

North Gem School District

Substitute Teacher Handbook

HOW TO BECOME A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

1. Complete an application.
2. Pass a background check
3. Complete Substitute training with the superintendent (or designated lead teacher)
4. Submit graduation/certification documents or Parapro praxis scores or equivalency credit information for placement on the pay rate scale.

WHAT TO DO

1. **Be professional.** Sometimes sub dates can be arranged in advance, and you can plan ahead, or you might be called early in the morning for a teacher who has called in sick. In either case, demonstrate professionalism by showing up on the days you've agreed to. It's difficult to get a sub for a sub!
2. **Be punctual.** Arrive at the school no later than 7:30, if possible. Many teachers have 7:30 duties that will be part of your daily routine. This will also give you time to get sub plans, find the classroom, and familiarize yourself with the lesson plans for the day. If you are a para sub, you can check in with the teachers that you will be working with during the day.
3. **Understand the material.** Read the lesson plans carefully, ensuring that you have the copies that you need and that you understand the various steps you will take throughout the day. If there's something you don't understand about the plans, visit with a nearby teacher who can help you decipher the teacher's lessons.
4. **Follow the plan.** Follow the plans as written, using your best judgment on items you may not understand.
5. **Inform the teacher.** Leave notes for the regular teacher, letting her/him know about the pertinent information that occurred throughout the day. This can include whether you were able to complete all the tasks in the lesson, how the students did with the lessons, how the students behaved that day, and if you had any questions or problems.

6. **Step up.** North Gem School District is a small district and there will be many times that you may be asked to step in to help with things that aren't on your sub plans.

WHAT NOT TO DO

1. Don't arrive late to the school and don't not show up at all.
2. Don't get on the sub list but then never actually agree to sub.
3. Don't agree to a position that you aren't willing to perform all the responsibilities that are assigned to you or asked of you.
4. Don't be inappropriate with students. This can include being too casual or discussing your intimate personal life.
5. Don't criticize the teacher or the assignments she/he left for the class.
6. Don't try to be too friendly with the students. You're their boss for the day, not their friend.
7. Don't change/abandon the teacher's lesson plan and do something different.

GENERAL SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

1. Be seated in the classroom when the tardy bell rings.
2. Bring the necessary books and supplies to class every day.
3. Don't sit on the desktops or deface the desks in any manner.
4. Don't interrupt when a student or teacher is talking.
5. Everyday manners and courtesies should be practiced.
6. The bell does not excuse the students. The teacher does.
7. Students will not vape or smoke tobacco, drink alcohol in any form, chew snuff, or be under the influence of drugs in the buildings or on school grounds, or during school-related activities.
8. Students will not be permitted to have any drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, vapes, or chewing tobacco on their person, in their lockers, or in their vehicles.
9. Fighting and harassment will not be tolerated.
10. No hats are to be worn in the school building.
11. No food or drinks in the hallways or classrooms unless it is pre-approved by the school or teachers.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1. Be the boss. *You are in charge of the classroom, not the students.* This is important to remind yourself, especially if you are feeling intimidated. If students sense your uncertainty, more may become disruptive as well.

2. Correct behavior quickly. Don't let students get away with misbehaving over and over again before you decide to put a stop to it. The sooner you correct and redirect students, the quicker they'll recognize that they won't get to misbehave with you.

3. Correct behavior quietly. Rather than scolding students from across the room, it's generally better to move toward them and quietly speak to them. If they're misbehaving for attention, scolding them from across the room gives them exactly what they want.

4. Say what you mean, mean what you say. Empty threats get you nowhere. If students are misbehaving, and you threaten with a consequence, give it to them on their next offense. For example, if you tell a student that you're going to move her to the front of the room if she continues talking when she isn't supposed to, then move her to the front of the room the **very next time** she talks out of turn.

5. Discipline students when necessary. As the teacher in charge, you have the authority to discipline students. You can move them to a different seat, send them to the office, etc. No one will accuse you of overstepping your bounds. When you apply appropriate discipline to a misbehaved student, that student and the others see that you mean business.

6. Be consistent. Once students become accustomed to you, they should know that you mean what you say and say what you mean--*the first time you say it.*

7. Expect respect. Students are usually told by their regular classroom teacher about what their behavior should be when a sub is teaching the class. They know that they are supposed to behave as well or better than they normally do.

8. Respect students. Treat your students like the people they are. No one likes to be talked down to or to be disrespected. Giving students respect increases the likelihood that they'll return it to you.

9. Consider the cause of the behavior. Students are human beings with impulses just like you and me; they get bored, frustrated, or overwhelmed, and many are easily influenced by their peers. Nearly all behavior has a cause: If a student is misbehaving to get attention, giving them attention is simply feeding the problem.

10. Move students, if necessary. This is one of your first lines of defense. Many teachers utilize seating charts. If so, copies of those charts should be in their subfolders. If that is not the case, feel free to move students to desks/tables where you think they'll be less disruptive.

11. Avoid downtime. Don't allow too much time to pass between activities. Idle students are more likely to become distracted and will start messing around.

12. Use your physical presence to influence behavior. Don't sit behind the desk for long periods of time. Sitting behind the desk is letting your guard down. Keep your guard alert: move around the room, especially to areas where students are getting off-task.

13. Don't get sucked into a power struggle. If a student is misbehaving and pushing your buttons, chances are it's on purpose. By reacting the way the student wants, you're reinforcing the negative behavior. Additionally, students won't want to lose face in front of their peers; they're unlikely to back down once everyone is watching.

14. Use time limits. Give students a time limit to complete tasks. For example, if they're working on an assignment, you can say, "You have seven minutes to work on this, and then we're moving to the next task." This lets students know that they are expected to get to work right away because another task awaits.

15. Manage devices. Students have Chromebooks and iPads in most classes. They are to use their devices for academic purposes only. **Cell phones are not allowed to be out or used during class time - EVER.**

16. Follow the rules yourself. Stay off your phone--if students can't be on their phones, neither should you. If students aren't allowed to eat in class, neither should you.

17. Be fair. Don't apply rules more harshly to one or two students because you suspect they're troublemakers. Being fair and holding all students to the same standards allows them to see that you don't play favorites or pick on students.

18. Be reasonable. Students are people. They make mistakes, they forget things, and they have bad days. If a student forgot their textbook, let them go get it. If a student needs to go to the bathroom in the middle of class, it's probably okay to let him go. (However, if the same students have the same issues over and over again they might be manipulating you or looking for ways to get out of class.) If a student says they don't feel well, send them to the office if a drink and a bathroom trip doesn't work. Use your best judgment.

19. Follow hallway procedures and monitor students. If a student asks to leave class to use the restroom or to see the counselor or go to the office, make sure you are monitoring the amount of time that they are gone and make sure that they are returning to class in a timely manner.

20. Get help when necessary. If a class gets out of control, don't be afraid to step into the hallway and get someone to help you. Many teachers leave notes indicating who to contact for help.

21. Maintain classroom control. Once you get a class under control, maintain it by following these classroom management tips consistently.

WHEN TO GET ADMINISTRATION INVOLVED

It can be difficult to know when to get a lead teacher or building administrator involved in a classroom management issue. In general, it is best to handle situations within the classroom yourself. After all, if you send all your discipline issues to the office for every small infraction, you're letting students know that you have given all your authority away.

However, there are exceptions. Here are instances when you must notify administration.

1. If you've attempted three times to correct a student's behavior and nothing is working and the misbehavior continues, it's time to get the office involved.
2. If a student does something especially awful (cussing you out, deliberately tipping over a desk, getting in a fight with another student, sexually harassing you or another student, etc.) you need to alert the office.
3. If a student is caught violating the drug/alcohol/weapon policy, you must alert the office at once.
4. If a student is a danger to themselves or others, you must alert the office at once.
5. If a student goes missing, you need to let the office know immediately.

LESSON PLANS

All teachers are required to give emergency sub plans to secretaries. This plans should include:

1. Class/daily schedule
2. Class rosters and attendance protocol
3. Seating charts (if applicable)
4. Classroom rules
5. Emergency lesson plans
6. List of trustworthy student helpers
7. List of go-to teachers for questions and emergencies
8. Emergency procedures for fire drills, lockdowns, and flood drills.

When teachers are not at school due to a scheduled absence, they typically have well-prepared and detailed plans ready.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Sometimes students complete all the tasks in the regular teacher's lesson plan and time remains in class. It's a good idea to have some additional activities up your sleeve that students can complete. (Ideally, the regular teacher should have something similar available to you, but it's best for you to be as prepared as you can. It's a good idea to curate some tasks that you can use in multiple classrooms/situations.) Here are some go-to ideas:

1. Have students read from their library book (if they have one).
2. Assign students to write a story using a story starter. Ex. *It was a dark and stormy night, when suddenly...*
3. Have students clean their desks.
4. Assign students to write a letter to themselves five years in the future.
5. Have students plan a dream vacation.
6. Have students create a playlist of songs that represent their life.
7. Assign students to create a list of rhyming words.
8. Assign students to list as many animals for each letter of the alphabet as they can.
9. Have students design or draw a picture of their house or their dream house.
10. Complete a puzzle.
11. Write a list of compliments, one for each classmate.
12. Make words from other words. How many words can you make from Merry Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving, spring break, the students name, etc.? The letters can be used over and over, but can only be used as many times as it appears.
13. Have the students draw a simple picture and then write the steps on how to draw the picture. Collect the papers and have the students draw according to the directions and see if it matches the picture.
14. Have a story starter...*On a dark stormy night...*give the students X amount of time to write on the topic. At the end of the time, students will pass the paper to the person behind them, giving them time to read what is written on the paper. They then have X amount of time to continue the story that the first person started. Keep doing this until there are four or five paragraphs. The papers are

then returned to the original person. They can then read how the story has been continued on.

15. Give students a picture and have them write a story about the picture and then color the picture. They can share their stories with the class if they want to.

16. As you read to the students, have them draw what they are hearing in the story.

17. On your break or at recess time, ask other teachers if they have something that students should be working on when they finish their assignments.

18. Have students create math problems for other students to solve. Tell the students that the problems have to be similar to the problems that they are learning in math.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Here are some other tips to help increase your success and enjoyment as a substitute teacher.

1. **Use your students' skills and knowledge.** If you don't understand the material being taught, don't panic! Teachers and students don't expect you to know everything, and they'll understand if you don't know what's going on in a book that they're midway through or if you don't remember how to solve for x using the quadratic formula. This is a great opportunity to let students show off a little bit. Ask for volunteers to help explain it to you. They like feeling important and knowledgeable.

2. **Humanize yourself.** The more humanity students see in you, the better they'll treat you. You can achieve this by telling them a little bit about yourself. Just don't get too personal.

3. **Show interest in your students.** Ask students about their game, the rodeo season, the recent FFA contest, or their new puppy. The more interest you show in students, the more likely they are to behave for you.

4. **Immerse yourself.** If you're comfortable, eat with the other teachers in the teachers' lounge or the cafeteria. Get to know the staff, and let them get to know you.

5. **Grade papers.** If the teacher left a grading key, grade the papers the students have completed.

6. **Reach out.** If you have nothing to do during the teacher's prep period, ask the secretary if there's anything you can do for them!

7. **Observe other teachers.** If you have some free time, arrange to observe another teacher at work. It may give you some good ideas on how to handle particular situations. You'll also have a better idea of what to expect if you ever sub for that teacher.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. **Fire drills.** Fire drills occur once per month. Sometimes you'll know about them in advance, sometimes you won't. When the fire alarm goes off, follow these steps:

- i. Each classroom has an emergency bag. Please make sure to grab that before going outside. Shut off the light and close the classroom door.
- ii. Most students know where to go in case of a fire drill but the teacher should have left directions in the lesson plans as well.
- iii. If everyone is accounted for, hold up the green card. If there are missing students, hold up the red card. You will be asked where your missing student is.
- iv. Await instructions from the administrator on duty. They will indicate when you and your students can return to class. Try to keep your students moving in an orderly fashion.

2. **Lockdown/Hall Check/Evacuation. See posted emergency sheet for procedures:** ALICE is used when responding to a lockdown. ALICE stands for **A**lert, **L**ockdown, **I**nform, **C**ounter, **E**vacuate. (See additional handouts.)

ALICE Procedures

A

ALERT. *Use Plain and Specific Language. Avoid code words.*

The purpose of the ALERT is to inform as many people as possible within the danger zone that a potentially life-threatening situation exists. This can be facilitated via many different methods (PA, text, email, alarm). Various sounds, sights, and interactions can create awareness of the active shooter (gunfire, witness, unusual noises, yelling, etc.) No matter the method of delivery, the objective should be a conveyance of information, not an issuance of a command. The use of plain language, delivered through as many delivery channels as possible, is the best way to ensure awareness within the danger zone. It will empower as many as possible with the ability to make an informed decision as to their best option that will maximize survival chances. Example: “A man has a gun in the library.”

L

LOCKDOWN. *Barricade the Room. Silence Mobile Devices. Prepare to EVACUATE or COUNTER if needed.*

If evacuation is not possible and a lockdown is required, secure the room. It is a starting point from which survival decisions will begin to be made. Look for alternate escape routes (windows, other doors, etc.). Lock the door. Tie-down the door, if possible, using belts, purse straps, shoelaces, etc. Barricade the door with any object available (desk, chairs, etc.). Cover any windows. Move out of the doorway in case gunfire comes through. Silence or place cell phones on vibrate. Once secured, do not open the door for anyone. Police will enter the room when the situation is over. As soon as you are safe, call 911. Gather weapons (coffee cups, chairs, books, pens, etc.) and mentally prepare to defend yourself or others. Put yourself in a position to surprise the active shooter if he or she enters the room.

I

INFORM. *Communicate the intruder's location in real-time.*

Inform is a continuation of Alert and uses any means necessary to pass on real-time information. Video surveillance, 911 calls, and PA announcements are just a few of the channels that may be used by school employees, safety officers, and other personnel. Information should always be clear and direct and, as much as possible, communicate the whereabouts of the intruder. Effective information can keep the shooter off balance, giving people in the school more time to further lockdown, or evacuate to safety. Active shooters work alone 98% of the time. If the shooter is known to be in an isolated section of a building, occupants in other areas can safely evacuate while those in direct danger can lockdown and prepare to counter. Knowledge is the key to survival. Use any means necessary to pass on real-time information. Use plain language. Provide “who, what, when, where, and how” information.

C

COUNTER. *Create Noise, Movement, Distance, and Distraction with the intent of Reducing the Shooters Ability to Shoot Accurately.*

Counter is a last-ditch and worst-case scenario option. In the horrible event that an active shooter makes his or her way into the school, there are steps that can be taken as an effort to survive an attack. Counter is about survival, the last barrier between a shooter and a potential victim, and anything a person can do to gain control is acceptable. It's the opposite of being a sitting duck, and every action taken is a step towards survival. Use simple, proactive techniques if you are confronted by an active shooter. Realize that anything can be a weapon (books, coffee cups, etc.) Throw objects at the shooter's head to disrupt his/her aim. Create as much noise as possible. Attack or swarm in a group. Grab the shooter's limbs or head, take him/her to the ground, and hold him/her there. Run around the room and create chaos. If you have control of the shooter, call 911 and tell the police where you are. Listen to the police commands when they arrive on the scene.

E

EVACUATE. *When safe to do so, remove yourself from the danger zone.*

Safety is our primary focus for this program, and we do not endorse risking lives of students or employees. Remove yourself and others from the danger zone as quickly as possible. Decide if you can safely evacuate. Run in a zigzag pattern as fast as you can. Do not stop running until you are far away from the scene. Bring something to throw in case you encounter the active shooter. Consider if the fall from a window would be detrimental. Break out windows and attempt to quickly clear glass from the frame. Consider using belts, clothing, or other items as an improvised rope to shorten the distance you would fall. Hang by your hands from the window ledge to shorten the drop. Attempt to drop into shrubs, mulch, or grass to lessen the injury.

Helpful tip: Did you know that you should break a window from the corner as opposed to the center?