

Student Teachers

One of the easiest types of jobs a substitute can take is a job that has a student teacher. Typically, the student teacher does all the teaching while the sub just helps as needed. I have even encountered positions in the past where the teacher leaves a special instruction on the website that says “bring a book.” □ I actually subbed for this teacher a couple of weeks earlier and so I knew what to expect. It was a classroom with mentally impaired children, ranging from a boy in a wheelchair who could really only cry out (he spends much of the day listening to music) to a couple of students who are mainstreamed into some specials but still have pretty severe language problems (reading and writing, and in some cases, talking). Also on hand were two assistants, so between us there were two students per adult. As expected I spent much of the day helping rather than teaching, but that is actually expected in this type of class even when there is no student teacher. In that case the assistants take over because they know where each student is at, which really varies dramatically, and what to expect from each student. Without the people in the room who know this a sub can never know if the work the student is doing is really acceptable or if (s)he is just blowing off the work. For some reason I tend to get this sort of job often, whether mentally impaired or just learning disabled, in this district. It may just be that these teachers have more meetings due to the nature of their job, or it may be that the preferred subs have the opportunity at the regular jobs first, or that the regular classroom teachers tend to create a preferred list while the special education teachers don't.

Actually, I should really explain what I mean by “preferred.” In this district there are two types of preferred subs. The first is on a list made by each teacher of who to call first if a substitute is needed (conversely, I believe they also

have a do-not-call list for teachers they never want to see back in their classrooms again). The other type of preferred sub is the 120-day (can work 120 days per school year in the district), or certified substitute. These subs are actual certified teachers either looking for a full-time position but subbing in the meantime or are retired. The system looks for the individual preferred teacher first, and if none are available calls on the 120-day subs, and finally resorts to the 90-day subs. I am a 90-day sub. This means I am not certified as a teacher, but have simple substitute certification for which anyone with any bachelor's degree can apply. I do not fault them for this system at all. In fact, they are completely up front as to the way it works. Yet, I do get calls and see the jobs posted online. The only thing that rubbed me the wrong way was when they applied for a waiver so they could use 120-day subs for more than 120 days. Essentially, some subs are liked so much by the various schools and teachers that they are pretty much called every day. Of course, the one year I know of when they *didn't* have the waiver I don't know if they had trouble getting subs- perhaps they did. Therefore I will withhold judgment on this.

In any event, this is just one district. Other districts have different rules of course.