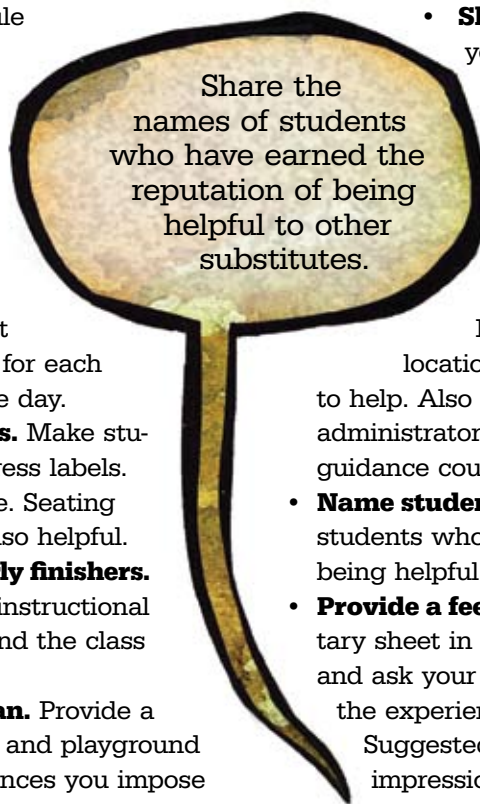
consider these practical suggestions for your guest teacher:

- **Prepare detailed, meaningful substitute plans.** Assume that the substitute knows nothing about your subject area(s) and prepare clear, detailed lesson plans in script form. Include learning outcomes, and specify corresponding materials and manipulatives and where they are located. Did you ever substitute? Think back on your experiences and apply what you would have found helpful.
- **Create emergency lessons.** Always have three days of emergency lesson plans

at school for unexpected absences. They should include a meaningful review of skills that is suitable at any time of the year.

Periodically update plans to reflect content, enrollment, and schedule changes.

- **Share the schedule.** Place a copy of the master schedule in your guest teacher folder. Include time frames for each subject, as well as periodic schedule changes or rotations. Outline plans for inclement weather delays.
- **Supply student rosters and group lists.** Eliminate confusion regarding changing classes and regrouping for specific subject areas. Add student rosters and lists of names for each group seen throughout the day.
- **Create student nametags.** Make student nametags using address labels. Include pictures if possible. Seating charts with pictures are also helpful.
- **Develop activities for early finishers.** To fill extra time, provide instructional materials for individuals and the class as a whole.
- **Share your discipline plan.** Provide a copy of school, classroom, and playground rules, as well as consequences you impose for infractions. Give information on when to use behavior referrals to the office and individual behavior plans.
- **Supply a schedule listing students who leave the room.** Students are pulled from classrooms for various reasons, including band, mentoring, tutoring, and to take medication. Though the departures may be routine, substitute teachers may be concerned that some students are leaving when they shouldn't. Name students being pulled, time of departure, and the expected time of return.
- **List paraprofessionals who visit the classroom.** Make your substitute aware of school personnel who regularly visit the room and their purposes.
- **Describe dismissal procedures.** Provide details for end-of-the-day routines. List times when students go to their lockers or gather



personal belongings. Give instructions for cleanup and when to dismiss walkers, car riders, and bus riders.

- **Describe emergency procedures.** In case of an emergency, substitutes should be able to respond quickly using your descriptions for fire and tornado drills or a lockdown.

Give the location of emergency materials.

- **Share other procedures.** Share your procedures for attendance, breakfast and lunch, class transitions, heading papers, pencil sharpening, and restroom use. Describe other duties the sub must perform, such as recess or lunch duty.
- **List school personnel.** Let your sub know names and locations of other teachers willing to help. Also provide the names of school administrators, office personnel, custodians, guidance counselors, and the nurse.
- **Name student helpers.** Share the names of students who have earned the reputation of being helpful to other substitutes.
- **Provide a feedback form.** Place a commentary sheet in your substitute teacher packet and ask your substitute to inform you about the experience of leading your classroom. Suggested feedback may include overall impression of the day, how lesson plans worked, finished and incomplete assignments, student behavior, and suggestions for future substitutes.

No substitute will be you, but you can help that person be the best possible guest teacher for your students by leaving clear plans and expectations, as well as room for flexibility. Substitutes appear more organized to students when they understand how you conduct classroom business. 🍏

Now your sub can **BE A STAR!**

### References

- Jones, K. 1999. Managing substitute teaching: Here's how. *Principal* 18(2): 1-4. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- Ostapczuk, E. 1994. What makes effective secondary education substitute teachers? Literature Review. ERIC ED 374 075. Available at: [www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/13/51/e5.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/13/51/e5.pdf).