

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

- Speak to staff members, and be courteous to everyone from the principal to the custodian. Regulate your voice according to the circumstances, but try not to talk too loudly in the classroom or in the halls. Students may respond more positively to a whisper than to a shout.
- Newspapers, books, cups of coffee, soft drinks, and snacks should be reserved for the lounge. Their presence in the classroom tends to send the wrong message to students. Do not expect to reconcile your checkbook during the day you substitute. Always be mindful that you must carefully monitor and supervise the students at all times.
- Do not talk about your personal problems or carry anger or any visible emotional issues to school. Venting your opinions about education in general or students in particular, or complaining about the school board are inappropriate. The task is to conduct the lesson the teacher planned.
- Although you may be family friends with some of the students or their parents, everyone should be treated alike at school and in the classroom. As the substitute teacher, have student's address you as "Mrs.," "Mr.," or "Miss" rather than your first name.
- Your attitude about school and students will have profound effect on the success of your day. Think positively, act confidently, and speak with authority and respect to ensure a productive experience. Remember that it is okay to apologize to a colleague or a student when there has been a misunderstanding.
- Respect is usually earned. Speaking to students in respectful ways will help to avoid power struggles. Saying "thank you", "please", "pardon me," and other polite communications will convey your caring attitude and respect for students.
- Being able to laugh at one's own mistakes is important. Laughing with students is commendable; laughing at them or putting them down will only create problems. You are not at school to entertain so jokes, smart quips, and comebacks will tend to create more disorder than you bargained for.
- Maintain self-control and poise in a business-like atmosphere. Do not raise your voice. Yelling usually makes matters worse. If you cannot be even-tempered, patient, and self-disciplined, you should not be a substitute. Substitute teachers should model the kind of behavior they expect from their students.

Discretion and Confidentiality

- Your assignment is to conduct a lesson on a topic selected by the teacher, not to share opinions about current events, politics, religion, lifestyles, abortion, or sports. Sometimes students will ask questions of a substitute teacher (or a regular classroom teacher) to delay the class work. This is a ploy to avoid work and find out more about you. Be a self-regulated person and stay away from these subjects.
- Be especially careful about your speech. Speak as correctly as possible and do not use expletives or current slang. Use of this language does not make you “cool” with the kids, but indicates an immaturity or lack of judgment, which can only get you into trouble.
- Do not be a “pal”. You are a substitute teacher, and too much familiarity will weaken your status with students.
- Any information learned at school is confidential and not to be shared at church, at the community club, or at bridge games. Sometimes having information about students or the school staff may tempt you to repeat it. You must avoid doing so.
- Substitute teachers do not lose their tempers, bang books on desks, throw erasers, break pencils, or otherwise lose their composure.

Relationships with the Staff

- Ask for copies of procedures, the student handbook, a floor plan of the building, regulations regarding copies, lunch times and procedures, rules about hall passes, etc. as soon as you arrive at the school.
- Introduce yourself to the teachers located closest to you as soon as you can. If they know a substitute teacher is in a classroom, they can be more alert to any unusual circumstances and offer assistance more readily. Be open to their suggestions.
- Do not leave students unattended for any reason. If you have an emergency, send a student to the office with a note that you need another adult present in the room.
- Try to take care of as many responsibilities of the teacher for whom you are substituting as possible. If you are a long-term substitute, take part in school activities, and cooperate and support the staff.
- Be alert to student needs, and share your impressions with the principal.