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# A Self-Analysis of a Substitute Teacher

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## A Self-Analysis of a Substitute Teacher

Christina Donofrio  
Capstone Project  
February 2015

A culminating project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Education

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### **Section 1: Introduction**

It's 5:30 a.m. and I am awake, waiting for a phone call. At 5:45 a.m. my phone rings, and the caller ID reads Sub Line. I listen to the automated message giving me my assignment for the day. Some days I receive a phone call at night for an assignment but many times the calls come early in the morning. Substitute teaching has many advantages and disadvantages. Working as a substitute teacher means flexibility, stress, time management, along with gaining experience. On some days substitute teaching requires me to substitute for two different people in the same day, meaning I might have to travel to another school building at some point in the day. I walk into the classroom, most likely for the first time, and study the room for the regular classroom teacher's desk. I look for the regular teacher's lesson plans and if that fails, I look for his/her plan book. If the teacher is absent unexpectedly, and does not leave plans, or an open plan book, I ask the other grade level teachers for assistance. These teachers will somehow get in touch with the regular classroom teacher or they will show me which math lesson or where the teacher left off in the ELA Module. I sometimes struggle to find where all of the materials are located in the classroom for the day. Now it is 8:50 a.m. and the students are starting to trickle into the classroom. Little by little as the students come in I introduce myself along with a cheery "Good Morning," as they arrive. We begin our day and I may complete certain things differently from their teacher's normal procedure such as lunch count, attendance, and smartboard lessons. My delivery of information might be a bit different as well. And as I have come to expect, the students attempt to inform me that I am doing certain things incorrectly. I explain that it is okay if I do things differently, as long as everything still gets done, possibly just in a different way. While the students are at lunch, and even while they are attending specials, (Music, Physical Education, Library, or Art), I am often asked by the regular teacher in his/her plans, or on

occasion the teacher has called me on the classroom phone to correct papers, make copies, fill out behavior reports, and even return books back to the book room. On some occasions an announcement over the public address system invites all students to an assembly without any notification and I have to stop my instruction to get the students lined up and ready to proceed to the assembly. Similarly, a guest speaker may drop in for a lesson without any notification from the regular classroom teacher and use the time I was planning on teaching, not allowing me to get through all of the material that the teacher left. At the end of the school day working as a substitute teacher is often a very exhausting, but very rewarding experience for me. I am getting the chance to practice everything I have learned in college, as well as gaining the experience I need to one day have my own classroom. I can read as many books and watch as many videos as possible about different teaching methods, different problems that could possibly occur, but without the hands-on experience of working in a classroom, all of the preparedness is incomplete.

### **Problem Statement**

How can working as a substitute teacher prepare me for my own classroom?

Every day that I have worked as a substitute teacher, I have faced many different challenges throughout the day. The above vignette has been a typical day for me as a substitute teacher. Substitute teaching can be presented in different forms. For example, filling in for a teacher to administer a test, filling in as a hall monitor or following detailed lesson plans the classroom teacher has left. Working as a substitute teacher is an extremely important task, however not everyone can identify why a substitute teacher is so important. For example, Fielder (2014) showed that parents view substitute teachers as babysitters, and students often ask why they are not able to visit the library rather than sitting in class. Working as a substitute

teacher can help me to gain exposure to the many different issues the regular classroom teacher might face, as well as, with this experience I have learned how to deal with these issues myself. It is my responsibility as a substitute teacher to provide the students that I am working with that day the best possible education. I have to show them that I am the teacher for the day, not just someone that they can take advantage of. Substitute teaching is not only a learning experience for me, but also for the students; they too must learn how to be flexible if my methods differ from those of their classroom teacher.

### **Significance of the Problem**

I examined why it is imperative to gain experience as a substitute teacher before having a classroom of my own. Working as a substitute teacher has given me opportunities for exposure to different problems a classroom teacher might come in contact with, and I have learned how to solve them. The problem focused on can be considered important because the practice that is related to the problem is something that needs to be improved (Clark & Creswell, 2010). I have looked for ways to improve my teaching performances in order to become a more effective teacher. According to Peterson (1991) substitute teaching is an important topic to study because she explains how to become a substitute teacher and all of the work it entails. She also explains how to prepare yourself, along with ways to have a better substitute teaching experience. Beltzer (2009) explains how important it is for the substitute teacher to follow all of the procedures of the regular classroom teacher but not be afraid to add your own thoughts and ideas to the teacher's lesson plans. My study has involved looking at myself as a substitute teacher and then analyzing my experiences. This is a qualitative study because my personal experiences have been used as evidence for the importance of the problem (Clark & Creswell, 2010).

**Purpose for the Study**

The purpose for this self-study was to learn how working as a substitute teacher will help to prepare me for a classroom of my own. A self-study is a powerful tool to help teacher educators investigate questions of practice through honest, critical, and constructive review (Pinnegar & Russell, 1995). According to Loughran (2004) a self-study is different from a reflection because it involves open critique from colleagues and challenges the interpretations made based on experiences. I conducted my study by researching a number of different journal articles, past and present. Substitute teaching is important in so many instances. For example, the regular teacher is absent for a day or possibly longer and schools are finding it difficult to meet the high academic and accountability standards without prepared substitute teachers (Gresham, Donihoo & Cox, 2007). Through the self-study procedures, I was hopeful to improve upon my teaching performance. I was also positive that I will continue to desire to learn about myself.

**Research Questions**

Before I began my research I came up with the following questions, and my goal was to be able to answer them. According to Whitehead (2004) a self-study stems from a specific query:

“How do I improve what I am doing?”

How will working as a substitute teacher enhance my overall teaching performance while preparing me for a classroom of my own?

What can I do differently to become a more effective teacher?

What am I doing now that makes me an effective teacher?

**Rationale**

For the purpose of this project, I studied myself. This study was important to me because I wanted to better myself as a teacher, and still do. I feel as though working as a substitute teacher is a wholesome practice for having my own classroom. I was interested in exploring my own teaching methods and looking for ways of improvement, as well as discovering areas in which I was already proficient. With this self-study, I had the opportunity to look at myself as an educator and reflect upon my day. Whether good or bad, I always looked for methods of improvement. I wanted to explore the idea of teacher preparedness to work as a substitute teacher and whether or not there are programs that a perspective substitute teacher could go through in order to prepare them for the challenging job of substitute teaching which in itself is a method to prepare for a teaching position.

**Study Approaches**

I conducted a self-study using qualitative research methods. This was also a constant comparative study (Glaser, 1978) using methods of observation, journaling as well as a self-generated questionnaire to triangulate my data collection. With my data collection and analysis I used the constant comparative analysis method with its series of steps to analyze all of the data I collected (Glaser). Each day that I substitute taught, I observed my surroundings within the classroom and school throughout the school day. At the end of the school day, I completed my questionnaire that is filled with questions pertaining to how my day went generally, and then to conclude, I spent ten minutes journaling about the experiences, significant or routine, that I had throughout the school day. My goal was to analyze my different experiences, I wanted to see



what I did well, what I could improve upon, or perform differently while experiencing working with multiple grade levels.

A self-study was best suited for the purpose of this project because I observed my own behaviors as an educator. I was the only participant in this study so it was imperative that I showed how my data was reliable as well as valid. There are many other researchers who have conducted self-studies in their careers. For example, Bullock and Russel (2012) have a book about education practices of science teachers, which is based upon self-studies conducted by these researchers in their field of education. Also, Loughran and Russel (2002) wrote a book about whether self-studies can help to improve teaching methods of educators, based upon self-studies that they had previously conducted. Finally, Cohen (2005) has conducted a self-study based upon his experiences as a student in the nursing field. With the help of all of these outside sources I was be able to conduct my self-study thoroughly and effectively.

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

Substitute teaching is a very difficult and stressful task. In fact, substitute teaching has frequently been given the nickname of glorified baby sitter. However, it is much more than that. According to Fielder, the role of a substitute teacher has often been likened to that of a babysitter, which is defined as the act of maintaining the class at its current position by simply watching over the students as they perform tasks not relevant to learning (1991). Working as a substitute teacher means that the person selected as a substitute is taking on the role of the classroom teacher when the classroom teacher is absent due to illness, meetings, family emergencies, doctor's appointments, assessment days, or even grading days.

Becoming a substitute teacher does not just happen overnight. According to some of the research articles I have read in order to become prepared to be a substitute teacher, there are different types of teacher training programs to go through. No matter how prepared I think that I am and how many training programs I have gone through, there are always going to be ways of improvement for myself, even when I am a normal classroom teacher. Teachers who participate in different teacher training programs may feel as though they are prepared, but can still be considered to be non-effective teachers. I will be discussing different types of Teacher Preparedness/Teacher Training Programs, Methods of Improvement in both substitute teaching and for the regular classroom teacher, and lastly Effective versus Non-Effective Teachers.

### **Teacher Preparedness/Teacher Training Programs**

Becoming a substitute teacher does not happen overnight. There are certain ideas and steps that you must be prepared to handle before you take your first step into the classroom on your own. Historically, to become a prepared teacher you would have had to go to a teaching

accredited university as well as pass a licensure exam, however now a teacher is held accountable for their own performance assessment as well as employer feedback (Donovan, Ashdown, & Mungai, 2014) meaning the teacher will be observed while they teach at some point and the results that the students score on their state assessments will affect the educator's teaching standards. In certain school districts, for example both of the districts I work in, certification is not necessary in order to work as a substitute teacher; the only requirement is a Bachelor's Degree. The Bachelor's Degree does not even have to be in the area of teaching. I do not agree with the fact that anybody can get hired as a substitute teacher. However, if a training program was available for a substitute to go through before he/she started the position; it is possible the teacher candidate would become more prepared for what is to come. For example the substitute teacher might have to deal with behavioral problems, lesson confusion, and/or lack of knowledge about the students. The substitute teacher may not know where all the required materials are located within the classroom or if the classroom is supplied sufficiently. Purvis and Garvey (1993) explain that in some instances the job of a substitute teacher may be more difficult than that of the regular teacher because the substitute needs to be extremely perceptive and be able to make decisions with limited information and resources. It seems as though if teachers are in general more prepared, then theoretically the students should do better in school and score higher on their state assessments. When the regular teacher is prepared, it can be assumed that the substitute teacher and the students will have a more calm and productive day. This is especially important when substituting in a special education classroom. In a special education classroom the substitute teacher is required to know how to read an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), testing modifications and accommodations as well as how to deal with certain disabilities, and without proper training this will be very difficult (Fleury, 2000). Also

according to Purvis and Garvey, the need for a comprehensive substitute teacher program, coordinated among faculty and administrators is of extreme importance. There are many different people who should be involved in the formation of the substitute teacher program. It is important for all teachers, faculty, administrators and students, to be in the loop on teacher preparedness so there is no confusion. For example the principal is involved, the regular teacher, as well as the superintendent in all of these decisions (Purvis & Garvey). Many substitute teachers come home from their day of subbing with stories of how horrendous their day was (Purvis & Garvey). A substitute teacher training program, along with faculty development, will help to ensure that classroom time is spent on instruction rather than on behavior management problems and looking for supplies (Peterson, 1991).

Another form of teacher training is called professional dispositions. Professional dispositions track patterns of behavior exhibited frequently, consciously and voluntarily by educators (Pang, Nichols, Terwilliger, & Walsh, 2014). Being able to identify professional dispositions gives the teacher a chance to look at themselves and critique them self as an educator, look for what proficiencies are processed as well as improvements that can be made (Pang, et. al.).

If every school was able to have a substitute training program, in my opinion students would be better behaved and not attempt to take advantage of a substitute. There is a drawback to having a substitute teacher training program however; they are expensive. “Improving the instructional effectiveness of substitute teachers is a big mission; it is also a difficult and costly job” (Welsch, 2001). Having substitute teachers who are prepared for their jobs, and who go through a proper training program will be more successful than those who are not trained nor prepared (Harris & Sass 2010). It seems as though it is impossible to have a perfect day where

nothing goes wrong, i.e. students behave as angels, and the lesson plans are clearly written and all of the materials are ready and clearly labeled for you.

Bletzer (2009) explains in his study:

Mastering the procedures of securing a daily assignment, when to report each day, where to find lesson plans upon arrival in the classroom, when to submit attendance sheets, what to do in case of an emergency, what kind of pass is required for distinct campus destinations; expectations of academic instruction dependent on expertise limitations; classroom behavior permitted by school policies, offset by teacher variation; what is reasonable procedure if an atypical request is made, teaching tools, once knowledge of these procedures is acquired, the substitute can engage the class in completing assignments and in meeting individual needs. This is what should happen every day, whether the day is ideal or average, and even when the classroom adult is the substitute. (p. 404)

Bletzer goes on to explain in his study, with participants including substitute teachers students in all grades from an urban large central school and a populated suburban school in the same city, the substitute teachers are studying how to use strategies to better function as a substitute teacher. The results of this study apply to my study because I also substitute in suburban schools, but the way that the districts are laid out, there are students coming from urban households. After Bletzer practiced using the above mentioned strategies, the teachers being studied were able to learn through their experiences and became closer with other faculty members of the school district. Even as professionals, perfect days are extremely hard to come by, but by having a proper substitute teacher program in the school districts, substitute teachers may be more prepared for their work. I think that having a proper training program, no matter how qualified

you feel you are, and even if you are a certified teacher, should be required in all school districts, if only to go over different protocols.

### **Methods of Improvement**

Whether you are a substitute teacher, or have been a classroom teacher for thirty plus years there is always room for improvement. There can be improvements whether it is in teacher delivery, lesson plans, or use of technology. According to Shelly Hudson Bowden (2014) there are many different practices that a classroom teacher can use to help a substitute teacher when coming into a new classroom such as creating a lesson plan folder, making sure the students have name tags on their desks, preparing students for a substitute teacher, giving them computer do's and don'ts, having a "thanks for being here" questionnaire, and providing a phone number. If the regular teacher does these few things to prepare for a substitute, the day will go much smoother for the students as well as for the substitute. Something else that might help is having emergency substitute plans for days the teacher does not plan on being out. Most classrooms that I have subbed in have used these practices which have made the day go smoother.

Some school districts have gone as far as to have a systematic feedback for their substitute teachers. In 2014, Richardson, Kalvaitus and Delparte explain how substitute teachers are interviewed and observed by other teachers in order for the substitute teachers to receive feedback. Within this study the participants included Adventure Educators and their students working in an outdoor park in British Columbia, Canada. They studied how the use of focus group interviews enabled educators to reflect on student feedback to improve their teaching in subsequent courses. With these methods, the substitute teachers were given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, accept constructive criticism and receive praise. Richardson, et. al. give the examples of using focus group interviews to enable educators to reflect on feedback

received by the students to use to reflect on the educator's teaching performance, and look for means of improvement. It is also suggested that by creating group opportunities for educators to share their teaching experiences in order to assist with instructional improvement, staff morale will increase, and a sense of professionalism will be implanted. When the substitute teacher receives his/her feedback, mistakes can be corrected, and any praise can be accepted. The results of Richardson, et.al. included comments from focus group interviews which indicated that instructors perceived that the evaluation, feedback, and reflection processes helped the instructors to improve upon their teaching skills. From this study the teachers were also able to become more comfortable with focus group interviews and liked seeing the feedback from students. The teacher then went on to report that they had a higher degree of satisfaction with the feedback and reflection process. Currently some schools in different countries have different forms of teacher evaluations. Looney (2011) explained how there are evaluations such as student ratings of teacher performance, teacher appraisal, which are formal performance reviews, teacher peer evaluation, teachers working in the same subject area who may observe their peers and offer feedback and suggestions for improvement, school evaluations (external and internal). External evaluations are conducted by an individual or team who are not part of the school staff. Internal evaluations are conducted by the project or the school staff. Looney also suggests that with the different forms of teacher evaluations, a focus is put on individual teaching performance in the classroom, the school context and student outcomes.

### **Effective versus Non-Effective Teachers**

An effective teacher must possess many different qualities. Teachers who have gone through proper training programs and are prepared with appropriate certifications should be considered to be effective teachers, especially in today's society particularly New York State,

where it is extremely difficult to get a teaching position. However teachers in some schools are still considered to be ineffective. School districts want effective teachers for the sake of their students; they want their students to succeed. The question is what does an effective teacher look like. Anderson, Standerford, and Imdieke (2010) describe an effective teacher as committed to students and their growth, knowledge of the subject matter, effective management of the students and the learning process, systematic thinking and reflection about the practice and membership in the learning community. If a teacher candidate is just starting out working as a substitute teacher, he/she will have time to rehearse these practices in order to become an effective teacher. An example of an ineffective teacher looks like someone who has trouble with discipline and control of the classroom, who has inadequate or missing lesson plans, does not know where materials are, and does not know all of the staff with whom they are working (Dendwick, 1993). Damianos (1998) explains that a teacher is also considered to be ineffective if he/she is not involved in extra-curricular activities, in school assemblies, as well as, all of the little things that make school enjoyable for the students.

There are several factors for a substitute teacher to be considered an effective substitute. A study was completed a few years back (Fielder, 1991) describes substitute teacher effectiveness based on scores they received on the five point Likert Scale. An effective substitute teacher must score a five in all categories on two or more separate evaluations, an ineffective substitute teacher had to score no higher than two on the majority of rated areas on two or more separate evaluations. Fielder also stated that a set of positive behavioral traits can distinguish an effective substitute from an ineffective substitute. Traits such as movement/monitoring behaviors, on-task concern, physical touch, behavior expectation statements, personalizing, discipline, or positive reinforcement that are displayed, the greater the



likelihood that the substitute teacher will be effective. Fielder then explains that a set of positive personality traits can distinguish an effective substitute teacher from an ineffective substitute teacher. For example, dramaturgy (the positive verbal give and take between the substitute and the student), organization, adaptability, quick impression management, business like general demeanor, adult interpersonal skills, love, understanding, caring of children, humor, and internal motivation. If a substitute teacher can show a majority of these traits, the more likely they are to be considered effective. A substitute teacher can possess certain personality characteristics that can make them seem to be an ineffective teacher. For example if the substitute teacher is unable to explain failure, denies ineffective experiences, blames others for failure and practices self-aggrandizement (Fielder), he/she would be considered an ineffective teacher. Fielder also goes on to explain that a large indicator of how effective a substitute teacher is going to be is related to his/her college training. Finally, Fielder explains that certain teachers seem to create a classroom environment in which most substitute teachers can be effective, whereas some teachers create the opposite environment. The effective environment consists of the regular teacher being highly organized, having established expectations of appropriate student behavior, and having established a set classroom routines. After reading through Fielder's article and reviewing his study with participants from a suburban/inner-city south eastern school with a population of about 5,000 students equally split among all socioeconomic status levels and their parents, looking to figure out how a substitute teacher can teach their students effectively, it seems almost obvious to decipher an effective substitute teacher from an ineffective substitute teacher through the results found as previously mentioned. Effective teachers know how to discipline their students when it is necessary. After years of practice teachers learn the best way students respond to poor choices, and therefore discipline of these students is managed

appropriately. According to, Souter (2001) a student might benefit from In School Suspension, Out of School Suspension or possibly expulsion. Other students may best respond by speaking with a teacher or principal about poor behavior demonstrated. Teachers may request that such students visit the school psychologist to ascertain the cause of the inappropriate behavior. The results of this study are relevant to my study because, many times I have seen the regular classroom teacher display characteristics of an ineffective teacher. I have also noticed a few characteristics of an ineffective teacher in my own teaching. This is something that I am going to work towards correcting so that I can be considered without question, to be an effective teacher.

### **Summary**

After reviewing all relevant literature to the topic chosen, I have found many interesting facts about substitute teaching. Many different resources for information about substitute teaching in general as well as about teacher preparedness and training programs, methods of improvement as well as information about effective teachers and ineffective teachers can be found through research. Through my research, I have found many different teacher training programs discussed throughout the literature. The teacher training programs are put in place so that substitute teachers can be better prepared for what they might come in contact with. A substitute teacher can improve upon many different practices. After reading through the literature I was also able to learn how to determine whether a teacher is considered to be effective or ineffective in the way lessons are presented. The more practice you have at being a substitute teacher, theoretically the more effective your teaching will become.

### **Section 3: Methods and Procedures**

#### **Participants**

Since this was a self-study, I was the only person participating in this study. The information was based on my classroom experiences.

#### **Setting**

My study took place over the course of the Fall 2014 semester in nine different schools in Western New York. I have worked as a substitute in two different school districts, grades Kindergarten through sixth. Some of the schools are considered to be academically “high need,” where there are students who are consistently performing below grade level. Also, three of the schools include students where the majority of the students come from families who are below the poverty level.

#### **Positionality as the Researcher**

This research project was conducted by myself only. I am a 25-year-old Caucasian female currently living in Western New York. Before I began the quest of earning my Master’s Degree in Childhood Literacy, I gained an Associate’s Degree in Liberal Arts, along with a certification as a Teacher Assistant. I later went on to complete course work to gain my Bachelor’s of Science Degree in History as well as earning Certification in Childhood Education (grades 1-6). I have gone on to earn other certifications as well which include Early Childhood Education (birth-grade 2), Students with Disabilities (grades 1-6), and Early Childhood Education Students with Disabilities (birth-grade 2). By earning all of these certifications I am hoping with the skills I have acquired with these certifications that I am more well-rounded therefore making myself more marketable while looking for employment.

Since attaining these certifications I have been working as a substitute teacher in two different school districts, and have subbed in nine different schools. My current role is called per diem Substitute teacher. I receive an automated phone call telling me where my next job assignment is going to be. Every morning I travel to the school that I am going to be working at and sign in at the office and receive a name badge, and then proceed to the classroom that I am scheduled to work in. I have substituted for teachers in every grade, Kindergarten through sixth grade, which I am certified in. Currently this is my third year working as a substitute teacher.

### **Criteria for Trustworthiness**

Throughout the course of this study, I used several factors to show that my work is both valid and trustworthy. I used Prolonged Engagement by collecting data every day that I substituted for six weeks. I also used Persistent Observation on a daily basis; I was able to see what methods and practices I performed proficiently as well as what I could improve upon. Triangulation was another practice I used. Observation, journaling, and filling out a questionnaire each day that I substitute taught were used as well. Finally I used Conformability; I showed examples of all of the data that I collected, as well as my results, so the outcomes of the study are considered to be valid.

### **Methods for Data Collection and Analysis/Procedures**

I collected data for my study by filling out a questionnaire (See Appendix 1), journaling and making observations every day that I substitute taught. I have recorded all of the days that I substitute taught and the grade levels (See Appendix 2). I have analyzed my data by reading through all of my observations to note similar trends, and searched for ways that I related to items that I found through my research. I looked for ways that I could improve my teaching methods to make myself a more effective teacher and to prepare for a classroom of my own.

I self-generated the questionnaire. I thought about questions that I felt were important to answer and answered the same questions each day for comparison purposes. This activity ensured that all my experiences throughout the day, each day, were collected in one place. In writing down my observations, experiences and results of my actions each day, I showed what I have excelled at during the day, where I failed, how I handled certain situations, what I could have done instead of or differently, and any modifications or omissions I made to the classroom teacher's lesson plans.

I sat down with my journal for ten minutes at the end of the school day and wrote down the details of what went on throughout the day. I wrote down behavior issues, notes about the classroom teacher's lesson plans, why I changed something or did something differently, and my overall thoughts and feelings about the day.

Many times throughout the school day I observed my own behaviors, which I also recorded in my journal. I saw if there was a method I used that was not working, with regard to the responses to my teaching, or if there were any discipline problems not being controlled by me. I was able to see what methods were going well, and I noticed my confidence level increasing the more that I substitute taught. I collected data for at least 21 days in six weeks of substitute teaching and then analyzed the data that I collected and looked for methods of improvement.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The only way I will be able to determine my effectiveness as a teacher is by the analysis of my own notes. The entire study was based on my observations, and my opinions and personal critiques about myself. I did not have any professional observations by teachers or administrators.

A limitation of my study was the fact that three of the schools I substitute in are considered high need schools, where the majority of the students perform at a lower level. This limits my study because I will not have a beneficial amount of experience working with enriched students. A further limit to my study is the short time that it is being conducted, six weeks is a very short amount of time to show growth in my teaching. Also limiting my study is the fact that I am not always allowed access to certain documents, for example students personal information, so I might not always know which students need extra support and how I could best help them. An additional limit to my study is the lack of research about substitute teaching. I have had to go all the way back to the year 1991 to find articles about certain topics. This has been difficult because without more current information, it is challenging to determine whether or not certain methods or ideas are still valid today.

## **Section 4: Findings and Results**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to analyze how I, as a substitute teacher, could take a step back and look at my own teaching methods. Additionally, I explored how I could incorporate all of the different teaching methods I have learned through my years of schooling. I conducted the study with the intention of being able to use the newly gathered data to reflect and improve upon my own teachings as a substitute teacher and to influence my future work as a classroom teacher. The data for the study originated from my six weeks as a substitute teacher in two different suburban elementary schools districts located in western New York. In order to reflect on my teaching, I self-generated a list of questions to answer at the end of every day that I substitute taught. I also wrote in a journal for ten minutes at the end of the day to list my observations throughout the day and describe my experiences for the day. Using these methods for data collection helped me to look for areas where I have used appropriate teaching methods as well as areas where improvement in my teaching methods would benefit. After my data collection I used different color makers to find common trends in my data so I could more easily analyze my findings. To do this I went through my journal as well as my questionnaire and looked to see if I answered my questions similarly or identically.

I found several situations within my observations throughout my data collection period that had to be further analyzed due to patterns that had formed. These patterns included Language/Vocabulary, Communication, Instructional Decisions, Comfort Level/Confidence, and Types of Behaviors.

**Language/Vocabulary**

An example of the new methods that I have learned through my research includes language as well as appropriate vocabulary to use with the students. For example I have learned when it is appropriate to joke around with the students and when to use my professional teacher voice. These are all situations that I have run into throughout my data collection period. I have found in my research, that it is important to let the students know what I will and will not tolerate throughout the school day (Gresham, et. al.), every day that I substitute teach. I start the day by introducing myself, and talk to the students about my expectations for the day. This seemed to work well with the younger students; however the older students tended to disregard the message.

Something else I have come to realize is that my teacher voice is different when I am working with kindergarteners than it is when I am working with fifth graders. When I work with the younger students my voice is more sweet and calming, however when I am working with the older students my voice is rather strict and firm. I change my teacher voice depending on the grade level I am working with to better keep the attention of the students. From my experience if I raise my voice to the younger students, I might frighten them, whereas if I talk to the older students in a calm soothing voice they may not take me seriously. This is something I learned by observing the way other teachers interact with their students. As a result of my data I feel as though I was able to use appropriate language with the students I worked with.

**Communication**

This is my third year of working as a substitute teacher and I feel as though I have come a long way since I have started, but according to the data from my questionnaires and the notes in my journal I analyzed, I found there are still ways I can improve my teaching. For example, I



realized that I should preview smartboard lessons before teaching them, make sure I notify the office if a student comes in tardy after I have marked them absent, and if I am unsure of which action to take in a situation, to always ask someone. Learning how to communicate with a teacher, parent/guardian, and principal about a behavior issue with a student, as well as when it is appropriate for me to contact them is an important skill to master. I have also learned when there is a situation occurring due to a behavioral problem from a student, when it is appropriate to leave the teacher a note versus contacting the principal along with sending a note to the teacher. Because this is my third year working as a substitute teacher, I have subbed for many of the teachers in both of the school districts that I work in, thus I am familiar with many of their disciplinary methods. I am also familiar with many of the students, for example, which of the students are good helpers and which of the students are normally the students who may need some extra attention. Therefore, I know how to deal with the student's actions or choices. However during my data collection, I was given the opportunity to substitute for teachers that I had not previously subbed for and students who I have not yet had in class before. This situation resulted in my ability to practice some of the methods that I came across in my research.

Lesson plans can be very easy to read, and sometimes they can be very confusing. I spend an average of about ten to fifteen minutes daily looking at the lesson plans for the day. Some days I spend a longer amount of time looking over the lesson plans than other days. In my experience, during my data collection period the regular classroom teacher has been present to explain his/her plans for the day, to show me exactly where the materials are located and how to go through the morning routine on the smartboard. It is helpful when the regular classroom teacher comes to school in the morning on the day I have been asked to substitute to explain what is to be done for the day, specifically go over the math lesson, and to show me what is to be

accomplished during the guided reading groups. The teacher is able to answer any questions that I have when I am unsure about something.

As the day goes on and I am teaching, I read through the lesson plans and sometimes make notes on these lesson plans in the margins for my own reference and for the regular teacher so any changes can be seen in how I taught the materials to the students. I think these notes are helpful so the teacher can see if I left anything out, if I went a little bit farther than expected, and how I went about introducing the material to the students. Writing a note to the teacher at the end of the day is a practice I feel I do well when I substitute teach.

Similar to what I have previously mentioned there have been some instances, where I have been unsure of what to do, or how to handle a situation. According to Souter (2001) through years of experience, teachers have to learn which type of punishment works best for each student, whether it be verbal communication (talking to the student about poor behavior), removing a student from the class permanently or temporarily, or possibly scheduling a visit to the school psychologist to figure out the root of the student's behavior problems. Through my experience while substitute teaching I think it would be important for teachers to add the information regarding how students respond to punishment, to the lesson plans. I need to work on learning when I have to contact the principal, when I should write a note home to the student's parent/guardian, when it would be best to just simply talk to the student about his/her actions, or if I should write the regular classroom teacher a note about the behaviors shown throughout the day. There were several instances where a student had made a poor choice or made an inappropriate comment where I have not been sure what to do. I have tried to handle these situations on my own, without going to the principal, thinking that they might not think I was doing a good job or not qualified as a teacher and could not handle the students.

Unfortunately, sometimes this lack of using the proper authority was not the best solution. I have learned if I am not sure how to handle a situation I document everything for the classroom teacher, I then talk to another teacher, and then possibly the principal if that is suggested. This is something I have learned to do through my personal experience rather than just trying to take care of it myself. I am not afraid of asking questions when I am unsure about how to handle something anymore, and many times the same problem arises that I have experienced before which leads me to leaving a detailed note for the regular teacher, or if the need to handle the situation is immediate, I will speak with another teacher. But, if it is a situation that I know the method for which it was handled previously, I will handle it myself.

One example of me not being sure how to handle a situation was at school FB on October 14, 2014, in a fourth grade classroom. Two students asked if they could talk to me in private about an issue. They led me to the hallway and explained to me that another student was making inappropriate comments about me, and my response to them was that the student had an active imagination. I was unsure of how to handle the situation, I was unsure if I should speak the student directly, write a note home, or leave the regular classroom teacher a note. I ended up leaving the regular teacher a note and then after the students had been dismissed I asked another teacher what I should do and she told me to talk to the principal and let him handle the situation. Poor behavior is not the only classroom management issue I have come across, time management is another issue.

### **Instructional Decisions**

When I am substitute teaching, many times throughout the day I have to make my own decisions about the lessons. Even though other teachers are willing to help, I am practicing making decisions as if this were my own classroom.

Something else that I learned through my research is when it is appropriate to keep going with a lesson or to move on. For example if I am teaching a math lesson and the teacher only allots an hour for math instruction, and the students are a bit confused over the new material, I have learned that it is appropriate to keep going with math for longer than the scheduled time. Also, if the teacher schedules another activity and all of the students finish before the scheduled amount of time it is appropriate to finish early, or to move on to the next activity even if it is not yet time for it.

As a result of being a substitute teacher I often find that the teachers for whom I am subbing leave me a lot of busy work to do as well as work from other teachers. This includes making copies, laminating, correcting papers, taking bus duty shifts, or breakfast duty shifts. This is all part of being a teacher, but sometimes I feel it is unfair that I am subbing for one teacher but other teachers give me piles of papers to go through when it is supposed to be my break. Usually doing these types of errands for the teacher does not bother me and it is good practice for when I have a classroom of my own, but a lot of the times the copying is for other teachers' classrooms which made me feel like they were using me to do busy work during the day. However, I know that most of the schools that I work in have parent volunteers who come in to assist with these preparations for class. If parents do not come in, unfortunately this is something that is expected of the substitutes. Although I am trying to be a team player, I find when I have all of these extra tasks to complete it is not the best use of my time as I spend it worried about how to use the copy machine or if there is a long line will I be able to finish, and what if I am late to pick up the students. I would be more comfortable if I used this time to review the technology aspect of the lessons I have been assigned to teach. After I finish the extra work I always receive praise and thanks for doing it so I do not feel as taken advantage of.

From my experience working as a substitute teacher, I have learned that it is very difficult to modify the lesson plans. I do not know every single student in every building that I substitute in; therefore I do not always know which students may need extra help. Also, I am not always sure if the regular teacher would be against me making modifications to their lesson plans left for me. For the most part the only modifications that I was able to make were the amount of time spent on certain activities. Sometimes the students finished a little bit sooner than expected, and sometimes the students need some extra time to complete a task. There were, however some items in the teachers lesson plan that I had chosen to omit, only after the regular classroom teacher had agreed with me. Items that I chose to omit for the most part were extra read alouds, as well as extra activities to fill in the time, which through my research I learned was the correct part of the lesson to omit.

There were several occasions where I think that modifications would help the students, but unfortunately with math, English Language Arts (ELA) and even science, the lesson plans are for the most part scripted for the substitute teacher through the Common Core Modules and they already have modifications written for teachers to show the students. The way the lessons are written leaves limited room for creativity. This is especially true for students in older grades. When I am working as a substitute teacher, I try to follow the lesson plans exactly as the teacher writes them because I know that is what the teacher wants done that day.

When I am reading through the teacher's manual for math, it shows exactly what the teacher should say and then possible responses from the students, and then it goes on to display a different method to get the correct answer. This is very helpful, but there is a flexibility aspect for the teacher to be creative and show the material in a different way. When I teach ELA I follow the Common Core Module, which outlines everything I am supposed to be teaching on

that day. The module shows exactly which pages to read that day, which vocabulary words to look at with the students and step-by-step activities. When I teach science the lessons are also labeled by day and all of the materials come in a kit. Everything is ready for the students to use along with the lesson and step-by-step directions as to how to complete the lab are spelled out. The teacher's manual is structured similarly because it shows which vocabulary words to pre-teach along with ways to activate background knowledge. It also provides a script of what the teacher should say. Unfortunately these activities, math, ELA and science cannot be omitted during the day. They are specific area content pieces. I remember when I was in elementary school, if we did not get to any one subject during the allotted time in the regular school day that subject got pushed off to the next day. This is not the case any longer; teachers must plan to incorporate all of these activities into the school day. Most of the time I do not omit anything from the teacher's lesson plans because I understand that they want me to cover these specific tasks with their students, so it is my responsibility to be sure that I transition from subject to subject in the appropriate amount of time scheduled for each.

Some days when I have gone into the classroom, the teacher has left very limited plans that do not specify exactly what needs to be done. For example, one teacher left plans that read to complete next math lesson, do a read aloud, do a free write, read to self, and then do the next science lesson. As a result of this note I was able to use what I learned through my research (Gresham, et. al.), following the lesson plan but using my own ideas and creativity to teach the students. Sometimes when I have been called in to substitute last minute, the teacher next door showed me the teacher's plan book and told me to go by that. There was another occasion where I have gone into the classroom and there were no lesson plans left and no teacher plan book present. This occurred on October 21, 2014, in a third and fourth grade special education

classroom. When I looked around the classroom I started to panic, but I learned that those particular grade level teachers were in a faculty meeting that morning and that the teacher would stop down after the meeting. I had subbed for that particular teacher a few times previously and I knew the routine of the classroom so that made things a bit easier which was good for both myself and the students, because the teacher did not come back from the meeting until about ten minutes before the students began to arrive. I sometimes get nervous when I go into a classroom where from experience, I knew that the teacher does not write very detailed lesson plans. It is necessary then for me know I have to get to school earlier so I can read through all of the lesson plans and decipher the meanings, find all of the necessary materials for the day, make the copies needed for the day and then find another teacher who can answer all of my questions when clarity is required. Something that I feel I have done well is when substituting in a special education classroom, I am able to read students Individualized Education Plan's (IEP's) when the regular classroom teacher gives me access to them. This is usually when I have to administer a test, because I have to be able to follow testing modifications for the students.

On October 1, 2014, I subbed in a fourth and fifth grade special education classroom at LB school, and had to administer a test to the fourth grade students. Following testing modifications is extremely important because if the teacher does not follow the modifications for the student according to the specific IEP for that student, then the modifications will get taken away. This was good practice for me because when I have a classroom of my own this is something I will have to do every time that there is a test to be given.

On September 26, 2014, I subbed in a sixth grade science classroom, which is a middle school setting, so I had different students every sixty minutes. The teacher had to write only one set of plans which included procedures that had to be explained five different times that day. I

did not even have to teach because the students were doing independent lab work. The Consultant Teacher led the first period class and then let me take the lead for the remainder of the day. The lesson plans were easy to read and all of the lab materials were already set up, however, as a result, I found this day a bit boring because I was doing the same thing over and over again. This is good practice though because my teaching certification goes up to sixth grade so I could possibly one day get a job teaching sixth grade where I teach the same material over and over again all day long. Even though I would be teaching the same lesson over and over again throughout the day, I would have to modify it for different classes and for different students. Even though the teacher did not write down specific modifications to differentiate the lesson from class to class, I was able to determine by observation which students needed extra support, or simplified directions.

On another occasion I was subbing at school LB on October 20, 2014, in a special education classroom which had fourth and fifth graders. This classroom had a regular teacher and also an aide. When the class needs to be split into grade levels, the classroom teacher works with the fifth graders and the aide works with the fourth graders and then they switch places halfway through the lesson. However, the day that I subbed in this classroom the aide took a half day without prior notice and the school could not get a substitute for her on such short notice so I was going to be on my own for the remainder of the school day. I was not sure what to do because when the class was split into grade levels they were doing completely different lessons. I decided I would give the fifth graders directions and have them start out working independently while I started the lesson with the fourth graders and then would switch places. This did not work out very well, because without a teacher sitting with the groups they were completely off task (talking, throwing pencils, and drawing). After school I talked to the teacher about what had



happened, and she told me how difficult that must have been, and that if something like that happened again, scratch the plans that were left and have the students do a whole group activity such as Scholastic News (a magazine with kid friendly news stories), or have them go on the computer and log into Raz-Kids (an online reading program, that allows students to read books and answer questions based on their current reading levels). From this situation, I learned that again it is appropriate to change the lesson plans the teacher leaves, depending on the circumstances.

I am usually pretty proficient on the smartboard, however one day when I subbed in a classroom for the first time (October 22, 2014, in a fifth grade special education classroom), and when it came time for science, I was a bit unsure of how to show the particular smartboard lesson because I was unfamiliar with the program that the teacher used. As I was teaching the lesson I stumbled my way through the beginning lesson, and by the last few slides, I figured it out. What I should have done was tried to figure out the program ahead of time, rather than taking a personal break, while the students were at lunch or while they were at specials. Now that I have had this little problem I have learned from my mistake and I know not to make it again. I will always preview all of the smartboard lessons even if I feel that I know the program pretty proficiently. From this point on whenever I substitute and there is a technology aspect in any part of the lesson I always preview it first, even if it is something as simple as showing a movie, I always make sure that it loads and plays while I have free time.

In both of the school districts that I substitute teach in, the schools offer a breakfast program for the students to participate in, which means students often come into the classroom late. Some teachers allow these students to bring breakfast back to the classroom to eat, while others do not allow breakfast in the classroom due to allergies, risk of making a mess, or that the

students take their time eating and do not finish their morning work. There are quite a few students who take a shuttle bus to school, (they go to a different school than their address would suggest), and therefore they are usually late to arrive to school. I have not realized this on some occasions and have sent the attendance records and lunch selections down to the main office marking students absent when really they come in tardy due to breakfast or the arrival time of the students' buses. Because there are students who come in late often, they do not have to sign in at the office when they arrive. If the student arrives after lunch count and attendance has already been taken care of, I learned that I have to make sure I contact the office to relay this information. There have been occasions where I have not contacted the office and they see that the students have been marked absent so they call home and then the parents are wondering where their children are.

### **Comfort Level/Confidence**

Something that I have found within my data is that it is difficult to find the appropriate balance between being a strict teacher who screams and yells all day long, and being a teacher the students come to hate, versus acting as the student's friend. Classroom management has always been a bit of a struggle for me. Especially when I first starting working as a substitute teacher. I have been at the very end of both sides of the scale and after looking at my data collection, I can see how I can be more successful in finding a balance. Mastering which action to take in certain situations, i.e. poor behavior, technology problems, as well as lack of materials will bolster my confidence and therefore raise my comfort level.

There have been some instances I have found where I have been unsure of what to do with regard to the student's behavior or with something the teacher has asked me to do. When I substitute for the same teacher more than once I have found that I have become more familiar

with their disciplinary methods and can have a more productive day with the students because then we do not have to spend a portion of the day figuring out how their regular teacher would handle certain situations. Through all of my research and findings I have learned many new methods that I can use in the classroom to show what I have learned.

As a result of coming in as the substitute teacher I am at a disadvantage because for the most part, I do not know every single student, and I do not know every single regular classroom teachers behavioral expectations. For the majority of the classrooms, they use a clip up or clip down method where students move their clips up for making good choices, and down for poor choices. I am pretty familiar with this system. The easiest solution to this problem was moving their clips down for talking too much and moving clips up for staying on task. Once the students see their peers moving their clips up they seem to follow their example. In some instances I have been uncomfortable using this system because I do not know how strict the teacher is. For example does the regular teacher move clips every time a student makes a sound, or do they get another chance to change their behavior? Again, without knowing the students, or knowing which students have individual behavior plans it is difficult to maintain this system. Some students may get disciplined differently than other students and when I ask them to move their clip down, they do not agree and continue to act up. Also in some instances where students who normally are well behaved get asked to move their clips down and they have a meltdown about the situation and say that it is not fair and obsessively talk about it. My solution to this situation has been to clearly inform the students at the onset of the day that I do not know how their regular teacher uses this tool and then I explain what behavior is expected and what situations will lead me to raise or lower their clips. This action plan has worked for me the majority of the times that I have used it.

Every day that I substitute I try to look for things I have done well throughout the school day and list them in my daily journal. When I am able to get through all of the material that the teacher has left for me, I feel a higher sense of confidence in myself. I feel confident when I can get through the day without any behavior problems, when I get through everything that the teacher had left me but more importantly, when after I teach a lesson I can see that all of the students understood the material especially if the student was struggling with a concept previously. Through my research I have learned several different methods that I as a substitute teacher, should practice throughout the day to keep the day more positive rather than negative. For example I always arrive to the school where I am substituting early or on time. As a result of arriving on time I have sufficient time to look over the lesson plans, find all required materials and make necessary copies. I also use the proper teacher voice for the appropriate grade level that I am working with for the day. If I am confused by the regular teacher's notes, I ask questions of the other grade level teachers which usually helps clear up my confusion (Bowden 2014).

### **Types of Behaviors**

I have seen many different types of behaviors from the students whom I have subbed for since I began collecting data for my project. These different types of behaviors include positive as well as negative. Students know when they should be acting appropriately, and many times they act up because there is a substitute in the room for the day and think they can get away with anything. When I would stop to ask the students if they treat their regular teacher in that manner they always respond that they would not. When I go on to ask why they are acting the way that they are I always get the same answer, it's because their regular teacher is not there. When I get this response from the students I have to use the information that I have learned in my research

along with my classroom experience to show how I am their teacher for the day and they need to respect me.

The most common negative behavior that I have encountered is talking at an inappropriate time. For example an inappropriate time would be considered, while I am teaching, while the students are doing independent work, while the students are taking a test or quiz, while the students should be reading to self or when the students should be listening to a response from their peer. Other negative behaviors include, making inappropriate comments, not keeping hands to self, tattling and not following assigned directions. Positive behaviors include raising hands when the students want to say something or ask a question, sitting quietly and listening attentively, being respectful, and keeping voice level at an appropriate level. When negative behaviors are displayed, it is my responsibility to discipline the students appropriately. When positive behavior is displayed by the students, then the students should receive praise.

After reviewing the data that I collected and looking at the big picture I saw that the most common trend for classroom management was the need to discourage students from talking at inappropriate times. However students contributed many other types of negative behavior for example, hitting each other, sticking their tongue out at me or other classmates and throwing their supplies around the classroom. Through research I have learned that the most effective way to promote positive talk from the students rather than having unrelated conversation is to keep them engaged in the lesson (Fernley, 2011). This is something that takes practice by the teacher. If teachers are unable to maintain students attention and keep the students motivated to learn during the instructional time, and learning will not take place, no matter how wonderful the lesson plans are. Indeed, when a teacher spends too much time helping students eliminate

inappropriate behaviors, it will ultimately decrease instructional time and obviously reduce the learning opportunities of all the students (Fernley).

An example of a student making a poor choice was on September 24, 2014. It was a kindergarten class at school LB. The student decided to uncap his glue stick and twist it all the way to the top and he then proceeded to stick his scissors inside of the glue and smash it, making a big mess. As a result of his poor choice I took the glue stick and scissors away from him and asked him if he thought it was appropriate to be doing what he was doing and when he did not answer, I asked him again. In a pouting voice he said no, so I asked him to move his clip down, wash his hands and then clean up his desk. At the end of the day I wrote the classroom teacher a very lengthy note about the issue and told the teacher the actions that I took to handle the incident.

Another instance where there were a few students who were not following directions was on September 26, 2014, at school MS. This was a group of sixth graders who instead of doing their assigned labs, saw that there was a substitute teacher and thought they could get away with anything they wanted to do. After about 20 minutes of asking and asking and then moving on to yelling while watching the students roll their eyes at me, I decided that it was time to ask for some help. I asked one of the students who was behaving, to walk across the hallway to ask the principal if she would mind stepping in and assisting me. This resulted in the principal coming in to talk to the students. She told them they had better change the way they were behaving, and from that moment on, if I wrote down any names it would result in detention with the principal. After she left the students begged me not to write down their names so I responded to them by telling them that if they could prove they could behave for the rest of the class, I would not write their names down. However this only lasted for a few short minutes, so I wound up writing quite

a few names down. After these few instances i.e. talking out of turn, lack of respect, and poor choices the only classroom management problems I ran into (behavior wise), was that the students did more talking than working.

### **Summary**

Through my observations in my data collection period I was able to pull out several common themes and actions. Through these themes and actions I was able to pick out five important findings. Language/Vocabulary deals with the teachers' voice, whether it be calm or strict, as well as their vocabulary can vary from grade to grade. Communication I found to be an extremely important action for both the regular classroom teacher as well as the substitute teacher. Communication between the regular teacher and the substitute teacher is important so the substitute teacher knows exactly what to teach throughout the school day. Something else I discovered was that I had the authority to make Instructional Decisions while I was substitute teaching on a daily basis. I found that as the teacher for the day it was my responsibility to modify the lesson plan for appropriate reasons. My Comfort Level/Confidence is something that I have found I have showed great improvement in my substitute teaching. Finally I found that students exhibit many Different Types of Behaviors both positive and negative.

### **Section 5: Implications and Conclusions**

Throughout the entirety of this study I have come across new and important strategies that would improve my teaching methods. Substitute teaching is an important topic to study because substitute teaching is often perceived as an easy job that anyone can have. Peterson (1991) explained that substitute teaching is important to study because it explains how to become a substitute teacher, along with all of the work that it entails. My goal was to come up with ways to improve my teaching in order to be prepared for a classroom of my own. I was able to accomplish my goal through research, data collection and working as a substitute teacher in various classrooms and grade levels. I was able to take note of the opinions of other professional teachers as well as administrators in order to make improvements. As a result of this study I wanted to observe growth in myself as an educator through the data that I collected. With this research I learned that it is helpful for teachers and school personnel to remember that communication is an extremely important tool in the classroom. The regular classroom teacher needs to demonstrate communication with the substitute whether it be through lesson plans or calling the substitute the morning of the teacher's absence where improved communication between the regular teacher and the substitute teacher will increase comfort and confidence level for the substitute. The substitute will not have to make as many instructional decisions, and then be worried that the regular teacher will not approve. Also, with improved communication, the substitute will be more comfortable with the disciplinary actions of the regular teacher as well as using appropriate language and vocabulary with the students. Students are used to the classroom routine that their regular teacher enforces and sometimes have a difficult time when their routine is altered. Improved communication between the regular teacher and the substitute will help to keep the classroom routine and alleviate these difficulties.



Conversely, the substitute teacher is also responsible for communicating with the regular teacher. The substitute is responsible for leaving a note to tell the regular teacher what progress was made with the lesson, if there were any behavior issues, or if the substitute made any modifications to the teacher's lesson plans.

Having a substitute teacher training program would be effective in school districts (Purvis & Garvey, 1993). From personal experience my very first day as a substitute teacher was a bit nerve racking. I strongly feel that if there was a training program for substitute teachers to go through, the students, the teachers, as well as other school personnel would appreciate a prepared and confident substitute teacher coming to work at the school.

I completed this project solely on my own. I was never observed, I could only go by my own personal observations. Being observed by another teacher or possibly even a principal would have been extremely helpful in me reaching my goal of improving my teaching methods. Richardson, et.al. shows an example of how some substitute teachers were observed and how they received their feedback. I think it would be interesting to listen to student feedback of your teaching performance, to see what their thoughts about the day were. I like the idea of a survey or questionnaire for the students to fill out at the end of the day without writing their names on them so they can give their honest opinion of the substitute teacher's performance for the day. If the students were required to physically talk to the teacher, I do not think that they would be honest; they might be intimidated to give negative feedback to the substitute teacher. Other than student feedback, I also think that while working as a substitute teacher getting observed by another teacher or an administrator, would be effective feedback to have as well for when the substitute has a classroom of their own.

Even though it was a short amount of time, I have seen growth in myself and in my confidence. One of the biggest ideas I can take away from this study is the fact that no teacher is perfect, especially at first and it takes practice, where you live and learn through the process. The majority of the time other teachers are willing to help when needed even if it is as simple as answering a few simple questions.

### **Implications for Practice**

Familiarization with school technology equipment before school begins so substitute teachers do not have to figure it out for themselves would be appropriate. If a substitute had proper training on the different technology instruments in a school, they would be more successful in the classroom. In today's schools technology plays a big part in the school day and if a teacher is not proficient in any technological area, then their day will not run as smoothly.

I also believe that there should be a mandatory substitute teacher training session for all new substitute teachers to go through before they start subbing. Having a training session like this will help the substitute learn different procedures the school has about attendance, discipline, and routines. This is important because from personal experience coming into school without knowing certain procedures, can be embarrassing, and/or not in the best interest or safety of the students. By implementing this training session, both substitute teachers, along with regular classroom teachers will have a more relaxed, prepared and productive day.

I now know several ways to get the attention of the students, when it is appropriate to discipline students, what kind of behaviors should not be tolerated, and how to deal with certain behavioral issues. I can take everything I have learned and use it every day in the classroom. This is my third year working as a substitute teacher and every day I learn something new in and out of the classroom and add it to my experience and knowledge to be used again at a later time.

This task of studying my experiences has made me realize not only am I still extremely interested in teaching becoming my career, I am confident that I can succeed. While I will continue learning each day, I feel ready to take on a classroom of my own.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

School Name:

Date:

1. What grade level am I working with today?
  
2. What time did I arrive in the classroom?
  
3. How much time did I spend looking over the lesson plans the classroom teacher left for me?
  
4. What did I do when I was confused about the lesson plans?
  
5. Where other teachers willing to help?
  
- 6a. Did I follow the lesson plans exactly?

6b. What did I modify? Why?

6c. What did I omit? Why?

7a. Were there any behavioral issues?

7b. How did I resolve them?

8. What did I do well today?

9 What can I do differently next time?

10. On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate more performance today? Why?

## Appendix 2

## Days of Substitute Teaching

Date	School Code	Grade Level
September 23, 2014	WD	Math AIS, 2-5
September 24, 2014	LB	Kindergarten
September 25, 2014	WD	3
September 26, 2014	MS	6
September 29, 2014	LB	1
September 30, 2014	WD	Kindergarten
October 1, 2014	LB	3,4 Special Education
October 2, 2014	FB	Math AIS 2, 4, 5
October 3, 2014	WD	5
October 8, 2014	FB	4
October 9, 2014	WM	CT, K-5
October 14, 2014	MS	6
October 15, 2014	FB	3
October 17, 2014	LB	Kindergarten
October 20, 2014	LB	4/5 Special Education
October 21, 2014	NA	3/4 Special Education
October 22, 2014	WD	5 Special Education
October 23, 2014	FB	4
October 24, 2014	WD	5
October 27, 2014	FB	2
October 28, 2014	WD	5