# Hints and Suggestions to Assist the Substitute Teacher

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1. Know the teacher who is next door. Introduce yourself so you can call on someone to answer your questions about schedules or materials for the class.

2. When students need to go to the restroom or the library, send only one student at a time. When the first child returns, then send another student.

3. If there is no seating chart left by the teacher, quickly make one. It is much easier to maintain discipline when you can call a student by name and not just refer to him as "the boy in the blue shirt".

4. If a student doesn't respond when you call him by name, you may suspect the students have switched seats. Let them know it is better to have the correct names so the wrong student doesn't get in trouble and written about to the regular teacher.

5. Do not let students start any name calling or being rude to other students. It is much easier to stop a disagreement by talking before it gets to pushing or fighting.

6. Try to get in the hall between classes. It is a good idea to stand in the doorway so you can keep one eye on the hallway traffic and one eye on the students coming into the classroom. If the students see a teacher, they are less likely to have difficulties.

7. Have a couple of extra pens or pencils with you for those who have "forgotten" their materials.

8. Try to have the names of one or two trustworthy students who will be able to help out in the class.

9. Never dismiss a class early to lunch or to the next class unless the teacher or the next door teacher approves. Some schools have very strict rules about the number of students in the cafeteria at a time.

10. Make your rules and expectations very clear at the beginning of the day.

11. Do not discuss the teacher's class with other people, especially out of school. You are a professional and should not discuss individual students or problems. If you need to talk to someone about a problem, talk to the principal.

12. Keep your opinions about students or the teacher's class to yourself.

13. Be neat and professional in your appearance.

14. Follow the lesson plans the teacher has left. Incorporate your own ideas if there is extra time.

15. Organize the students' work for the day to assist the teacher when she/he returns. Do not grade students’ work.

16. Even though a few students can upset your plans, try to find out the names of the students who have been good or helpful; leave the teacher positive notes about the class and individual students as well as any concerns that occurred.

17. Most students will acquiesce to your leadership, but there will be some who will question your plans or authority. It is better not to argue. Instead say, "*I know this may not be the way Mr. Smith does it, but this is the plan for today*.

18. If you are not sure how the teacher wants an assignment completed, ask another teacher for assistance. If that is not possible, develop your own plan. If you do change the assignment, leave a note for the regular teacher explaining the task.

19. Be assertive (but not aggressive or punitive) so the students do not feel they can manipulate your decisions and authority. You can use statements such as:

    I need you to start reading now.

    I want everyone to pass their papers forward

    I don't need……

    I don't want……

20. Do not let the students manipulate you by protesting or saying "We never do that!" Just tell them, "*I know it can be hard to have a sub, but for today we will read aloud instead of silently*."

21. Walk around the room. Do not sit at the desk, especially during seatwork or when students are taking a test. The students will stay on task when you are close by them.

22. Do not try to catch a student by pulling his arm or his clothes. He could fall, and you could accidentally twist his arm or rip his clothes.

23. Do not touch the blood of a bleeding child. Use a napkin, towel, or a cloth to cover the cut. Have the student put his hand on the cut until you can get to water or the nurse.

24. If a teacher has “classroom sets” of books, packets, and/or worksheets that are used by the students, be sure to have all materials returned to their appropriate location before the entire class can leave. This will help you keep track of a missing book, etc.

25. Do not make statements lightly. Students remember!

# MANAGING THE CLASSROOM

## Starting the Day and Setting the Tone

Tradition has it that substitute teachers should arrive wearing sturdy armor, a helmet, and combat boots to meet the rigors of the day. However, having a successful experience as a substitute teacher does not depend on your choice of war gear, but rather on how well the students respond to your leadership of the class.

Here we address, in detail, some key principles of successful classroom management, as well as providing specific tips to help in making the tough decisions that substitutes are faced with daily. There is not one "true" recipe that guarantees a good day, but these guiding principles are beneficial. With experience you will devise your own strategies for gaining students' cooperation.

## Getting Started

- Arrive at your assigned school at least 20-30 minutes before class begins.
- Check in at the office, ask if there are any special instructions, "special needs" students, or special events for the day.
- Meet the grade leader and/or the teacher next door. A “buddy” will prove to be invaluable as the day progresses. *Possible questions for your fellow teachers may include:*

    1. *Do I need to supervise outside at recess or do you share supervision?*
    2. *How does the lunch procedure work?*
    3. *Does the teacher I am substituting for have any ongoing programs in their room that I should be aware of? (reading contest, super spellers, etc.)*

- Review the teacher's plans for the day.
- Find the materials needed for the day including schedules, class rosters, books, worksheets, etc. (Should you have any questions regarding the teacher's plans or necessary materials, be sure to ask the grade leader or the teacher next door).
- **Print your name on the board** so students have a visual reference.
- Check to see if classroom rules/expectations are posted. Familiarize yourself with the rules, and reinforce them consistently. (*If rules are not posted, have 3-4 rules you expect students to follow ready. Print the rules on the board for students to see.*)
- **When the bell rings, it is helpful and reassuring to students to be standing at the door greeting them as they enter the classroom.**
- Spend the first 5-10 minutes of class reviewing the class rules. (The established rules or those you’ve written on the board.)
- If you arrive late, which can happen if you are called at the last minute, do the best you can to glance at the teacher's plans and get the lay-of-the-land before the students arrive. Don't be fumbling through papers while the students are entering the class.
- **Look ready for the day to start, because it has!**

## WELCOME THE STUDENTS

- Introduce yourself as the teacher
- Present procedures for the day
- Establish incentives for the day
- Take roll
- Check or make a seating chart
- No candy allowed
- Set up reward system

Observe the students as they enter the classroom. Most teachers will have a previously established morning routine with their students, and you may see this routine begin as the students start their day. The students will probably find their seats and wait for you to give them directions. Occasionally, you may encounter a classroom filled with excitement, energy, and possibly even chaos. Whatever the situation, it' is time for you to get their attention and introduce yourself.

First…don't begin speaking unit you have everyone's attention. Introduce yourself as their teacher for the day and explain, if you so choose, the reason for the teacher's absence. Establish your credibility as a teacher with the class. Give them a brief resumé of your experience: "*I am a teacher, and I have taught every grade from kindergarten to grade six and even in junior high and high school.*"

Say something positive about the class: "*When I arrived today, your principal told me that you are a wonderful class and that I should expect to have a good day*."

Describe your plan and schedule of activities for the day to the class. It does not matter what the plan is; but once you state it, stick with it . Firmness, fairness, and consistency are the keys!

As your first activity, you might choose name tags. It's a good idea to buy large quantities of stick-on name tags and carry them with you to your various substitute teaching assignments. Masking tape is another inexpensive option. You can also use 5" by 8" cards that students write their names on, fold in half, and keep on their desks. Let the students know that you are excited about having the opportunity to teach them today and want to learn each person's name. This will help you tremendously throughout the day. Also, calling students by name helps them to pay attention to your directions and lets them know that you want to get to know them on a first-name basis.

Many experienced substitutes will interject a fun activity early on in the morning or outline a reward system to be used throughout the day. You can bring stickers, a bag of candy, or a gift wrapped box with a game or book inside that can be used as rewards.

Procedures for taking roll and obtaining a lunch count may differ from school to school and classroom to classroom. Follow their procedures if instructions have been provided. Otherwise, it is best to give the students a quiet seat work assignment such as "*List 10 things you saw on the way to school today*," while you take roll and lunch count.

It is critical that you always know where the students are and what they are doing. Some teachers have classroom passes that students use to leave the room for the office or rest room. Since you cannot always count on the teacher or school to have passes, you might

- Make your own classroom passes
- Laminate them bringing them with you to each assignment
- Write your name on them: Mr. Brown's Pass
- Have passes for the rest room (2 passes only), office (for injured students), phone, hall, and library.

Students may say, "*We don't do it that way*." Politely tell them, "*Thank you, but for today we will do it this way*." If a seating chart has been provided, you will be able to see who is in their seats and who is absent. Generally, elementary students don't try to "*fake out a sub*" by changing seats, since all of their belongings are in their own desks. However, in junior high, seat changing is a typical ploy used with substitute teachers.

It is important to continually reinforce the behavior standards for the day. Many teachers will have classroom rules posted. If you are unable to find any, be sure to have your own rules prepared and ready to put into action. A key factor in having students behave in accordance with the rules is to have them prominently displayed. You may want to list the rules on a large poster or on the chalkboard.

Classroom rules should be specific and operational so the students can easily understand what they mean. Phrases such as "*be cooperative*," "*respect others," be polite and helpful*" are too general and take too much time to explain. "*Follow directions the first time they are given*" is direct and clear.

Positive reinforcement is another key aspect of achieving appropriate student behavior. You can continually reinforce the students in a positive way each time they follow the directions by saying, "*Thank you for following my directions the first time they were given*," or "*Thank you for raising your hand.*"

It is equally important that you do not reinforce negative behavior. You can continually reinforce the students in a positive way each time they follow the directions by says, "*Thank you for following my directions the first time they were given*," or "*Thank you for raising your hand*." Respectfully correct students who talk without raising their hands. If you let students speak out of turn or answer a question without raising their hands, you are not going to get the type of behavior you want.

Generally speaking, reinforce the behavior you want and do not condone behaviors that are inappropriate. When you see appropriate behavior, be sure to respond with specific praise by using the student's name. You can also give out points, tickets, or use any other reward system you or the teacher has established.

Effective "classroom" teachers have clean, concise procedures for daily routines. They also have clear, specific rules with consequences that students can understand. Effective teachers continually give genuine, positive reinforcement to students for following the rules. Paying close attention to the steps previously described will provide both you and the students with a rewarding experience. Remember, prevention is 80% of your success for the day. Be confident, firm, assertive, and positive, eliciting the behaviors you want from the students. Now that you have established the day's plan for the class, you are better prepared to deal with those few difficult situations that may emerge.

# CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Here are a few situations you might encounter with some suggestions on how to respond to them in a calm, positive manner in order to gain student compliance. You may wish to discuss these or other scenarios with a group of fellow teachers or even write down your own ideas in the margins. To plan ahead and have a course of action decided and ready to implement is the best way to prepare yourself for these types of situation.

## Situation 1: The Interrupter

When asking a question of the class, a student responds without raising his hand for permission to speak or speaks out of turn when a student response is not called for.

- **Step 1**: Do not respond to the disruptive student. Look positively at those who are raising their hands, calling on one of them saying, "*Thank you for raising your hand*," as the student proceeds to answer the question.

- **Step 2**: If the student continues to speak without raising his hand when you ask the next question, continue to reinforce the students who are behaving appropriately and move closer to the student who is not cooperating. Do not acknowledge the student who is speaking out of turn. If you give in and let that student answer, you are actually reinforcing the inappropriate behavior.

Generally after Step 1 and Step 2, the non-compliant student will cooperate and raise his hand. It is important that you call on him as soon as he raises his hand, reinforcing him verbally for the appropriate behavior.

## Situation 2: Refusal To Do Work

After giving an assignment, a student refuses to do his work. When you encourage him to complete the assignment, he makes a statement such as, "*You can't make me*."

Strategy: Agree and disarm

- Disarm the student by agreeing that he is correct and then restate your expectations and consequences if they are not met.

Example: "*You' re right. I can't make you complete this assignment, but I can expect you to have it completed before recess. If it is not finished by then, you will stay in and work on it. I also expect you to remain quiet and not disrupt the other students who are choosing to complete the assignment at this time*." If no work is done for the day, leave a note for the teacher.

- NOTE: Many times refusal to do work is an indication that the student doesn't know how to complete the assignment. They would rather appear "bad" than stupid. If you suspect this may be the case, you may need to reteach the concept before expecting them to complete the work.

**Situation 3: Not Following Instructions**

You have instructed the class to get their math books and open to page 24. Two students are talking and laughing, not following your directions.

Strategy: Reinforce the behaviors that you expect

- Repeat the instructions focusing on the students who are following your directions. "Thank you for following the directions, Andy." Or "I appreciate John, Mary, and Joe for following my directions so quickly." You can also give stickers, points or tickets to students who are following directions.

Strategy: Proximity.

- It is a good idea to use proximity. In other words, "*move toward the student*" while you are talking. Move closely to the off-task or non-compliant student(s) while repeating the instructions for the whole class. Your change in proximity to the non-compliant student(s) will generally elicit compliance.

**Situation 4: The Class That Won't Be Quiet**

After being given a "*no talking*" assignment, class members are talking to one another and won't be quiet.

Strategy: Reevaluate the situation

- Step back and take a look at why the students are talking. Perhaps they do not understand the assignment and are trying to figure it out together. Maybe something has happened at lunch that needs to be dealt with. If you find that this is the case, you may need to deal with the disruptive event, reteach the objective, or perhaps even restructure the assignment to be completed as a class or in groups.

Strategy: Restate the expected behavior, motivators, and consequences

- You may not have been clear in communicating your behavior expectations for the activity. It may be necessary to gain the attention of the entire class and restate these expectations.

Example: "*Many of you are talking without permission during this assignment. I expect you to work independently, with feet on the floor, facing forward, and no talking as this disturbs others. If you have a question, please raise your hand and I will come to your desk. Students who follow these instructions will receive a ticket (or other motivator). Students who choose not to follow these instructions will be assigned the consequences outlined in the classroom rules (review the consequences)*."

Having restated your expectations, it is often helpful to then call on students and have them restate the expectations, motivators, and consequences. In addition, you may want to develop a noise level chart so students can see how they are doing.

**Situation 5: Transitions**

You find that it is taking more than one or two minutes to make the transition from one activity to the next.

Strategy: Make it a step-by-step process

- Students often waste a lot of time going from one activity to another. This is often because instructions that seem simple such as, "*Get ready for math*," are in reality quite ambiguous. Students need to know five specific things to make a quick transition from one activity to the next.

    1. What to do about the activity they are currently engaged in.
    2. What to do with the materials they are using.
    3. What new materials they will need.
    4. What to do with these new materials.
    5. How much time they will have to make the transition.

Example: "*Please stop reading and put your reading book away. Get out your math book and paper. Open the book to page 112. You have one minute to do this. Please begin."*

**Situation 6: Assemblies**

The principal informs you when you arrive at the school that there will be an assembly that day.

Strategy: Have a plan

- This seemingly pleasant break in the school day can turn into a nightmare for a substitute teacher who does not have a plan for managing the students during this activity. Here are some suggestions to help you survive the event with nerves still intact.

    1. Find out the time, location, and whether students need to bring anything from the classroom.
    2. Talk to classroom teachers. Many schools have specific procedures for going to and returning from an assembly, as well as assigned seating for each class
    3. If such procedures exist, familiarize yourself with them and do your best to follow them.
    4. If there are no established procedures, devise your own (i.e., walk in a single file line down the hall to the assembly, sit together as a class, return in a single file line, etc.)
    5. Determine the specific behaviors you expect during the assembly with consequences and rewards dependent on how these expectations are met. Beware of punishing the whole class for the misdeeds of a few. This can create a hostile environment with the students acting out against each other as well as you.

6. Teach or review with the students the procedures, expected behavior, and consequences or rewards associated with the activity.

**Situation 7: Refocusing The Class**

The class is not paying attention or resuming their studies after an assembly, fire drill, or other disruptive event.

Strategy: Incorporate and redirect

- A common experience is a great foundation for a learning activity. Regardless of how unwelcome the disruption may have been, it is an experience the entire class is familiar with. Use the experience as the basis for the next lesson. For example, if it was a fire drill and you are about to study science, talk about which parts of the school would burn the fastest. If you are about to study math, have students calculate the approximate number of people in each room that would need to be evacuated and the number of transportation vehicles that would be needed for taking everyone home. If you were preparing a writing lesson, have the students write about what would happen if the school really did burn down.

Strategy: Captivate and redirect

- Sometimes the best way to deal with a disruption is to minimize the event by capturing and redirecting their attention. For example, after an exciting assembly, complete a fun activity that requires them to do something. Involving students in a fun learning activity will help them settle back down to the routine of the day.

**Situation 8: Getting Their Attention**

If the class is in the middle of or just finishing an activity, you need to get their attention to either give further instructions or close the activity.

Strategy: Rhythmic claps

- If you want the attention of the entire class in a hurry, clap a rhythm with your hands and ask the class to repeat after you. Continue the rhythmic claps until all students are participating. This strategy works best with Kinder-8th grade students.

Strategy: Raised hand

- When trying to quiet the class, raise your hand above your head and start counting down by saying "5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . . class I need your attention". Now the teacher can give whole group directions to the class.

Strategy: Whisper

- Your first instinct in this situation may be to raise your voice above the noise level of the room and demand attention. This however can incur some unwelcome side effects. Hearing you

speak loudly, the students will assume that it is O.K. for them to raise their voices as well. A better strategy is to do the opposite of your instincts. Move to the front of the room and begin talking and giving instructions very quietly. As students hear you, they will become quiet and focus their attention on understanding what you are saying, The quieter the room becomes, the quieter your voice should become. Soon, students who are still talking and interacting will instinctively begin to feel awkward about making noise in such a quiet atmosphere and will become silent also. When you have the attention of the entire class, you can then give the instructions they need to hear with regard to what they are working on.

Example (to be spoken in a very quiet voice): "*If you can hear what I am saying, please put your pencil down and turn around to face the front of the room. Place your hands on your desk and look to see if the person sitting next to you is listening and doing the same. Now use your finger to trace your name on top of your desk..*" Continue with these simple silent activities until you have the attention of the entire class.

**Situation 9: Wrong Names/Wrong Seats**

You are using a seating chart to call on students by name. You notice that several students are not responding to their name, and you suspect they have switched seats.

Strategy: State the facts

- Make a statement to the effect that it is better for everyone involved if you know the students' correct names. This information is necessary to take daily attendance and will be vital in the case of an emergency. In addition, it protects the wrong student from getting in trouble when you write your notes to the classroom teacher at the end of the day.

**Situation 10: The "You vs. Them" Class**

You get the feeling that the whole class, or at least several of the students, have banded together to make the day as difficult as possible for you, the substitute teacher.

Strategy: Work together

- Most "You against Them" scenarios turn out to be a lose-lose situation for everyone involved. Take the initiative early in the day to do a teacher and student interactive activity. Going around the room, ask students to share a hobby they like or an activity they are interested in. Complete this activity by telling them a hobby you like. Chances are that once you break the ice the rest of the day will go much more smoothly. Making the classroom a battleground for control will usually only make things worse.

**Situation 11: Inappropriate Language/Derogatory Remarks**

A student uses profanity or makes a derogatory remark about you, another student, or the classroom teacher.

Strategy: You choose to break the rule

- Hopefully, the classroom rules and consequences, established at the beginning of the day, have provisions for dealing with this challenging situation--*Implement Them*! You might say something like*, "Susan, you chose to break classroom rule number three. The consequence for doing so is that you will not be allowed to participate in the end of the day drawing*." Do not ask the student why they said what they said (you really don't want to know); just acknowledge that the student chose to break a rule and state the consequence. Try not to take the remarks personally. Keep your cool. Concentrate on dealing professionally with the behavior and not letting your feelings towards the student cause you to get upset. Then dismiss the incident and resume class work as quickly as possible.

Strategy: Remove and reprimand

- In some situations, it is best to talk privately with the student in a corner of the classroom. Calmly ask the class to continue working, then speak with the student. Stay calm and in control of the situation. State the rule that was broken or explain that their behavior was unacceptable and why. Explain the consequence if the rule is broken a second time. Express your confidence in the student's ability to behave their best, then ask them to go back to their seat and begin their work.

**Situation 12: A Fight**

You are supervising students at recess when you see two students yelling at each other, ready for a fist fight.

Classroom teachers understand the difficulty of substitute teaching and will be ready to assist you in extreme circumstances. Respond quickly and decisively, not hesitating to get help from another teacher, if needed.

Strategy: Quickly and decisively

- Verbal jousting can be extinguished by a firm command from you as you move toward the students, using a loud authoritative voice say, "*Stop*, *I need both of you to take your seats*", or "*Stop this right now and sit against the wall*." Your voice and the authority it represents conveys your message. Do not try to stand in between students.

Strategy: Firm but not demeaning

- If students are engaged physically, you must quickly and with authority tell them to step back away from each other, *"Stop fighting and separate".* Do not attempt to place yourself between the students. This could escalate the already physical situation. Do not get angry, excited or show emotion. By giving firm and positive directions consistently, the students will respond and comply as requested. Send them separately to the front office.

## Situation 13: Threats

A student threatens you or another student.

Threats are a very challenging scenario, and the best strategy and response will vary with each situation. The most important thing you, as the teacher, must do is to stay calm and emotionally detached so you can realistically evaluate and professionally deal with the situation.

Strategy: Diffuse the situation then redirect the student's actions

- A threat is often the result of an emotional response. Ignoring the student will probably invoke more threats and perhaps even aggression. Responding with threats of your own may accelerate the confrontation. The sooner the threat is acknowledged and the situation diffused the better. Once the student has calmed down you can then direct his actions to something constructive. If you feel the student needs to discuss the situation refer student to a school counselor so they can gain emotional support and perspective on the situation.

# PROCEDURES and ROUTINES

## Emergency Procedures

In addition to managing the classroom, there are a few additional procedures to consider as a substitute teacher.

- Since every building and classroom is different, it is important for you to know how to evacuate the class in the event of a drill or other emergency.

- Know where the nearest exit is and have a class list available to grab when you evacuate the building.

    - If you hear the fire alarm or a message over the intercom, instruct the students to quickly and quietly leave the room in single file directing them to the exit door.

    - Some classrooms now have an emergency "backpack" hanging by the door that can be grabbed upon exiting with the class.

    - If you see an emergency "backpack" take it with you when you evacuate.

    - Handle most classroom accidents with common sense. Students who are injured can be taken to the office where a secretary or school nurse can administer first aid. Do not fall into the "band-aide" or "ice" trap, where students are continually asking to go to the office for ice or band-aides for fake injuries. Be sure you know how to handle a situation involving blood either in the classroom or on the playground.

    - *DO NOT TOUCH A STUDENT WHO IS BLEEDING EVEN IF YOU USE GLOVES.* For example: If a student has a bloody nose or cut knee, hand them the box of tissues or paper towel and instruct them to hold it on the wound. Take the student to the office or clinic for further care.

## Supervising Students

- Never leave your students alone or unsupervised in the classroom.

- If it is absolutely necessary for you to leave the classroom, notify the teacher next door or across the hall, or press the intercom button in your classroom and notify the front office of the necessity.

## Conclusion

Your efforts to be early, organized, and to communicate clearly with a discipline plan in place will pay off! Your goal as a substitute teacher is to provide continuity to the students while the teacher is absent. By minimizing the time spent on procedural matters such as taking roll, you can maximize the time spent on learning.

## REMEMBER…

- ✓ Require students to pay attention and to stay on task.
- ✓ Have students repeat your directions after you give them.
- ✓ Move about the room continually while students are completing seatwork and during group activities to ensure that all the students are participating and completing assignments.
- ✓ Provide students with specific feedback regarding their work. Feedback tells them how well they are doing and reinforces the importance of each lesson.
- ✓ Allow time to review any independent work completed, checking to see if anyone is having any difficulty. Collect all the work at the end of each lesson/period.
- ✓ At the end of each day, provide closure for the learning activities by reminding the students to complete necessary homework and hand in work that is due that day.
- ✓ Have students clean up their work space and get ready to go home. Leaving the room in neat condition is a must, so allow time at the end of the day for proper closure and cleanup.
- ✓ Compliment the students on their academic achievements for the day. Let them know how much you enjoyed teaching them.
- ✓ Clip all notes and messages together for the teacher to read and respond to upon his/her return.
- ✓ Finally, outline the day in a note to the teacher. (You may wish to use the form provided). Include a list of work completed, problems you may encountered with students or parents, significant incidences, and successes. Teachers really appreciate hearing from you regarding the day and are more likely to ask you back if they feel you are competent in handling any difficult situations and using effective strategies to solve any problems that may arise.

# HOW SHOULD I DO THAT?

When substituting, you are expected to present the material outlined in the classroom teacher's lesson plan. However, sometimes the lesson plan instructions are general and very nonspecific with regard to lesson presentation. Here are several techniques for presenting lesson plans that can lead the way to covering the material in a positive and creative manner.

**Lesson Plan:** ***Have students read Chapter XX and answer questions.***

1. Pretest and posttest. Ask students to guess what will be covered before they start reading. Share ideas aloud and write down five facts or ideas as predictions.

2. Togetherness. Read the assignment orally with the students to find the answers. By making the assignment a class activity, you promote classroom cooperation.

3. Group effort. Divide the class into groups and ask each one to report on part of the reading later. This method is best used with material that does not require continuity to be meaningful.

4. Quiz Board. Give the assignment and tell the students that you will stop 15 minutes before the end of the period and establish a quiz board. Appoint three to five students or select volunteers to be members of the board. Ask them to come to the front of the room. The rest of the students pose questions to these students about the day's reading. After a certain number of questions have been answered, a new board may be selected. This technique works well for review. An added advantage is that you need not know the subject well in order to handle it.

**Lesson Plan:** ***Have the class write a composition about XYZ.***

To begin, make the start interesting, challenging, and fun.

1. To make any topic more meaningful, encourage students to relate to it personally. One way is to write sentence starters that use the students' natural speech pattern, such as "I wish," "I like," "I'm glad I'm allowed to…"

2. If the students are assigned to write a story, suggest that they first decide on a cast of characters, a setting, a time, etc. as a class. By doing the groundwork together, the students will be "into" the story before they lift a pencil.

3. If the assignment is an essay, consider using the "buzz group" technique. Ask students to say whatever comes to mind about the topic and write their ideas on the board in some quick, abbreviated form. When everyone has had a chance to study the list, students can begin to write using whatever "buzzing" ideas they wish.

4. Whatever the topic, propose that the students write free association word lists about it. Tell them to start with the given word, such as "freedom", "pets" or "winter" and then add up to ten other

words that immediately come to mind about the key word. Now the students can write their own compositions.

5. Before students start to write, initiate a values clarification exercise that will help students relate an abstract subject to their own lives. For example, if the topic is "conservation of electricity," have the students start by listing five electrical gadgets or appliances they use that they could do without. Record their answers on the board. From this specific exercise the students can move on to the broader issue.

**Lesson Plan:** ***The class has a test tomorrow. Have them study and review.***

This may sound easy, but it often doesn't work out that way. Although you may not know the material the class has been studying, you can conduct a review session in several ways.

1. Try a game format for drill material, such as spelling, number facts, state capitols, and vocabulary. Use familiar games like tic-tac-toe, categories, etc.

2. Have pairs or small groups of students make up model tests. Assign one group true and false questions, another multiple choice question, etc. Spend the last part of the period going over the questions. Ask each group to read their test while the rest of the class ponders the answers.

**Lesson Plan:** ***Discuss topics ABC with class.***

This can be most challenging! The students have been dealing with the topic and you have not. The following methods show how you can lead the discussion constructively.

1. Have a student lead the discussion, or call on two or three students.

2. Have the class brainstorm all sorts of ideas related to the discussion topic. Do not judge the ideas--anything goes! Just encourage the students to speak their minds. After about five minutes, start the discussion again, this time arranging their ideas in a more orderly fashion.

3. If the topic is controversial, divide the class into sections, each representing a special-interest group. During the discussion, each group will give its point of view on the subject.

**Lesson Plan*****: Show the film, then discuss.***

Once the lights are off, this kind of assignment can turn into a disaster; but you can develop it into a delight.

1. To heighten student interest in the audiovisual material, use the pretest and posttest technique. Introduce the exercise with a comment such as, "*If you were making a movie about tooth brushing, or earthquakes, or China, what would you include?*" As they watch, have students check their lists against the film. How does the film compare to the students' expectations?

2. As students watch, have them write down three questions that are answered in the film or video, then exchange questions with another student after the presentation.

Keep in mind that with audiovisual materials it is crucial to get the students to be active, not passive, viewers.

# ELEMENTARY SPONGE ACTIVITIES

There are many times during the day that time is lost in the classroom. When reading groups change as students are waiting for uses, before and after recess or lunch, or whenever there is a transition, valuable moments are gone. What can be done to prevent this escape of precious learning time? The answer to the problem is evident when a substitute becomes familiar with "Sponges".

Sometimes "Sponges" are called warm-ups, board work, mind stretchers or drill activities. Whatever they are called, they provide a short practice on previously learned lessons with few or no required materials. They are easy for all students and will decrease the likelihood of classroom problems while students are waiting.

"Sponges" can become a part of all subjects. They can be put on 3X5 cards and laminated and used again and again, or they can be written on the board. Wherever and whenever they are used, Sponges absorb time and turn it into productive learning.

"Sponges" have characteristics such as:

- They are short they provide practice, review, application, transfer and a chance to use and think about learning.
- They allow everyone to participate , are open-ended and easy for the teacher (few materials, no grading).
- Sponges are self-explanatory (clear, easily-understood directions), can be written or oral, can be used with individuals or groups, teacher-led or student-led.

**Examples of Sponges**

- Tell one playground rule
- List five good health habits
- Put spelling words in alphabetical order
- Name as many animals as you can
- Name as many states as you can
- Name as many countries as you can
- Name as many teachers in your school as you can
- List five school rules
- List the days of the week
- List seven holidays
- List as many kinds of transportation as you can
- List as many kinds of ice cream as you can
- Name as many fruits as you can
- Name as many vegetables as you can

# SECONDARY SPONGE ACTIVITIES

"SPONGE" activities can be beneficial to secondary students and their teachers. They provide review and practice for students and free the teacher to complete her/his tasks.

Each subject area has a variety of skills that should be reviewed. For instance, mathematics contains steps that build on each other. Therefore, the review and practice of skills will help the student move forward in a planned program. In science, we realize that vocabulary and the ability to locate information become important skills to review. History contains specific facts and overall general ideas which also relate to geography. Therefore, review and practice should include these aspects of the topic being covered. English and literature review should cover fundamental rules as well as personal feelings related to the topic.

"SPONGES" can be organized into several methods of delivery. They can be written on the chalkboard, put on 3X5 cards and laminated (to be used again and again), put on small papers and picked up by students as they walk in the door, stapled to a bulletin board, taped to desks, written on charts, put on overhead transparencies, or given orally.

Whatever method is used, the activity needs to fulfill all the requirements of a "SPONGE" which include

- participation from all students
- open minded
- easy for the teacher to use (few materials, no grading)
- self-explanatory (clear, easily-understood directions)
- written or oral
- individual or group
- teacher-led or student-led
- short (5-10 minutes)
- provide relevant practice, review, application, and a chance to use and think about learning.

**English and Literature Sponges**

- Name ten American authors
- Name ten American plays
- List seven items of punctuation and how they are used
- Write: an abbreviation, a Roman numeral, a trademark, a proper name (biographical), a proper name (geographical)
- Make a list of twenty prepositions

**History**

- List as many states as you can
- Name as many U.S. Presidents as you can
- Name as many Vice-Presidents as you can
- List the wars the United States has been involved in
- List the thirteen colonies and their capitals

**Science**

- Name as many kinds of windstorms as you can
- Name ten reference books
- Classify twelve items in your classroom
- Name the steps of the scientific method
- Make a graph of the different colors present in your classroom

**Mathematics**

- List the things you would buy with a $50.00 gift certificate
- List twenty objects that can be identified by shape
- How many seconds in a month?
- How many hours in a year?
- If a drop from 25 to 5 is a loss of 80%, what is the percent gain from 5 to 15? (400%)