

Classroom Management: The First Five Minutes

No matter what grade level or subject you teach, the first five minutes of class are critical! Those first few minutes after the bell rings will set the tone for the rest of the day. The most important thing a substitute teacher can do is quickly get the students involved in a learning activity.

Many teachers have established routines that include independent "starter" activities for students to do while the teacher takes roll, lunch count, etc. If such is the case, have students follow the regular routine and be prepared to jump right into the next lesson or class activity when they have finished.

If you received a last minute call to sub and you didn't have time to review the lesson plans before school, you may want to assign a five-minute activity or worksheet of your own to buy yourself a little time to get ready to teach. There is nothing that communicates you are nervous, unprepared, and don't have a handle on things as fast as letting students sit idle at the beginning of class while you try to get organized.

Don't drag out procedures like taking attendance and lunch count any more than necessary, or spend a lot of time talking to students about who you are and what a great day they are going to have. Consider starting the day with a simple and yet informative statement such as the following:

" Hello, my name is Mrs. Nelson and I am going to be teaching for Mr. Murphy today. We'll be following the lesson plans Mr. Murphy left and using the behavior plan he has posted on the back wall. I'll appreciate your cooperation as I may do things just a little be differently than Mr. Murphy does. Now lets begin by . . . ?"

Be friendly but to the point from the beginning. The sooner students are involved in a learning activity the less likely they are to engage in inappropriate behavior. Just as first impressions are important, so the first five minutes right after the bell set the tone for an effective day.