



South Shore

Regional Centre for Education

Substitute Teacher Handbook

Information for All Substitute Teachers

Welcome

Welcome to the South Shore Regional Centre for Education. Substitute teachers are an important part of our school system. It would be extremely difficult for us to operate our schools on a satisfactory basis without them. School business, supervision of events and illness occasionally require regular teachers to be absent. It is here that the substitute teacher steps in. We value the substitute's contribution to the system. A substitute who can continue a high level of activity in the classroom greatly contributes to student success.

The South Shore Regional Centre for Education has provided this booklet to support substitute teachers. It provides expectations and valuable information needed to ensure a successful assignment. We hope that when you are in a school, you are treated as part of the staff and that you feel free to share any comments or concerns directly with the Principal in a professional manner.

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The Expectations of a Substitute Teacher

To start with, you are not “just a baby sitter” or someone to merely hold things together until the regular teacher returns to his/her classroom. You are a professional educator and as such you can substitute in your areas of competence. While in the classroom you are the teacher. You are expected to carry on the program and learning experiences of the classroom as if you were the regular teacher.

Your time in the school may be half a day or several months. Regardless of the length of time, you are fulfilling a professional role, requiring you to conduct yourself in the same manner that is expected of all teachers. It is equally expected that you will be treated with dignity and professional respect by students, staff and administration.

The advantages of being a substitute teacher are that you are able to observe a variety of classroom and school environments; you gain valuable experience; you have a flexible working schedule; it is interesting and challenging work with the chance to exercise knowledge and creativity; and it provides the opportunity to experiment with different teaching strategies and to become familiar with a variety of resources.

Be Up to date

Reading books, keeping up on the latest developments in education, and taking an active part in the school community will keep you current. The up-to-date [Curriculum guides](#) can be found on the Department of Education Web site for the Government of Nova Scotia. They are a valuable resources. Other resources are also available on our Board website at www.ssrce.ca under the Teachers tab.

As a substitute, you may also voluntarily participate in professional development when seats are available. Check with an administrator at a school you are working at for more information.

Be Professional

Substitute teaching occurs at varied locations with different administrators, students and situations. They cannot be compared. Become familiar with the procedures and expectations of each school that you work at or plan to work at.

Be Consistent

Perform the duties and plans of the regular teacher where asked. If the day book indicates introduction of a new concept, you may want to consult with the principal to decide if new work should be started; if you should review previous work; or if you should do something different.

Obtaining Positions

Now that you have successfully completed the application process, you are ready to begin accepting opportunities. You should have now received a Congratulations email which will include your login information for our Sonic hiring site which is where you will view instructions on completing all of the required documentation.

Once all documentation has been completed and received by the HR Department you will receive an email with your AESOP login information as well as an AESOP User Guide & Phone Guide to log on to AESOP please go to www.aesopcanada.com and enter your ID and PIN.

For support at any time, please contact Natasha Sode at 541-3022 or via e-mail nsode@ssrce.ca

Be Available

If you are on the substitute list and your schedule shows that you are available, the Region does have an expectation that you are willing to substitute when contacted. If illness or other obligations prevent you from working, please adjust your calendar. If you require assistance, please contact Natasha Sode at 541-3022 for assistance.

Arriving at the School

Clothes

Choose your clothes carefully. You want to look professional as it sets a tone of respect.

Your assignment might influence your choice – physical education, outdoor activities, technology education etc. You may want to pack an extra set of clothes to cover these contingencies. Many elementary schools have a policy of having indoor and outdoor shoes so you need to consider packing a set of shoes for the classroom.

Arrive Early

Even though you may not get much advance notice, it helps to arrive early, especially if this is your first time at this location.

Check in at the office. See if there is any special information (i.e. lesson plans, medical information) you need and sign any documentation required by the administrative assistant.

Check what room(s) you will be in, locate any plan books, time tables, fire drill instructions, seating plans. If you cannot find what you are looking for, ask at the office.

Should there be no Lesson Plan for the Day

There will be rare times when there is no lesson plan. Sometimes, the proposed material may be too difficult to cover adequately with no prior preparation, or the plan may be too sketchy to be understood. Here are some suggestions:

- Check with the office; the regular teacher may have phoned in instructions, or asked for you to call her/him for direction.
- Consult with the principal and/or another teacher teaching the same subject.
- Refer to the last completed day in the daybook, if available, and then do a reasonable follow-up to the previous lessons. Student notebooks may be checked if the day book is not available.
- Accumulate a set of your own prepared materials - the Super Sub kit.
- Younger students or students with special needs may become disturbed by a departure from the routine. Explain to them that some things will be done differently that day. Ask students for their patience and cooperation.
- Students often enjoy having a substitute - they are glad for the break from the normal routine. Capitalize on this by providing activities that have an element of fun.
- It helps if you get to know the names of the students - name tags, desk labels, etc.
- Try to use the student's name every time you speak to him or her.

When You Get to the Class

Before Class

- introduce yourself to the teachers nearest you - they will usually help you if needed
- enter the class with confidence
- write your name and an outline of what the regular teacher had planned for the day
- have an activity to start the day quickly and engage the students immediately

As the Students Arrive

- greet the students at the door
- defer questions about their teacher's absence until the whole class is settled
- introduce yourself and explain to the class that you are going to follow the lessons that their regular teacher has left
- go over the classroom rules and your expectations; be consistent with the regular teacher's expectations
- tell the students a bit about yourself
- If there are other adults working in the room (TA, Tutor, etc.) introduce yourself to them and seek their assistance
- Scan the seating plan. If there isn't one, use strategies to remember names or ask students to write their names on place cards.

During the Day

- have students address you by your proper name (Mr., Ms, Miss, Mrs.)
- use a positive approach
- constantly wander around the room to assist students at their desks as needed
- carry out the lesson plans to the best of your abilities
- correct any work that you assign
- improvise using material to fill extra time, enhance activities, or supplement lesson plans
- be fair and carry out the rewards and consequences you establish
- be consistent with the schools and teacher's expectations (i.e. PEBS)
- be positive and respectful in your interactions with students and school personnel

At the End of the Day

Allow things to wind down a few minutes early, to tidy up and put things away. Challenge students to recall projects and topics they have studied that day and remind students of homework. You may wish to play a game or other fun activity to finish off the day. Thank the students for their co-operation. Organize and label the students' work. Mark what you can. Make sure that all classroom books and materials are accounted for.

Leave a note for the teacher at the end of the day and let the classroom teacher know how the day went. Did the students struggle with a lesson? If so, let the teacher know. If you were unable to complete a lesson, let the teacher know how much you were able to cover. Remember to include the positives of the day as well as the negatives. Close windows, turn off lights and equipment, and make sure the room is in good order, before you lock the door. Turn in keys and any money collected at the office.

Check with a nearby teacher or the office to determine end of class procedures (e.g chairs up or down). Check to see if you will be needed again the next day. Jot down a few notes to yourself

about what was accomplished and how things went for future reference in case you return to that school and class.

Classroom Management

Whether this becomes a problem or not depends on your ability to deal with most situations that arise. Be patient until the class gets to know you, but expect good behaviour and you should get a good response. Fairness and consistency on your part will gain respect.

Classroom management focuses on prevention and problem solving rather than on punishment. Discipline and good behaviour are learned, and they must be constantly reinforced. Even after you take steps to create a positive atmosphere, some students' behaviour may be unacceptable. Here are some suggestions.

What Works

Tell students what you expect, model for good behaviour, check for understanding, and allow for practice and follow-up. Don't assume that students know how to act appropriately. They need to be taught and coached to manage their behaviour.

Create a classroom environment that provides structure and support and reinforces positive behaviour. Set your standards high; be clear and realistic in your expectations. Classroom conflict is more likely to be reduced if you:

- arrive in the classroom before the students do
- assist students to make appropriate choices
- be fair and consistent and make conditions and alternatives clearly understood
- use realistic, logical consequences, and enforce them
- give clear instructions in an audible, quiet, friendly tone of voice
- have a low-key, consistent, and matter-of-fact manner
- show faith in each student and build on strengths
- believe that all students are capable and lovable
- help students to increase self-esteem by using praise and positive reinforcement
- teach students decision-making and problem solving skills
- help students to live with mistakes and take them in stride
- insist that everyone be treated with a wholesome respect
- listen to students' opinions and consider their feelings
- maintain your sense of humour and tolerant attitude
- make sure the class is paying attention when instructed to do so
- move around the classroom
- organize and be ready before each lesson
- write the day's agenda on the blackboard
- try to adapt lessons to make them as interesting as possible to the students
- try to spend one-on-one time with each student, even if only for 30 seconds

What Does Not Work

Teachers who have discipline problems often:

- accept excuses, bargain, or blame
- act hastily without knowing the implications of their actions
- offer "bribes/rewards" for behaviour
- preach, nag, criticize, shout, and threaten

- punish the whole class for the misdeeds of a few
- use put-downs, sarcasm, embarrassment, or humiliation

If you encounter a real discipline problem that you feel cannot be handled in the classroom by yourself, refer it to the Principal. If something happens during the day that may result in a parent or guardian contacting the school, let the principal know before you leave. It is important that the Principal understands the context of the situation to deal with it effectively.

Basics To Remember

Strategies

School and Classroom Conduct

Many schools have their own codes of conduct and standards of behaviour expected of students. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with them, and to adopt similar standards when you are in class. Be consistent and deal with issues immediately.

Proximity

Continuing your lesson while you move about the room, pausing near “trouble spots,” can let the students know that even though they aren’t near the teacher’s desk, they are still expected to demonstrate appropriate behaviour. You’re getting “boxed in” behind your desk or podium encourages misbehavior in the far corners of the room.

Pausing

Continuous teacher talk may give students a noise screen for their own conversations. An occasional pause brings an off task student back.

Active Participation

Sometimes having the student respond to a question or become involved in an activity can eliminate the undesired behaviour. Asking for a show of hands, having students perform a physical activity, or having each student write a quick answer to a question can make all students accountable for an immediate response.

Eye Contact

Make direct and prolonged eye contact with the students. This lets the student know that you are paying attention to them.

Be Positive

Praise will bring better results than censure. Accentuate behaviour you wish to reinforce and play down undesirable behaviour. Praise desirable behaviour quietly. Thank a student quietly, and thank the class for getting their books out so quickly.

Cueing

Try to judge when to change activities, to speed up, and when to slow down. Change direction; for example, a group of chatting students may be quieted by announcing an impromptu quiz on the subject at hand.

Goals and criteria of the lesson

Involve students in the process of learning; discuss in kid's language the goals of the lesson and what the criteria to show learning are. There is more student commitment to a lesson and less management problems when students understand why they are doing it and what they hope to be learning.

Humour

When all else fails, you might have to stop instruction to remind the class of appropriate behaviour. Keep it light.

Emergency Procedures

Medical Alert

Check with the school office to see if there are any students in your class that require medical attention. Do not administer medication without checking with school administration. Students who are ill should be taken to the office.

Student Accidents

If a student is hurt, do only what you are qualified to do. Notify the office and ensure that a responsible adult stays with the child. Make sure that your class is properly supervised. You can ask another teacher for help. Check with the office for accident report forms.

Fire Drill Procedures

Check each classroom when you are substituting to familiarize yourself with evacuation procedures. If you are not sure, check with the office. You should have your class file outside in single file, in an orderly manner and lined up away from the building near the exit used. The last student out of the room should close the door. You must lead the class out of the building and be sure to take the class attendance report. After you have taken attendance, any missing students must be reported to school administration.

Pay and Benefits

A substitute teacher is hired through the AESOP system. The days they are hired for are approved by the Principal. Once the substitute teacher arrives at the school they check in at the office. The Administrative Assistants reconcile the absences and attendances every day. This information is downloaded from AESOP by the Payroll Department daily and entered into the HR/Payroll system for payment.

Substitute Teachers are paid two weeks deferred on the same pay dates as all other employees. If a teacher works between the dates: September 11 to September 24th and the time is reconciled by the school, they will be paid on October 6th for the time worked.

A detailed information booklet for substitute teachers can be found on the NSTU web site www.nstu.ca This document answers questions on union memberships, medical and dental benefits, and rights and responsibilities of substitute teachers in Nova Scotia.