Frequently Asked Questions

The decision to become a substitute teacher is not one that should be made lightly. Anyone considering this employment opportunity should be armed with as much information as is available regarding what is required both to become a substitute and to succeed as a substitute after hiring.

Pre-hire questions

1. **Why would someone want to be a substitute teacher?**
   
   Many persons who are thinking about teaching as a career find that working as a substitute teacher gives them valuable insights into the teaching profession. Some retired teachers want to continue to teach and work with children. Some people want to find out more about the schools and the educational process from which their children benefit. But all have one thing in common: a desire to work with children and youth and to share in the exhilaration that comes from the teaching/learning experience.

2. **What is expected of substitute teachers?**
   
   The essential roles and responsibilities of the substitute teacher are detailed in the KISD Substitute Teacher Handbook. Briefly stated, substitute teachers are expected to carry out two responsibilities: follow the regular teachers’ lesson plans, and maintain discipline in the classroom at a level in which learning can take place. An additional expectation is that these two responsibilities will be carried out in a positive climate of respect.

3. **What are the steps in becoming a substitute teacher?**
   
   If your application is accepted and your test and interview (SubBlitz) is successful, you will be sent an email with a registration link that will inform you of the date, time, and location of the trainings you can choose from. After successful completion of training it takes approximately one week to active your substitute status in our AESOP system. We will email you with your AESOP user name and pin number. At this time you can login and begin accepting jobs.
4. **Why do I have to attend a training session?** All KISD substitutes must attend an initial training. You must attend either a full day training or KISD Policy and Procedure training. The type of training you will attend is determined by your past experiences in education. Full day training is an interactive session in which the participant learns the basics of classroom management, teaching strategies, the educational process, and the roles and responsibilities of a substitute teacher in Katy ISD. The Policy and Procedure training focuses only on the roles and responsibilities of a substitute teacher in Katy ISD. During both trainings, substitutes are also shown how to use the AESOP system which is used to record employee absences and to find substitutes to fill the absences.

5. **Where can I find the information on qualifications, salary, and application procedures for substitute employment?** This information is located on our main Substituting In KISD webpage. [http://www.katyisd.org/substituting/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.katyisd.org/substituting/Pages/default.aspx)

6. **What is the difference between substitute teachers and para-professional substitutes?** Substitute teachers take the place of the regular teachers when they need to be absent. They have the full responsibility and authority of the regular teacher and are expected to carry out the teacher's lesson plans and maintain discipline in the classroom. A paraprofessional substitute takes the place of instructional assistants or office staff when they are absent. They will always have a professional staff member to assist them in carrying out their duties.

7. **What grade levels or subjects can I teach as a substitute?** Substitutes may choose to teach any subject or at any grade level they feel comfortable and competent teaching. Paraprofessional substitutes may only substitutes for clerical or aide positions.

8. **Do substitutes have to teach at all the District schools?** No, substitutes can teach at any or all of the schools. Some substitutes work at only a few schools within a specific geographic region close to their homes; others work only at the District’s high schools or elementary schools.

9. **What is special education? Will I be able to substitute in classes with "special needs" children?** The Special Education website will provide answers to all of your questions about special needs students, inclusion philosophy and strategies. Yes, you are eligible to substitute in these classes and on those campuses if you wish; and you are invited to do so. Please take time to visit the Special Education website. [http://www.katyisd.org/special/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.katyisd.org/special/Pages/default.aspx)

10. **Will substitute teachers be treated with respect? Can they expect support from the school staff?** Substitute teachers can expect a high degree of support and assistance from all school personnel. Everyone is concerned for the success of our students and you are vital to this success. If at any time you need help in the classroom do not hesitate to contact a nearby teacher or administrator.
11. **Where can I get additional information on becoming a full time, certified teacher?** An excellent source of information is the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) who has an extensive list of questions and answers at "How to Become a Teacher in Texas." [http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/sbeconline/certinfo/bcometeacher.asp?width=1024&height=768](http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/sbeconline/certinfo/bcometeacher.asp?width=1024&height=768)

**Post-hire questions**

1. Are there any classes or training available to help me be a successful substitute teacher?
2. The SmartFind Express System denies me access, saying that "the PIN you have entered is incorrect." What's wrong?
3. What should substitute teachers do if they have to cancel a job they have already accepted?
4. How am I evaluated on my performance as a substitute?
5. Since one of the basic assumptions schools have for substitute teacher is that they will follow the teachers' lesson plans, what do subs do if the teacher has left no lesson plans for the substitute?
6. Are there other sources of information on lesson plans I can use in preparing for a particular substitute teaching assignment?
7. When substitute teachers have difficulty carrying out their duties, whether because of poor lesson plans or severe discipline problems, to whom can they turn for help?
8. Should substitutes allow students to visit the school nurse every time they ask to do so? What if they are faking an illness to get out of class?
9. What about restroom passes? Should substitutes let students go to the restroom every time they say they need to?
10. How are substitute teachers expected to handle discipline problems in the classroom?
11. I sometimes get called to substitute for a special education teacher, but I'm not sure what to expect. Where can I get more information of special needs students and the classes and programs in which I might be working?
12. I didn't sign up to substitute in a special education classroom. Why are there special education students in the regular classrooms?
13. What is the legal liability of substitute teachers?
14. Can substitute teachers share their religious beliefs with students in the classroom?
15. How do I continue working as a substitute from year to year? Is there anything I need to do at the start of a new year?
16. Where can I get additional information on becoming a full time, certified teacher?
17. Who do I contact for information about my paycheck?

1. **Are there any classes or training available to help me be a successful substitute teacher?** Yes. Besides initial training for all substitutes, SubU (Substitute University) is offered twice a year. SubU offers relevant classes for substitute teachers and paraprofessionals. CPE hours for certified teachers are earned for attendance. Also, there are numerous resources and a few training classes available on-line. (See the “Professional Development for Substitutes” section for more information.)

2. **I am having trouble with AESOP. What do I do?** First, refer to the instructions in the KISD Substitute Teacher Handbook. If you are able to login to the AESOP website, there are many video tutorials to help you navigate throughout the system. If you are unable to login to the AESOP website, please call the Substitute Office for help.
3. **What should substitute teachers do if they have to cancel a job they have already accepted?** Not a problem! Substitute teachers and their families get sick too. The important thing for the substitute to do is cancel the job as soon as possible so that AESOP can begin finding another substitute for the job. If you cancel a job after 6:15 (secondary) or 7:10 (elementary), please leave a message at the school and the Substitute Office so that we can also ensure that another substitute is found for the assignment.

4. **How am I evaluated on my performance as a substitute?** Campus administrators communicate with the Substitute Office if there has been an issue with performance at their campus. You will be contacted by the Substitute Office Supervisor if a report is received. Campus administrators also communicate about positive performance as well. This usually leads to you becoming a preferred substitute on that campus. Classroom teachers and paraprofessionals also can leave a star rating for each person substituting for them. The star ratings vary from 1 (low) to 5 (high) and teachers base their rating on the Star Rating Rubric. Substitutes can inquire about their star rating average by contacting the Substitute Office.

5. **Since one of the basic assumptions schools have for substitutes is that they will follow the teachers' lesson plans, what do subs do if the teacher has left no lesson plans for the substitute?** On rare occasions, a teacher may fail to leave lesson plans or leave plans that are inadequate for a substitute to carry out their duties. If this happens, the substitute should stay positive and immediately seek assistance. Other teachers who teach the same grade level of subject matter will be able to assist the substitute. At the Elementary schools, grade level team leaders can assist. At the Secondary schools, a department chairperson is always available for help. In the unlikely event that none of these persons is available, the substitute should seek help from an administrator.

6. **Are there other sources of information on lesson plans I can use in preparing for a particular substitute teaching assignment?** Yes, there are several internet sites you can visit that are very helpful in providing assistance in developing lesson plans (visit our “Professional Development for Substitutes” webpage). However, remember that teachers expect you to follow their lesson plans. You should use other plans as filler activities to keep students engaged.

7. **When substitute teachers have difficulty carrying out their duties, whether because of poor lesson plans or severe discipline problems, to whom can they turn for help?** The first and best source for assistance is a school administrator. These professionals are responsible for providing substitutes with the resources and support they need to succeed in their schools.

8. **Should substitutes allow students to visit the school nurse every time they ask to do so? What if they are faking an illness to get out of class?** Substitutes should never deny a student's request to go to the nurse. It is the nurse's responsibility to determine whether or not a child is ill--not the substitute teacher's.
9. **What about restroom passes? Should substitutes let students go to the restroom every time they say they need to?** Each grade level has its own schedule for restroom visits and the students are aware of the “restroom routine.” If a child expresses a need to go to the restroom at times outside of the established routine, substitutes should not deny them their requests, but instead should allow the visits and leave a note for the regular teacher regarding the requests. Students should be allowed to go to the restroom one at a time.

10. **How are substitute teachers expected to handle discipline problems in the classroom?** Simply stated, substitutes are expected to handle discipline in a firm but fair manner, with consistency and respect for the students under their care. They should be able to separate the students' behaviors from the students themselves. The training provided by the Substitute Office (see #1 above) gives numerous strategies for dealing with a wide variety of "discipline problems." The KISD Substitute Teachers Handbook stresses repeatedly that substitute teachers are never to use physical force with students. Nor should they shout at the students, insult them, or otherwise verbally attack the students. (See the Discipline section of KISD's Substitute Teacher Handbook)

11. **I sometimes get called to substitute for a special education teacher, but I’m not sure what to expect. Where can I get more information of special needs students and the classes and programs in which I might be working?** The Substitute Teacher Handbook has some basic information about Special Education Programs and Campuses in Katy ISD. You can also read more about all these topics in the District's Special Education website. [http://www.katyisd.org/special/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.katyisd.org/special/Pages/default.aspx)

12. **I didn’t sign up to substitute in a special education classroom. Why are there special education students in the regular classrooms?** The philosophy and strategies of inclusion require that all students be educated in the "least restrictive environment" possible, so that special needs students are always included in the "regular" classroom to the fullest possible extent. Please read more about the topic of inclusion in the Special Education website.

13. **What is the legal liability of substitute teachers?** In 2003, the Texas Legislature signed into law S.B. 930 which extended to substitute teachers the same qualified (limited) immunity from legal liability afforded the regular classroom teacher under State statute. This immunity is guaranteed as long as substitute teachers are using discretion and good judgment in carrying out the duties and responsibilities assigned to them, and do not use unnecessary force in disciplining students, However, this immunity from legal liability does not extend to injuries involving motor vehicles nor to violations of a student's Constitutionally protected rights. (Texas Education Code, Chapter 22, Subchapter B, Section 22.051--amended) The No Child Left Behind Act also has a provision granting limited immunity to teachers acting in the scope of their duties and not using excessive force when disciplining students.

14. **Can substitute teachers share their religious beliefs with students in the classroom?** Like other employees of the district, substitutes must maintain a posture of “neutrality” regarding religion in the classroom and in other activities and areas of the school. Substitutes are acting as "agents of the state" when carrying out their duties and are prohibited from advancing their own religious beliefs in the schools.
15. **How do I continue working as a substitute from year to year? Is there anything I need to do at the start of a new year?** Near the end of each school year, a memo or an email is sent to all active substitute teachers instructing them what needs to be done to work again as a substitute the next year. Each year a Letter of Reasonable Assurance must be returned to the Substitute Office stating that you intend to continue substituting. During some years a mandatory summer meeting will be required of all substitutes who wish to continue substituting. If any state or federal laws change directing school district to follow specific guidelines which effect substitutes, substitutes will have to abide by these new guidelines to continue substituting (ie-fingerprinting).

16. **Where can I get additional information on becoming a full time, certified teacher?** An excellent source of information is the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) who has an extensive list of questions and answers at “How to Become a Teacher in Texas.”
http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/sbeconline/certinfo/becometeacher.asp?width=1024&height=768

17. **Who do I contact for information about my paycheck?** Most questions are answered by referencing the KISD Substitute Teacher Handbook for payroll dates and calendars. If you still have questions please call the Substitute Office.