

STAFFORD TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

Substitute Teacher Handbook



2025-2026

Introduction

This booklet is your guide to success as a substitute teacher in the Stafford Township School District. The contents have been arranged to assist you in finding the answers to many of the questions and problems which may confront you as a substitute in the various schools throughout the system.

Serving as a substitute is one of the most difficult assignments within the school system. It requires the ability to spontaneously walk into any classroom setting – self-contained, physical education, individualized, departmentalized – and carry out the daily activities as would the regularly assigned teacher. Because of the extraordinary expectations and demands, substitute teacher training is imperative. The better prepared, organized and able to carry out the requirements and demands of being a substitute teacher, the greater the possibility of the substitute to be an effective facilitator in the learning process. We hope that this booklet will help facilitate your journey on becoming an effective substitute teacher.

Welcome

You, as a substitute teacher, are one of the most vital parts of our school's system. It would be extremely difficult for us to operate our schools on a satisfactory basis without you. Providing the best and highest quality education for our students is our everyday goal. Having reliable, fully qualified professional substitutes in our classrooms has always been a high priority for schools. In these days of education reform, with increased teacher in-service and outside-of-regular-classroom obligations, it is even more important that our substitute teachers be focused on student learning and skilled in effective instruction.

We wish to extend to you a most cordial welcome as a substitute teacher. Your daily work is an important contribution to the instructional program of our schools. We feel confident that you will do everything possible to meet the high standards required for teaching in our schools and wish to extend our sincere best wishes as you join our staff.

Please refer to the district website: www.staffordschools.org for up-to-date policies and regulations regarding dress code (Policy #4216) and other information you should familiarize yourself with.



STAFFORD TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

Administrative Offices
250 N. Main Street
Manahawkin, NJ 08050
609-978-5700

www.staffordschools.org

George J. Chidiac
Superintendent of Schools

Stephanie Bush
Director of Personnel
Ext. 1400

"Set Sail for Success"

Dear Stafford Substitute Teacher:

We are very pleased to have you join our family and would like to wish you a successful school year.

Substitutes play an essential role in the education of our students and allow quality instruction of our students to continue when illness or events cause a staff member to be absent. For this reason what you do is critical to each and every one of our students.

Substitute teachers also ensure the safety of our students. For this reason, I would like to emphasize how important it is to check the list of students who are staying after school for Extended Day program **every day**. These students are placed in the program because no one is able to be home to provide care immediately after school. Therefore, it is vital to the safety of our students that you make certain they report to the program rather than go home. Please know that this is a required job function for all of our substitutes and failure to do so will result in immediate removal from the district's substitute list.

I am confident that you understand the importance of your role in guaranteeing the safety of each of our students and we look forward to working with you.

Again, thank you for all you do for our students and have a great year!

Yours in education,

George J. Chidiac
Superintendent

Stafford Township School District

Superintendent of Schools

George J. Chidiac

Central Office Administration

Lourdes LaGuardia, Board Secretary/School Business Administrator

Stephanie Bush, Director of Personnel

Sean Reilly, Director of Special Services

Carolyn Roselli, Vice Principal/Special Education

Schools

Stafford Intermediate

1000 McKinley Avenue

Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Principal: Hope Zaun

Vice Principal: Kristin Ducker

Phone: 609-978-5700 X1191

McKinley Avenue Elementary

1000 McKinley Avenue

Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Principal: Tiffany Eberle

Vice Principal: Jacqueline Aliseo

Phone: 609-978-5700 X1134

Ocean Acres Elementary

489 Nautilus Drive

Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Principal: Susan D'Alessandro

Vice Principal: Christopher DiMicco

Phone: 609-978-5700 X1134

Ronald L. Meinders Primary Learning Center

1000 McKinley Avenue

Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Principal: Dawn Reo

Vice Principal: Richard Meyer

Phone: 609-978-5700 X1198

Oxycocus Elementary School

250 North Main Street

Manahawkin, NJ 08050

Director of Early Childhood: William Wilkinson

Phone: 609-978-5700 X1270

How to be a Successful Substitute Teacher

Role of the Substitute Teacher

The substitute teacher is a certificated employee in charge of the classroom in the absence of the regular teacher. The substitute teacher is responsible for delivery of the instructional program to the class. While the substitute teacher is there to ensure the education of each student, the first responsibility is to maintain the care, welfare, safety, and security of students in the classroom.

A substitute teacher needs to work closely with the teacher assistants and/or regular staff to maintain the continuity and routine of the regular classroom program. The substitute teacher is responsible for providing for the needs of the class, and for ensuring that established rules, procedures, and all assigned responsibilities are performed in an effective and professional manner.

Substitutes are not entitled to a planning period. During breaks from classroom duties, substitutes are to report to the school office for assignment from the principal. Note that substitutes are entitled to a 45-minute lunch period during the school day.

Reporting to the School

Arrival time

The following must be done as soon as you arrive:

- Sign in at the Visitor Station/Main Office
- Stop in the main office for a school map and room key
- Scan for Share911
- Review lesson plans for the day, books, materials, and special procedures – if you have any questions ask the neighboring teacher
- Review emergency plans, as well as specific behavior intervention plans for students
- Review Student Health Concerns list – if you have any questions, contact the school nurse immediately
- It is important to familiarize yourself with any unusual changes in school schedules such as fire drills, altered class schedules or activities day. If the school secretary or greeter does not apprise you of an unusual school schedule change, be sure to ask.
- Each school has emergency evacuation plans in case of a fire, lock down, or other potentially dangerous situation so that you can successfully evacuate students safely. Know the location of Emergency Response Guide. Also locate the school evacuation map in the classroom. If you cannot find the necessary information, contact the main office.
- Put your personal belongings in a secure place when you arrive

In the Classroom

Review the following:

- Daily lesson plans
- Worksheets/activities or other produced materials for carrying out today's activities in the classroom
- Attendance and lunch count directions and materials
- Special procedures (It is important that you do not vary from the practices of the regular teacher)
- Seating Chart

- Review list of all students that will be staying after school for the day
- Notes regarding specific students (i.e., special education, individual health problems, and behavior problems)
- Names of student helpers

Substitute Responsibilities

The following are applicable to all substitute assignments:

- Introduce yourself to the class. Write your name on the board. Greet students in a positive, confident manner. The first few minutes set the tone for the rest of the day.
- Start class promptly, this helps to reduce discipline problems.
- Record attendance and send to the greeter's station.
- Record lunch count and send to the cafeteria.
- Open and read all parent communication. Forward any unusual requests to the building principal. If you have questions regarding parental communication, contact the main office as soon as possible.
- Supervise students at all times. Circulate the classroom and offer assistance.
- Assist students with getting ready for dismissal and walk students to the appropriate dismissal location.
- Make sure all students attending Extended Day or after school programs get to the appropriate location – and DO NOT get on the bus at dismissal.
- Doing personal business during a substitute assignment is prohibited. The following are examples of unacceptable behavior: reading the newspaper, magazines, book, etc., personal phone calls on school phones or cell phone, and using the Internet for non-school related purposes.
- Remember to leave correspondence for the classroom teacher – letting him/her know what you were able to cover and any problems you encountered.
- If you need assistance resolving a problem, call the main office.

Classroom Instruction

- Follow the teacher's lesson plans as closely as you can. If you find it necessary to deviate, be sure to leave a note for the teacher with that information. Teachers spend a lot of time preparing when they will be out, show respect by doing what is asked.
- It is a good idea to have some plans and activities of your own that can be used if the class covers the planned material before the end of the day.
- Grade work when possible (unless the teacher's directions state otherwise). Teachers appreciate it when simple grading is completed. It is a nice touch for teachers to be able to come back and some of the assignments have already been graded. Grade any objective or simple type of assignments in the free time you have. Leave short answers, essays, or themes for the classroom teacher to grade.
- Use clear, consistent instructions in directing every activity.
- Leave the teacher's desk (and classroom) organized at the end of the day. Use paperclips and sticky notes to organize student work – you can never organize too much! The more organized you leave the room; the more you will be appreciated.
- Be flexible. When transitions do not go as well as planned or when you find out you have music at 10:00 instead of math, do not lose your head (or your sense of humor).

Classroom Management

- Start the day out quickly, firmly, concisely. Be pleasant. Appear confident. Let the students know “anything does not go.” Your first words and actions usually go a long way to set the day’s discipline.
- You are legally responsible for the student’s safety. While on school grounds, students are NOT to be left unattended at any time. Do not release a student to anyone without approval from the parent or main office. When in doubt - ASK.
- Maintain established routines as much as possible. Try to hold to time schedules, routines, etc.
- With any group, smile, be friendly, show enthusiasm, and be positive. Try to see that every student experiences some success or praise.
- Whenever talking with a student, squat down to their eye level. However, do not get in their “personal space.”
- Encourage students to think of alternative solutions to the conflict. Help the student see the consequences of his/her actions. Do not get into a power struggle with the student. Attempt to give the student options, which allow him/her to maintain dignity.
- Solve problems on the spot. Never degrade students, but do handle problem situations when they occur.
- Deal with the individual student, not the group when corrections are necessary. Have all the facts. Listen to both sides of a story. Focus attention on the problem. Give the child the benefit of the doubt.
- Reward good behavior. Praise behavior that you like. This shows the students the behavior you want instead of what you do not want.
- Be a positive role model. Students learn by example.
- As a professional, maintain the use of conservative, non-controversial, acceptable language when in the classroom. The use of foul or vulgar language creates a potentially volatile situation for the students as well as the teacher.
- The only time it is legal to physically restrain a student is when it is determined the student will injure him/herself or others. The amount of restraint that can be applied is the absolute minimum to control the situation.
- Report all incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying to the teacher and principal in accordance with Policy and Regulation 5512.
- The principal and other staff members are ready to assist you with special problems; however, the general tone of the classroom is your responsibility. Include the names and brief descriptions of any special problems you may have or feel are worthy of comment in your correspondence with the teacher. If necessary, complete a Student Discipline Referral to the main office. (See next page for referral form)

Accidents

Accidents in the classroom, hallways, or on the playground should be reported to the principal's office and the nurse's office immediately. An accident form is available from the school nurse and should be completed for any accident involving a student or an adult. There is a nurse on duty in each building to administer first aid and follow up on other necessary procedures.

Meetings and Conferences

In general, daily substitute teachers are not expected to attend faculty, committee, or parent meetings. Long-term substitutes will receive specific directions from the building principal.

At the End of the Day

Complete a final written report to the classroom teacher. Be sure to include:

- What you were able to complete in the lesson plans.
- What you were unable to complete, and why.
- What you added to the lesson plans, and why.
- Which students were helpful and which were problems (be specific and give details).
- Leave completed student work for the teacher.
- Return supplies and equipment to their proper storage areas.
- Attach all referral slips (to the office or nurse, etc) to your note to the teacher.
- Before they leave for the day, remind students of homework. Have students straighten and clean the area around their desks.
- Close windows, turn off lights and equipment, and make sure the room is in good order before locking the door.
- Return all keys to the main office.

Substitute Appraisal

- Please know your performance is important to us and has great impact on student achievement. Staff is asked to share feedback with building principals.
- We are committed to your success and all feedback will be reviewed with the building principals. Suggestions and ideas for improvement will be shared with you at a scheduled meeting.

Confidentiality of Student Information

- Releasing of student information to the wrong individual is a violation of district policy 8330 and regulation 8330 (available on the district website at www.staffordschools.org)
- Releasing of student information to the wrong individual is also a violation of numerous laws (district and individual that released the information will be held liable):
 - o Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) & related state laws (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19; N.J.A.C. 6A32-7.1 to 7.5);
 - These laws generally require that student records cannot be released or shared with anyone besides a student's parent/guardian unless that parent/guardian gives written consent.

Definition of "record" includes:

- Any record, file, document or other material maintained by an educational institution
- Containing any information directly related to a student
- Maintained in any format or medium

Of course there are a few exceptions to this general requirement. These exceptions are as follows:

- School officials with "legitimate educational interests"
 - Other schools into which a student is transferring or enrolling
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid
 - Organizations conducting certain students for, or on behalf of, the school
 - Accrediting organizations
 - Judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas
 - Health and safety emergencies
 - State and local authorities within a juvenile justice system pursuant to specific state laws. These exceptions are narrowly interpreted by the courts such that the law will weigh in favor of not releasing the information.
- o Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) & related state law (N.J.S.A. 18A:40 – 4): These laws provide added protection to health and medical information. They generally state that covered entities may only release protected health information for the purposes of facilitating treatment, payment or healthcare operations. Schools are considered covered entities.
 - Example – One little statement could violate all of these laws:
Situation: Student C's parents call you because Student C is being teased by Student D. You tell Student C's parents that you understand why they are upset but to try to give Student D a break because he has some emotional and behavioral disabilities which cause him to act this way, you believe that Student D might even be bipolar – but in any event, you say that you will talk to Student D and see what you can do. You think you are trying to calm the situation. However, Student C's parents relay that information back to Student C. Now Student C tells all of his/her friends – and soon everyone in the class is making fun of Student D. Student D is extremely depressed and unable to attend school or even get out of bed.
 - This is a violation of district policy and every law discussed above:

- o FERPA – this is information contained in the student's records
- o HIPAA – this is medical information
- o If true – is an invasion of privacy as the reasonable individual would not want this information shared
- o If false – is defamation of character because it brings down Student D's image to the community
- o Infliction of emotional distress – Student D is suffering emotional harm which is leading to physical harm
- o If something else happens between Student D and any other student, the student's parents will say that you and the district were "on notice" of problems
- o Law Against Discrimination – Student D may claim that he/she was bullied and discriminated against because of his/her emotional and behavioral disabilities.
- People are creative – they will bring actions under every claim just to see which ones will stick.

- **Key points you need to remember:**

- o Can be held individually liable and breaking is a violation of confidentiality policy and the law
- o At a minimum – you will be a witness called to testify
- o ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION – assume the information you are giving is confidential and assume the person is not permitted to have access to that information (then verify you are doing the right thing before you give an answer or provide any information).
- o It is understandable that when someone is asking you questions, they want answers and you want to give it to them – but if its confidential information you cannot –
 - Easy way out - say "Law and district policy do not permit me to tell you that"
- o Before you share information – think about why you are sharing it and think about who you are talking to (if there is not educational or safety purpose for providing the information – DO NOT SHARE IT!).

Emergency Procedures

Procedures to follow when calling your school office to notify of an emergency:

- Call the school office
- Give your name
- Give your extension number, phone number or room number.
- Describe the condition clearly and accurately.
- Don't hang up! Let the person you are talking to end the conversation; other information may be needed.

Policies that must be followed in every emergency preparedness situation:

- All possible steps will be taken to assure the safety of the pupils who attend our schools.
- For all emergencies, the teacher is the authority in the classroom and must act as reason dictates. If time permits, the teacher will receive and follow the directions of the principal.
- The teacher must stay with the children at all times.
- The teacher will not release the children without direction from the principal.

Fire Drill and Evacuation Plans

Each teacher is responsible for seeing that the Fire Drill and Evacuation Plan is posted in a conspicuous place in each classroom to which the teacher is assigned. Each teacher is also responsible for informing all students in each classroom of the evacuation plan for that room.

Special Instructions to the teacher:

- Remove the roll book
- Check for evacuation of all students
- Turn off the lights
- Close all doors and windows
- Proceed with the class to the evacuation area
- If a disaster is within the evacuation path or area, proceed in opposite direction
- Take roll (attendance)
- Keep all students quiet, orderly, and away from emergency personnel and vehicles
- Stay with your students and follow the directions of the administrator or emergency personnel

RED ROVER: AUTOMATED SUBSTITUTE CALLER

Red Rover is an automated system used to find substitutes for teachers and other staff during short term, temporary absences. Red Rover allows staff to register their own absences using a web site or an Interactive Voice Response phone system. Frontline then finds substitute teachers to fill each vacancy and allows substitutes to view and accept jobs online. The administrative management functions of Red Rover provide administrators with full information about absences and substitute assignments.

You will have access to the Red Rover once all required paperwork is completed with Human Resources and Payroll. If you have questions or comments regarding the use of the Red Rover, please contact the Human Resources at 609-978-5700 x1400.