
TRY THIS



Does this sound familiar? Many teachers will admit that they dread missing school for fear of what the students will or will not do in the care of a substitute teacher. But not *all* teachers dread having a substitute teacher take their place, because they've figured out a secret.

Here's what they do:

- First, they realize that human nature is human nature, and students will get away with exactly as much as they are allowed to get away with. Students will test anyone new if they are allowed to. So these teachers nip this in the bud very quickly.
- In the beginning of the school year, they train the students with "procedures for substitute teacher days." These procedures include assigning jobs to every student in the class. For instance, one person is the greeter. He greets the substitute teacher. Another student shows the substitute teacher where things are in the classroom—the lesson plans, supplies, and so on. Another student explains the regular teacher's procedure for getting students' attention. Another passes out papers. And on and on until everyone has some type of responsibility for helping the substitute teacher feel welcome and for familiarizing the substitute teacher with the general workings of the class. Every student has the job of thanking the substitute teacher on the way out of the room at the end of class. You get the idea. (This can be used effectively at any grade level. Obviously, you will need to make it apply to your personal setting, adapting it to the appropriate age levels of your students.)
- Once jobs are assigned and the substitute-teacher-day procedures are established, the teacher practices with the students. On occasion, the teacher says, "We'll pretend that I am a substitute teacher today. Assume your roles." Students love these drills, and it gives them the opportunity to practice so that they know exactly what to do when it is an actuality, not a drill.

So now, when you are absent, the students feel responsible and important, as opposed to feeling as if they have just been freed from their leashes!

If you don't believe this works, then you've never tried it. And this technique is not reserved for elementary classrooms. We continue to work with teachers at all grade levels who use it successfully. As an added bonus, the substitute teachers are overwhelmed by the responsible nature and good behavior of your students. They ask to return to your room any time.