

Substitute Teaching: The Unspoken Narrative

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Abstract

A survey sent out by the Regional Superintendents of Schools in Illinois (IARSS) found that in the 2016-2017 school year, at the halfway point, schools could not find substitutes for about six hundred classrooms per day (2017). Substitute teachers play a major role in the functioning of schools on a daily basis. In this autoethnography two themes emerged, isolation and expectations. Additionally, the researcher discusses policy and procedural solutions to the substitute teacher shortage.

Keywords: Substitute Teacher, School District, Teachers, Administrators

Substitute Teaching: The Unspoken Narrative

Substitute teachers are a valuable part of running a school; however, they often are overlooked when discussing school culture (Gershenson, 2012). In a recent news article it was stated that in Illinois “more than 3,000 teacher absences can’t be filled every school week due to a lack of substitutes in Illinois” (Shelley, 2017, para 1). This information was summarized from a press release by the Regional Superintendents of Schools, which stated that schools have to cover more than 16,500 teacher absences per week, but cannot find substitutes for 18 percent of those, which is about 600 classrooms per day (IARSS, 2017).

While these numbers may seem extreme, this shortage of substitutes is not unique to Illinois. Michigan is experiencing the same hardships attached to the substitute teacher shortage. They have even taken measures to post “help wanted” advertisements on billboards around the state. In response to this “the president of EDUStaff, which provides staffing, including substitute teachers, to more than 300 school districts,” Clark Galloway (Higgins, 2016, para 3) reported that throughout Michigan, the fill rate, which is the percentage of open positions, has actually declined about 10% from 2012 to 2016. Teachers and administrators argue, however, that there is still a need for substitute teachers and that school buildings are suffering. When substitute teachers are not found, students are placed in other classrooms creating classrooms with over thirty students; in some cases teachers who have other duties around the building (interventionists) are pulled from their job in order to cover a classroom without a teacher.

Illinois and Michigan feel the hardships of substitute teacher shortages, as well as many other states around the nation. When discussing substitute teachers, however, it is important to discuss the substitute teacher requirements in states around the nation. Each state has their own requirements, tests, recruitment and retention processes, as well as interview processes. For

example, in Alabama, a substitute teacher, at any grade level only needs a high school diploma and a negative tuberculosis (TB) test. The state of Arkansas does not have any state policy on requirements for substitute teachers, but some school districts have designed their own. In larger states, such as California, there are stricter licensing requirements for substitute teachers. Furthermore, on the NEA website (National Education Association), it notes that some states, such as Ohio, have illegal substitute teacher practices, which includes using an instructional aide as a substitute teacher (NEA, 2015).

Although news stations, newspapers, and education-based organizations are producing research and statistics in the 21st century that demonstrate the lack of substitute teachers, there is little research published on the skills, needs, and overall experience of substitute teachers nationwide. Most of the scholarship from the United States is from the 1990s and earlier. There are pieces of research from other countries; however, due to the vast differences in the education systems, the research is not applicable to the experiences in the United States.

While there are minimal research articles from the United States post-1990, there are two studies worth citing when discussing substitute teaching. In one study, Gershenson (2012), studied why substitute teachers may or may not accept a substitute-teaching job. He found that substitute teachers accepted jobs based on “arrival time, commute time, day of (the) week, classroom type, school type, and school quality” (p. 410). He also found that higher pay and long term subbing opportunities had a higher acceptance rate with most of the research participants.

Another researcher, Weems (2003), explored substitute teachers as professionals. Through her research, she studied substitute teacher characteristics, and developed a type of theoretical framework to use when researching the substitute teacher professional. In the article, the author describes three types of substitute teachers—“incompetent and unqualified, deviant

outsider, and guerilla superhero” (p. 254). The incompetent, unqualified substitute teacher is viewed as a babysitter while the teacher is absent. This type of substitute teacher has little, if any, training, certification, or experience. The deviant outsider substitute teacher is viewed as an outsider; some may even go so far as to characterize this substitute teacher as a second-class citizen. The final type of substitute teacher is the guerilla educator, as deemed by Weems (2003). This type of a substitute teacher stems from the portrayal of the hero, rescuer, and protector teacher often cast in movies. Substitute teachers who are viewed as the guerrilla educator “break away from traditional conventions of teaching to connect with and inspire students to reach their full potential” (p. 262). Overall, through her research, Weems (2003) developed a solid framework for how substitute teachers are perceived in school buildings.

Purpose

The scholarship focused on substitute teachers is stark and, in many instances, non-existence. Twenty or thirty years ago researchers stated in practitioner literature that substitute teachers were part of the problem, citing the lack of training, experience, and competence in the field (Booth, 1981; Deutchman, 1983; Shreeve, Nicely-Leach, Rogie Radebaugh, Morrill, & Slatton, 1983). Arguably, substitute teacher training and experience are still part of the issue in the field of education. However, recent rhetoric has focused on classroom teachers and somewhat ignored substitute teachers. Policies today are designed to demand quality education and professional development for teachers who are increasingly held accountable for student test scores. However, the qualifications for substitute teachers is still ignored. Substitute teachers around the country are often forgotten until the stark numbers of 600 empty classrooms in a given week is stated in the news.

Therefore, the researcher of this study designed a research project with the goal of understanding the substitute teacher shortage from the point of view of the substitute teacher. Additionally, the researcher aimed to address wider issues focused on education and substitute teachers, including state policies, federal policies, and school board mandates demanding teacher accountability, while forgetting about the substitute teacher workforce (Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010). The substitute teacher workforce that arguably ensures schools run on a day-to-day basis when teachers are absent for various reasons. However, research shows substitute teachers are lacking not only in number, but also in qualifications and preparedness. This is a needed area of research to make sure young students are receiving quality experiences and that substitute teachers are prepared for the struggles and joys of teaching students pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The purpose of this study was to provide first hand reflections of the substitute teacher experience. The methods, findings, and implications for this study will be discussed. Additionally the researcher advocates the need for policymakers, school board members, administrators, parents, and community members to show support for and pay attention to the substitute teacher workforce entering school buildings around the country.

Methods

This qualitative study was based on the researcher's first-hand experience as a substitute teacher. The researcher reflected on her personal experiences and questions while she was employed as a substitute teacher in one large school district in the Midwest. Since the researcher was conducting research on her own reflections and experiences, the specific type of qualitative research used was autoethnography. "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience(s)" (Ellis, Adams, &

Bochner, 2011, para 1) in order to understand experiences. It is a combination of an autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). The reflections and connections will be presented in the findings.

As a reminder, the purpose of the research study was to provide first hand reflections of the substitute teacher experience. The guiding research questions posed at the beginning of the study included three main overarching ideas.

1. What is the substitute teaching hiring process? How does this process influence the application and hiring process of quality individuals entering classrooms as substitute teachers?
2. How does the environment of the school influence the substitute teacher experience?
3. What implications can be made from the first-hand experience of applying for, being hired, and working as a substitute teacher?

It needs to be noted that throughout the methods, findings, discussion, and implications sections, the terms researcher and substitute teacher, in reference to the participant, will be used interchangeably.

The study took place in the state of Illinois. Therefore, before describing the methodology, the qualifications for substitute teaching in the state of Illinois need to be described. Generally, if an individual holds a bachelor's degree in any subject area from an accredited university, which is verified by submitting a transcript, a person is eligible to apply for student teaching in the state of Illinois. There are no experience or criminal background checks required by the state. However, individual districts have the choice to add more stringent requirements, if they deem it necessary.

In December of 2015, the researcher decided to become a substitute teacher in a large district in the state of Illinois. The total number of schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools, in the district totaled twenty-four. The demographics of the district, according to their annual report card, include 22.6% White students, 57.3% Black students, 9.7% Hispanic students, 8.1% of students indicated two or more races, and fractions of percentages represented Asian, American Indian, and Pacific Islander populations. Sixty-eight percent of the entire district was low income and 3% were homeless. The demographics of the teachers in the district included 88.2% White and 6.6% Black (www.illinoisreportcard.com).

The researcher applied through the online application process required by the district. The human resource individual responsible for hiring substitute teachers, along with other responsibilities, contacted the researcher through an email indicating the next steps in the substitute teacher hiring process. The next steps required by this district included a long list of requirements. Since the researcher was a licensed teacher in the state of Illinois, she needed to provide her license number. Additionally, she needed to be fingerprinted, agree to a background check, provide letters of recommendation, and travel to a facility for a drug test and TB test, which were paid by the district. Once these steps were completed, the researcher arranged a time to meet the human resource individual to finish the process at the district office.

When the researcher arrived at the district office at the agreed upon time, the human resource individual was in a meeting. The researcher waited approximately thirty to forty minutes and was finally greeted by the human resource individual. During the meeting the human resource individual opened up the file she had been keeping, which included all of the needed paperwork submitted by the researcher. The human resource individual made sure everything was in and took her picture for the district name badge. Once the picture was taken,

printed, and put in a lanyard, the human resource individual assigned the researcher a code for an online attendance system. The online system was the method the school district used for teachers to request a substitute teacher and for a substitute teacher to claim a job. The human resource individual instructed the researcher on how to use the system, asked if there were any questions, gave her the badge with her picture, and sent her on her way. Interestingly, there was never an official interview to ensure the researcher was of sound mind and understood the intricacies of leading a classroom. Nor were the individuals who wrote recommendation letters ever called to verify that the researcher was an ethical and trustworthy person.

Once the researcher left the district's main office, she was in the system to start substitute teaching. Over the course of one semester (approximately eighty-seven days), the researcher substitute taught twenty times in two different schools. The researcher chose to only substitute in prekindergarten through first grade classrooms. As a trained and experienced early childhood teacher, the researcher felt that entering a place of comfort (grades she had taught) would allow her to fully understand the outside factors of substitute teaching, rather than trying to understand a new grade level. Furthermore, when experiences arose that the researcher questioned, she would reach out to her own professional learning community to see if the experiences she had were normal. There were constraints on the researcher, who was also working fulltime as a professor. However, having the experience in various classrooms and school buildings provided a lens for the researcher to use when reflecting on the substitute teacher experience. The experiences and reflections of the researcher's time as a substitute teacher will be discussed in the findings.

Findings

The data of the researcher's experiences and reflections, in the form of writing, were analyzed using open coding. There were themes that emerged through this process. The researcher recognized, however, that experiences, thoughts, and perceptions are not generalizable, but purely based on personalities and past experiences. However, describing the overall themes of isolation and expectations add to the past scholarship and future needed scholarship on the topic of substitute teachers. The findings will be described in two intertwining ways. First, the findings will be discussed in relation to the two themes. Second, they will be discussed in relation to Weems (2003) three characterizations of substitute teachers. The three guiding researcher questions will also be addressed in the discussion and implications sections.

Isolation

The first theme that became apparent through the process of reflection and open coding was the fact that substitute teaching is very isolating. In both schools, the researcher checked in at the front office, signed in, went to her room, and read the substitute teacher plans left by the teacher. Occasionally another teacher would come by to see if the researcher needed anything at the beginning of the day and throughout the day. However, more often than not, no one came to make sure the researcher and the students were okay.

On her first day of substitute teaching, the researcher checked in and went to the kindergarten classroom where she would be subbing for the day. The students began entering and one teacher stopped by to see who was in the room for the day. The other teacher smiled and said, "Well, if you have any trouble with *student name* you just let me know and I will get him out as soon as possible." The researcher reflected, "What an ominous first thing to say to a substitute teacher."

The researcher patiently waited for the student the other teacher had warned her about at the beginning of the day. As soon as the student walked in the researcher understood why. The researcher, being a special education teacher for several years, knew immediately that he had to have an Individual Education Plan. The researcher later found out that he did not, but the process for the plan had been started. The student was essentially non-verbal and had a very difficult time with impulse control. Although the researcher understood how to approach and manage this student throughout the day, she also tried to put herself in the shoes of someone without an education background, without special education background, and without knowledge of what to do in a kindergarten classroom in general. What an overwhelming experience that would have to be. Interestingly, after the first visit from a teacher down the hall to warn the researcher about this student, no one else checked in on the student or the substitute teacher the rest of the day. In the teacher's lounge at lunchtime some of the other teachers said, "Oh, wow. How is *student name* today?" That however was the extent. It was an isolating feeling, especially since the student did not know the researcher when he walked into the classroom first thing in the morning.

Furthermore, the idea of isolation became apparent as the researcher continued to substitute teach throughout the semester. She realized that the principal of either school never came to check in on her, introduce themselves to her, or made sure the children were safe in the classroom. In all twenty times the researcher substitute taught, neither principal said anything to her, which created not only a feeling of isolation, but also one of being unwelcomed or unappreciated.

The researcher found this interesting, so she began to ask elementary school principals she knew through her professional learning community if they often introduce themselves to

substitute teachers. The overwhelming answer was no. However, one response stuck out. This principal said, “We have so many substitute teachers in and out through the year I would not remember if I had met them before or not. They are somewhat disposal because some can last and some can’t.”

Finally, a very clear moment of isolation occurred when the researcher substitute taught in a prekindergarten classroom for the lead teacher. The classroom had an aide, who created a very unwelcoming and isolating environment. The aide arrived late, after the students had already entered the room. This was problematic because the lead teacher did not leave any lesson plans. Throughout the day the aide did not give any instructions to the researcher as far as what was coming up next or what the researcher should be doing. In general, the aide spoke two sentences to the researcher over the course of the entire school day. At the end of the day, the aide told the researcher to take the students out to the bus, and the aide left. The researcher, not knowing the procedure of the buses, almost caused a handful of students to miss their bus due to the lack of communication. Overall, that experience was hard, demeaning, and displayed to the researcher how some people treat substitutes as babysitters who are underqualified and uneducated. What was more disturbing was that the aide never tried to get to know the researcher in the seven hours they spent together in a classroom with children.

The feeling of isolation, on the part of the researcher, supports the theoretical framework of Weems (2003) classifications of substitute teachers. During portions of the experience, the researcher felt like the incompetent and unqualified babysitter and at other portions throughout the experience, she felt like the deviant outsider or third class citizen. This was felt when the principal and/or other teachers in the building ignored the researcher by not checking in or welcoming the researcher. This unwillingness to welcome someone into your environment gave

off the impression of “you are only a warm body” in this classroom. The second-class citizen idea become obviously clear in the situation with the aide who did not communicate with the substitute teacher.

Expectations

The theme of expectations was discovered in two portions of the data. First, the researcher’s expectations of the hiring process and second the expectations placed on the substitute teacher throughout the teaching experience. The researcher described her shock and disbelief at how the hiring process went overall. There was never a legitimate interview or checking of references, other than the submitted letters. While the researcher did reflect that the experience might have been different if she was not already a licensed teacher, she later found out from other substitute teachers that her experience was normal.

Through this experience, as an educator and parent, the expectations and trust the researcher placed on the district to make sure the adults entering the classroom of young and old students was shattered. The researcher had held expectations of the hiring process and, other than the drug testing and criminal background checks, none of them were followed. There was never an interview. However, at any time if a school did not like the substitute teacher, after a day of teaching, they could retrospectively ban the substitute teacher from the building. Therefore, the district was reactive rather than proactive in the hiring and firing of substitute teachers.

Along with the expectations of the overall process, the researcher noted that the expectations of the substitute teaching experience were dependent on her past experience as an educator. When the researcher was a classroom teacher, she would go out of her way to make sure substitute teachers close to her classroom felt welcomed and knew how the day would go. When in the classroom as a full-time teacher, the researcher would introduce herself, answer any

questions, check-in, and be available for the substitute teacher. This was overwhelmingly lost in the experience the researcher had as a substitute teacher. The absence of planning, the unwelcoming school environment, and the lack of assistance was very apparent throughout the entire experience.

Second, the expectations and/or responsibilities placed on the researcher in the role of substitute teacher changed over the course of the semester. After building teachers realized the researcher was not another person in a babysitter role, but that the researcher was knowledgeable and trained in education, they began to treat her differently. At this point in the experience, the view of the researcher turned from one of deviant outsider to guerilla superhero. The teachers noticed that she was able to handle the “warned about” student, was able to hold a class together without yelling, and that students genuinely learned and liked her when she substitute taught.

One day, in a kindergarten classroom, there was a little boy who cried for the first hour or so of the day. The teachers came in one by one throughout the morning (never the principal) to say, “Oh yeah, he does this every time a substitute teacher comes.” They offered to take him out, but the researcher said, “No, it’s okay. I can handle it.” After hearing this somewhat empathetic response to the crying student several times, the researcher asked the other students in the classroom what usually happened when he cried with other substitutes. The students told her that he would get to go out and spend time with the gym teacher. That is exactly what the researcher suspected; he was sent to go have fun in the gym because he cried so much the substitute teacher could not take the noise or distraction. Therefore, the researcher walked over to the little boy and said,

I understand every time you have a substitute teacher you cry. Sometimes it can be very hard to have a new person in the classroom, I understand. However, I also understand

you usually get to go hang out in the gym. That is not going to happen today. You can cry if you are sad, that is okay, but as a student and friend in my classroom, you are going to stay. You can join all your friends having fun on the carpet when you are done crying. It is your choice.

Within five minutes of that conversation the crying ceased, the little boy joined the other students on the rug, and the day went on. When teachers continued to come in throughout the morning, they were shocked that he was in the classroom, calm, and participating with a substitute teacher. That is when the guerilla superhero characteristic came to fruition. After that day, the researcher had teachers at the school emailing her or catching her in the hall to ask if she could substitute for their class the next week or the next month.

This experience puzzled the researcher. However, upon further reflection she came to understand it from the perspective of the principal who stated that substitute teachers were a revolving door. Substitute teachers come through the school all the time, and most of the time the teachers witness substitute teachers who are not good with students, are underqualified, or are just a warm body. One teacher even said to the researcher, “Most of the subs I get do not even know how to turn on the CD player. I need you to come and sub when I am gone next week so I don’t have to come back to a bad note.” They had found a substitute teacher they could trust.

Overall, the two themes of isolation and expectations were apparent during the data analysis process. The researcher took her time to engage in the experience, reflect from different perspectives, and attempted to provide a full picture of her experience as a substitute teacher. While the researcher enjoyed her time in the classroom with students, there were definitely blatant negatives and areas of growth that were learned from the experience.

Discussion

As a former classroom teacher, the researcher had a unique and interesting perspective throughout the entire process. The first guiding research question focused on the hiring process of substitute teachers. It also asked how the hiring process might influence the application and hiring of quality substitute teachers. From the perspective of the researcher, the process in this district would only create a substitute teacher pool of individuals who were college educated without a drug or criminal background. The conversations and reactions to the researcher as a substitute teacher support this idea. Some of the teachers in the buildings, where the researcher subbed, along with the principal interviewed, view the substitute teacher workforce as a revolving door. Substitute teachers are not given support or confidence to succeed in a classroom, especially if they are not trained in education. Furthermore, the Illinois qualifications for a substitute teacher do not require criminal background checks. That portion of the process was deemed necessary by the district. The overall process, from the perspective of the researcher, would generally not supply quality substitute teachers to district schools.

The second research question addressed the school environment. As indicated in the findings, initially the researcher felt unwelcomed. However, once the teachers realized the guerilla superhero qualities of the researcher, they sought her out for substitute teaching opportunities. However, the principals at the schools never acknowledged or welcomed the researcher as a substitute teacher, which still created somewhat of an unwelcoming environment.

The third and final research question focused on overarching ideas of policies and procedures for substitute teacher qualifications and experiences. The findings related to this guiding research question apply more to the implications section.

Implications

While this research and other research findings focus on the downfalls of substitute teacher training, qualifications, and hiring processes, there are steps that policymakers, school administrators, parents, school boards, and teachers can advocate for in order to provide classrooms with high quality substitute teachers, especially when there is a push for high quality full-time teachers.

However, before those advocacy steps are discussed, the problems need to be summarized. First, when teachers are absent many school districts do not have substitute teachers, therefore other teachers or classrooms take in extra students in order to keep the school day running. Second, substitute teachers are not paid well. For example, in the district the researcher substitute taught in, she was paid \$10/hour before taxes. On average, a day of substitute teaching usually equated to less than \$60. Therefore, an increase in substitute teacher pay is the second advocacy step. The third focuses on the perceptions of substitute teachers. While the perceptions of substitute teachers often vary, it is often negative (Weems, 2003). Fourth, the school environment is often unwelcoming to substitute teachers for a variety of reasons, one being the view that that the substitute is a babysitter for the school day. Finally, substitute teachers are not vetted in a manner that generally produces individuals who understand education, know about students, or have been cleared of criminal backgrounds.

The five issues above were described in ascending order if imagining the issues in a triangle. The fifth issue is the foundation of the problem, which needs to be addressed in order to influence the fourth, which will influence the third, and so forth. Education policymakers, school boards, and parents need to demand that states have stricter laws on substitute teacher qualifications. In this study, the only reason the researcher was asked to participate in a criminal

background check and drug test was because the district deemed that necessary. The state of Illinois, along with many other states, have the view that if someone has a bachelor's degree, or in other states only a high school diploma, that person is qualified to be in a classroom with students of all ages. States need to have policies in place that require all teachers to have some education course background on their transcripts, a criminal background check, a drug test, and have a legitimate interview to ensure the substitute teacher understand aspects of teaching. For example, they can vocalize that corporal punishment is not currently practiced, that classroom management is important, and that support is in the building if needed. Informing substitute teachers, through this process, of the procedures to address misbehavior would benefit not only the substitute teacher, but also the students and school environment.

Once substitute teachers are required to go through a focused vetting process, the second and third concern could be addressed. When substitute teachers are held to a higher standards, school personnel will begin to transform their thinking about the individuals. They will begin to get out of the babysitter mentality and move into a fellow educator mentality. This will create an environment where there is not a rotating door, but a door that is welcoming, helpful, and dedicated to the substitute teacher pool and the individual professional growth of substitute teachers as members of the school and district community. When substitute teachers feel welcomed, they are more likely to come back to the school to substitute teach and students will not be left without a teacher. This was also observed in Gershenson's (2012), study. He found that substitute teachers accept jobs on several characteristics, one of them being school quality and type. While that terminology can have many meanings, the quality and type of a school is often related to the support systems in place for educators, which creates a sense of belonging and community.

When schools are unwelcoming, substitute teachers do not feel a connection or desire to be part of that environment. This was evident in this research study. The researcher reflected that after the aide was rude and non-communicative throughout the entire school day she had no desire to go back and “be treated like dirt or a second-class citizen.” Teacher and administrator preparation programs can also play a role in creating a welcoming district and school environment by providing information about interacting with substitute teachers in a positive and welcoming manner that builds an overall positive school environment.

Additionally, increasing substitute teacher pay, even with tight budgets, will create an environment where substitute teachers feel valued for the work they are doing. As any educator can report, teaching is a hard profession that takes patience and dedication. When substitute teachers are minimally paid, the desire to find another job becomes a priority. This was not apparent in this specific research study, because the researcher had another job. However, reports from substitute teachers and districts needing substitute teachers testify that the lack of pay decreases the availability of individuals to substitute teach (Gershenson, 2012).

Finally, if the policies are put in place to increase substitute teacher qualifications, substitute pay is increased, and the school environments become more welcoming the substitute teacher pool and desire to be in classrooms will rise. Teachers and administrators need to respect substitute teachers, substitute teachers need to feel respected, welcomed, and compensated, and policies need to be put in place to create an environment where substitute teaching is not something anyone can do. The teaching profession, including substitute teaching needs to be something that is valued and respected.

Additionally, accountability measures need to be in place for substitute teachers. On the days when teachers are absent the accountability measures and high expectations of classroom,

performance plummets due to the requirements and vetting process of substitute teachers. While there are fantastic substitute teachers out in the field, many have similar experiences described in this research study. Increasing substitute teacher accountability will create academically rich environments.

While the problems of the substitute teaching process and workforce are recognized, there are some people in the field of education tackling the problem head on. One veteran educator, Cherry Rice, began a startup called “Parachute Teachers.” The idea behind this program is “to support high-quality substitutes to do more than pass out worksheets and struggle to implement a hastily prepared lesson plan” (Will, 2017, para. 2). This grassroots solution was referred to as the “Uber for substitute teachers” in Harvard Ed. Magazine. The basic concept behind the Parachute Teachers project is to “have professionals in the community...’parachute’ into the classroom and teach something they’re passionate about.... The idea is to promote authentic learning in classrooms, even when the teacher is away” (Will, 2017, para 3). This idea addressing many of the concerns around the substitute teacher phenomenon. However, this concept is still in infancy.

Overall, substitute teachers are in demand around the country. There is minimal research on the profession of substitute teaching, including the demand for substitute teachers, the downfalls of substitute teaching, and the solutions to increase the substitute teacher pool. This research, while only a snapshot of one experience, supports the evidence that substitute teachers need to feel welcomed and appreciated in order to provide quality experiences for students. Additionally, creating stricter qualifications for substitute teachers could decrease the negative perception of substitute teachers nationwide. As a country, we continually increase the measures teachers need to reach in order to become more effective in the classroom. However, a large

portion of the education workforce is forgotten – substitute teachers. We also need to concentrate on the individuals entering and leading classrooms when teachers are absent. Schools cannot run without substitute teachers. However, substitute teachers are an ignored, silent, and marginalized group of educators.

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