A Sequential and Comprehensive Method for Effective Substitute Teaching

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- Conclusions were that substitutes who systematically work professionally by diligently and flexibly adapting to any assignment earn respect while substantially contributing to improved education. Administrators and teachers letting students know that substitutes have authority and deserve respect, teachers leaving substitutes with adequate lesson plans, and substitutes getting classroom management training were additional factors found to increase substitute teaching effectiveness.

- Protheroe, and Porch (2002) provided evidence that training substitute teachers how to use effective classroom management techniques and how to use effective instructional strategies has improved students’ academic achievement.

- Referring to a wide body of literature indicating that the perceived effectiveness of substitute teachers is worse than perceived effectiveness of student and first year teachers, Ostapczuk (1994) quoted from numerous studies that identify poor classroom management skills as being the single greatest problem experienced by substitute teachers. Recommendations included increased inservice training geared toward helping substitutes become more effective classroom managers. (Ostapczuk, 1994).

- Tomlinson (1997) reported survey research conducted in a Florida middle school indicating that: (1) teachers preparing students in advance for substitutes; (2) teachers making substitutes feel like part of their team; (3) substitutes arriving early to get ready for the school day were factors positively associated with improving substitutes’ classroom management skills.

- Developing a theme that substitute teachers often do not get enough respect to effectively manage classes and facilitate instruction, McHugh (2001) recommended that (1) principals make sure that substitutes feel welcome and make sure that teachers leave seating charts and lesson plans; (2) teachers tell students in advance that substitutes deserve respect and have authority; (3) substitutes demonstrate to all stakeholders that they work as professionally as professional teachers.

- Glatfelter (2006) the substitutes who were surveyed and/or interviewed in this study expressed interest in classroom observations along with networking with and mentoring by classroom teachers

- efficient distribution of materials to students
- Step one is to prepare for the day. Familiarize yourself with the school
- Write the assignment and student work expectations and the board.
- make a list of each class period you will teach which includes each periods’ tardy bell time and dismissal bell time.
- Make sure that your watch is synchronized with school time
- state the objective and the work Effective Substitute Teaching 11 expectations
McHugh (2001) articulated an excellent system for encouraging respect for substitute teachers which focused on (1) principals making substitutes feel welcome, (2) teachers telling students in advance that substitutes have authority and deserve respect, and (3) substitutes working as professionally as professional teachers.

Substitute Teachers: Making Lost Days Count
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- It is estimated that on any given school day, 8-13% of America's schoolchildren are being taught by substitute teachers (Glass, 2001).
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- Research in the early 1980s found that children spent from five to eight percent of a school year being taught by substitute teachers, and the percentage was rising (Ostapczuk, 1994). More recent work from the Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah State University places this figure at 10 percent nationally (Sykes, 2002). Therefore, over the course of their kindergarten to twelfth grade educational careers, children may spend the equivalent of one full year of school under the guidance of substitute teachers.
- Sometimes teachers’ lesson plans contain jargon that is clear to teachers familiar with the curriculum yet indecipherable to substitute teachers.
- While the literature consistently suggests that substitutes should be better trained and provided with feedback about their performance, it rarely happens.
- The classroom teachers who did develop relationships with their substitutes, however, were more inclined to trust them, to leave instructional content that was more closely aligned to what they would have taught, and were more likely to say that substitute teachers were able to manage classroom behavior.
• However, interview data revealed that the closer they are able to emulate the classroom’s daily routine, and the better they can use the curriculum to keep students engaged, the easier classroom management became.

• While I will discuss curriculum in more detail in the next section, interview data demonstrated that changing the students’ routine can present behavioral challenges. Qualitative data showed that substitute teachers preferred to teach and saw the need to maintain continuity in the students’ day.

• Substitute teachers have to deal with many challenges: 1. Time too short to learn the students’ learning style to meet their needs; 2. Unclear, inadequate, or missing lesson plans; 3. General low expectation by teachers, administrators, and students; 4. Insufficient training in instruction or classroom management.

• One study described the belief in substitute incompetence as “a self-fulfilling prophesy.” Teachers tend to leave disengaging work for the substitute which diminishes their role, making them less effective.

Research Brief

Ranjana Damle January 2009
Investigating The Impact Of Substitute Teachers On Student Achievement:
A Review Of Literature

• Glatfelter’s case for training the substitute teachers is consistent with the study findings about the efficacy of training regular teachers. These studies have suggested that training rather than educational background or experience of permanent teachers plays a key role in their success (2006; p. 19).

• The study found that while the regular teachers were confident that the substitutes follow the lesson plan, they doubted the substitutes’ ability to “present content” or maintain a satisfactory level of classroom discipline. The substitutes, on the other hand, reported that they were capable of teaching as well as maintaining discipline.

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• The work left for the substitute teacher is “busy work” that may involve continuation and completion of previous work. Thus the time is not used very effectively.

• The regular teachers may hesitate to assign serious work to the substitutes because of a lack of interaction or information exchange between the regular teacher and the substitute teacher, and the teacher not knowing the substitute’s credentials.

• There is evidence that training improves substitute teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.
Once while I was on assignment as a substitute, the teacher from the classroom next door stopped in my classroom twice during the day. Even though I was provided with excellent plans and had become familiar with that particular building, this teacher’s inquiries gave me additional assurance and support.

I also encouraged our teaching staff, all of whom were given daily the names and positions of substitute teachers who were in the building, to reach out and welcome them. Involving staff and teachers helped to initiate a congenial atmosphere and introduced the substitute teachers to the school setting.

When the principal, secretary, and teaching staff reach out to a substitute teacher, it lets substitute teachers know that they are recognized as part of the school team.

Another substitute teacher explained that students notice principals’ classroom visits and interactions with the substitute teachers. “I think that sends a message to the students that the principal supports the substitute and works with them. I feel that your interactions with me as a substitute have helped me to maintain the order and discipline that allows me to more easily implement the plans left by the classroom teacher.”

When a substitute is made to feel part of a school community and culture, a ripple effect of benefits is created:

- Comfort with students and their academic, social, and behavioral needs;
- Increased willingness of substitute teachers to reach out to others on the staff to ask questions, learn more about the school, and feel more engaged;
- Improved ability for substitute teachers to learn about and use the supplied curriculum and lesson plans, providing an improved probability for instructional continuity;
- Enhanced familiarity with the building, the locations of exits, and areas of use and interest, all of which enhances substitute teachers’ comfort, trust, and confidence; and
- Potential for improved rapport with parents.

I leave on my desk the following items: Seating charts in plastic sleeves, with markers, A pad of paper and a pen, A bottle of water with a note: "Thank you for being me today!"