

Comprehensive Substitute Teacher Packets

INTRODUCTION

Children are the future of any society. They are nurtured and taught the ways of the world by their parents and taught the academics of the world by their teachers. What happens when their academic teacher is out for the day? Their education is entrusted to a substitute teacher. This new teacher does not necessarily know the ways of the class or methods of content delivery that the primary teacher uses to educate her students. They must rely on what the teacher has left behind. All too often, the information the teacher leaves behind is helpful but leaves gaps in the substitute teacher's ability to create a seamless transition between teachers.

Through analytical research, it has been discovered that the instructions left by the primary teacher are often inadequate. This statement is based on active field research and analysis of raw data collected from classroom teachers, substitute teachers and members of school administration. The main focus or goal of this particular look into education is to determine and remedy the gaps created between an optimal substitute packet and what is actually left for a substitute. With the intensions of providing teachers with a comprehensive template to ensure success for not only the substitute but the children they are charged with.

SOURCES OF ANALYSIS

There were various sources consulted during this analysis. The main form of communication used was interview, and they were conducted with nine individuals related to the topic. There were three substitute teachers, three contracted teachers and three members of school administration (principals and secretaries). Alongside, text was consulted to aide in the analytical portion; specifically, *Beyond the Podium* by Allison Rossett, and the following texts by Robert Mager: *Goal Analysis* and *Preparing Instructional Objectives*. These two texts were used as a model for analyzing and forming solutions to lessen the gaps between optimal and actual substitute packets. The audience targeted by this analysis would be contracted teachers. The objective is to provide contracted teachers with a template to insure success for all parties involved when the primary teacher is absent.

GAPS

Interviewees were asked how important they felt certain items were for a substitute and what was left in the classroom for the substitute to use for the day as well as what they would consider the perfect packet of materials to leave behind. Of thirteen topics all three subsets felt should be included in an ideal packet only five were actually included in their packets. That's only 38%! Of the five items all three groups felt were important to have in general, only three were included. That's 60%, better than before but still not encouraging. The following is a chart displaying optimal items included in a packet, according to those interviewed, and what it typically left for a substitute teacher.

Optimal*	Actual	Gap
Fire/Lock Down Drill Plan	Missing from plans	Yes
Class Rules/ reward system	Available in lesson plans and around the room	No
Buddy Teacher for general questions	Missing from plans	Yes
Adjunct/Emergency Drill Duty	Contracted teachers would indicate when they had daily duty but not during drills	No

Seating Chart/roster	Occasionally included	No
Detailed Sub Plans	Present	No
Reliable Student Helpers	Missing from plans	Yes
Extra Time Activities	Occasionally included in lesson plans	No
Volunteer/Aide List	Missing from plans	Yes
Technology directions (when applicable)	Missing from plans	Yes
Campus Map	Missing from plans	Yes
Phone Numbers (office extensions)	Missing from plans	Yes
Structured Teacher feedback form	Missing from plans	Yes

*All items would take the form of a hard copy

It is puzzling to see that so many of the items described as optimal were not included in actual packets left for substitutes. For example, fire and lockdown drill procedures were listed as most important by all participants but were not included in any packet examined. This disparity leads to gaps in performance both on the part of the contracted teacher and the substitute who is expected to know all of the information but is not given access to it.

The main gaps that can be gleaned from this analysis are in the following areas: a fire drill and lockdown drill plan, a buddy teacher to ask questions of, a list of reliable student helpers, a list of class aides and regular classroom volunteers, directions as to how to use the technology present in the classroom, a campus map, important phone numbers, and a structured teacher feedback form. These are seen as gaps given that the desire for them was present by all parties but they were absent in the actual substitute packets presented. On a side note, all of the pieces that were listed as a gap were identified as being important to very important by participants. However, they were not left in the daily substitute packet, which indicates that there is a gap between what is optimally desired and what is actually included. Due to the fact that the other items are both desired and included they would not be considered gaps in performance.

DRIVERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Careful review of the gaps between optimal and actual results indicates various drivers including: motivation, incentives and memory. These drivers were determined through examination of the performance gaps. The skills and knowledge that are required for making substitute plans were present as well as the materials needed. This fact ruled out a skills/knowledge deficit and an environmental deficit (availability of tools). Upon examination of packets, given by contracted teachers, there appeared to be a lack of incentive and motivation in creating an all encompassing packet. There were no apparent penalties for creating an ineffective one either. This is one of the causes of poor substitute packets being left behind. Memory seemed to play a large role in the process as well. Many teachers and administrators interviewed could not remember what had been left for them when they were substituting; or they left exactly what had been left for them when they were substituting many years ago and had not adapted their plans to the changes in school culture or technology. This lack of memory also results in incomplete packets being left. Effective solutions have been given below for each driver.

Driver	Description	Solution
Motivation	There is little benefit seen in creating a comprehensive plan that will not be used on a regular basis. Not all included information will be used every time there is a substitute.	Job Aid and Peer Coaching
Incentive	A lot of work must go in to creating a comprehensive packet and teachers do not have the motivation to track down or create all of the required elements and becomes a hassle when trying to cope with absence and regular classroom planning. There is no direct benefit for the contracted teacher to create a comprehensive pack.	Job Aid and New incentives for creating a comprehensive pack
Memory	Often, it is forgotten what it was like being the new person in the room for only a day. Very rarely does a contracted teacher come into their own room and not know specifically what discuss means or what all “blacktop” duty entails.	Going into a new class and filling in for the day, with only a typical sub plan left behind.

ROLE OF JOB AIDS

In this particular case, a job aid, accompanied by peer coaching, has been ruled as the most effective method for closing the gap between optimal and actual performance when it comes to comprehensive substitute teacher packets. Tentatively, this job aid would list the optimal ingredients (seen in the following chart), as defined through interviews of applicable parties, and a template packet provided for each school site and/or department. Items to be provided are as follows:

Campus Map	Class Roster	Classroom discipline plan
'Extra Time' Activities	Assigned Buddy Teacher	Detailed Sub Plans
Parent Volunteer/ Classroom Aide List	Fire and Lockdown Drill Procedures	List of Adjunct and Emergency Drill Duties
Important Phone Numbers (Sheriff, Office Staff)	Structured Teacher feedback form	List of Student Helpers

Tentatively, an objective that the job aid would satisfy would be as follows:

Given a list of items to include, create a master substitute packet with enough detail that would allow someone who is not familiar with your class or site to take over seamlessly for the day.

Appendix

RESULTS

Your site's fire and lockdown drill plan.	Average: 4.75
A hard copy of the school wide rules and discipline plan/reward system.	Average: 3.5
A hard copy of your specific class rules and discipline plan/reward system.	Average: 4.75
A grade level partner/buddy teacher to ask general questions of.	Average: 4.25
A list of your adjunct and emergency duties.	Average: 4.25
A seating chart and/or class roster.	Average: 4.5
Generic teacher preferred "extra time" activities list, the substitute could turn too in case of extra time.	Average: 3.8

B. What do you see in a sub packet/ sub plan?

Lesson Plans with times and a few sentence description. Lucky to get plans at all. List of daily plans and materials needed for the day. Lesson Plans. A list of students who are pulled out for special services as well as what time they are pulled out. An assisting teacher who they can ask questions of. Phone number/contact info in case sub needs teacher. Additional work if needed and lesson plans. Lesson plan and materials.

C. What would an ideal sub packet/sub plan?

Detailed sub plans, one or two students names that can be trusted to answer questions honestly; drill info, seating chart, extra time activities. Rules/discipline for that class, lesson plan divided into time periods as well as a list; daily schedule, parent volunteer list, in class reward system, buddy teacher info, extra activities, over planning, technology directions (i.e. projector, compass learning, etc) Discipline and management plan for classroom, how to communicate with parents. Sub plans with options for the sub to do. Campus Map, Office extensions and important phone numbers and a structured teacher feedback form.

Teacher

A. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how important do you feel each of the following are for a substitute to know or have while in your classroom for the day?

Your site's fire and lockdown drill plan.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of the school wide rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of your specific classroom rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A grade level partner/buddy teacher to ask general questions of.

1 2 3 4 5

A list of your adjunct and emergency duties.

1 2 3 4 5

A seating chart and/or class roster.

1 2 3 4 5

Generic teacher preferred "extra time" activities list, the substitute could turn too in case of extra time.

1 2 3 4 5

B. What do you leave in your sub packet/ sub plan? Why?

C. What would an ideal sub packet/sub plan? Why?

Administrator

A. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how important do you feel each of the following are for a substitute to know or have while in a classroom?

Your site's fire and lockdown drill plan.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of the school wide rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of your specific classroom rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A grade level partner/buddy teacher to ask general questions of.

1 2 3 4 5

A list of your adjunct and emergency duties.

1 2 3 4 5

A seating chart and/or class roster.

1 2 3 4 5

Generic teacher preferred "extra time" activities list, the substitute could turn too in case of extra time.

1 2 3 4 5

B. What would you like to see in a sub packet/ sub plan? Why?

C. What would an ideal sub packet/sub plan? Why?

Substitute

A. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how important do you feel each of the following are for a substitute to know or have while in a classroom?

Your site's fire and lockdown drill plan.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of the school wide rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A hard copy of your specific classroom rules and discipline plan/reward system.

1 2 3 4 5

A grade level partner/buddy teacher to ask general questions of.

1 2 3 4 5

A list of your adjunct and emergency duties.

1 2 3 4 5

A seating chart and/or class roster.

1 2 3 4 5

Generic teacher preferred "extra time" activities list, the substitute could turn too in case of extra time.

1 2 3 4 5

B. What are you given in a typical sub packet/ sub plan? (On average? Worse day? Etc.)

C. What would an ideal sub packet/sub plan? Why?