

## SUBstantial News

### District Information

## Making Use of a Starter Activity

Often times, students will walk in and see that there is a substitute teacher and instantly think it will be a day they can get away with anything. One way to dispel this idea is to greet students at the door. This is a really simple technique that will demonstrate to students that you are a professional.

For this technique to be most helpful, you'll need to couple it with a starter activity for the students as they enter the classroom. Starter activities are indispensable for substitute teachers.

Starter activities are excellent ways to get students on task immediately. Once students are on task, it's much easier to keep them on task.

Some suggestions on implementing a starter activity ought to include:

1. Students should be able to work on the activity individually.
2. Students should be able to begin whenever they enter the classroom, which will be at different times.
3. Students should be able to complete the activity in 5-10 minutes (enough time for you to complete attendance and necessary pre-teaching tasks.)

These three techniques go well together and send a very powerful message to students. When students see a substitute teacher being proactive by greeting students at the door and directing them to a starter activity, they are less likely to assume the day is going to be wasted.

## Ideas for Starter Activities

Following are some ideas for starter activities:

- Ask students to design nametags or executive nameplates for their desks.
- In a math class, provide students quarter sheets of paper and have them write five sentences about how they used math outside of the classroom in the last week.
- Provide students with quarter sheets of paper and have them express what they learned the previous day in class using a graphic organizer.
- In younger grades, have students draw pictures of their daily schedule. Then have them draw clocks listing what time they did the tasks.
- Put a large poster of a picture in the front of the room, have students study the picture. After three minutes, take the picture away and ask them detailed questions about the picture.
- Photocopy a worksheet of addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division facts; have students time themselves on how long it takes to complete a line of equations.

- Write a brainteaser on the board, and allow a few minutes for students to try to solve it.
- Provide students with a piece of paper and have them write a letter to the President of the United States about how they feel about a current decision that was made.

The possibilities are endless for what you can do as a starter activity. It is best if you can relate the activity to the subject you will be covering for the day.

Remember, starter activities aren't busy work. They need to have a purpose and feedback should be provided on student work. Instead of you grading the papers, have students trade with a partner and have the partner write something they liked about the other student's work at the top of the paper before handing it back to the original owner.

For more ideas for starter activities, check out the *Five Minute Fillers* section in the *Substitute Teacher Handbook*.

### Quote of the month

Teachers teach because they care. Teaching young people is what they do best. It requires long hours, patience, and care."

– Horace Mann

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### Evacuations

One question you should pose to the school secretary in the morning is whether or not there is an emergency drill planned for the day. Drills (and even real emergencies) can happen at any time; sometimes they are planned and sometimes they are unplanned.

Although asking the school secretary isn't a foolproof method of finding out information about drills, it may prove helpful. You should also include in your many tasks at the beginning of each school day to review the evacuation map and locate the emergency procedure information that should be prominently displayed in every classroom.

Some teachers may have an emergency backpack hanging next to the door that contains class lists, parent contact

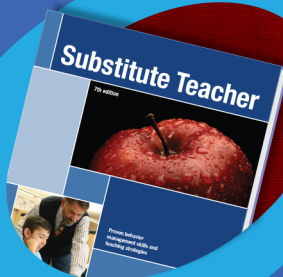
information, a first aid kit, etc. In the event that you evacuate the building, take the pack with you. At the very least you should always take a class list or seating chart with you when you leave the room so you can account for the students in your class once you are out of harms way.

Since different schools and geographical areas face different potential emergencies it's a good idea to ask the substitute teacher supervisor or a school administrator for a copy of the school's or district's emergency plan. You may even want to suggest a training meeting at the district level for all substitute teachers where protocol can be explained and questions can be answered.

### Things you need to know!

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