

## **Substitute Plans for Pre-Service Teachers: Bringing Real-World to Context**

### **Introduction**

It has been said that a “great part of a teacher’s job, is to give context” (Johnson 2022). Teacher educators are constantly trying to give students every opportunity to see what teaching is like in the real-world before students experience it during student teaching. There is no doubt that pre-service teachers and new teachers are faced with many challenges that they were not exposed to in their pre-service learning. In agricultural education, there are many more aspects to the job other than daily classroom expectations of teaching. Teacher educators have the knowledge that there are several days that secondary based agricultural teachers will be outside of the traditional classroom setting. Although teachers will be serving students in other ways, the fact of the matter is that there are still several students left behind in the classroom that need to continue the learning process. It is the teacher educators’ job to make sure that university students are prepared for this portion of the job as well.

Pre- service teachers are prepped with the knowledge of creating lessons plans with the understanding of best classroom management practices. With this experience students will learn by fitting their previous knowledge with a new type of plan that they have not worked with in the traditional setting (Olusegun 2015). With contextual teaching and learning, Johnson (2002) found that students engaging in activities that bring context to real-world situations within the classroom could bring about more meaningful learning. Unfortunately, we cannot recreate all facets of the school setting, but there are a few that we can bring into our classes to prepare students before they take on the role of student teaching, as well as being a certified teacher.

Therefore, the implementation of substitute (sub) plans for students on the pre-service block for absences was introduced and implemented. The goal is for students to be prepared for days that they will be absent in the field, have a working understanding of how these plans are used, and create healthy and productive habits for a busy ag teacher for the future.

### **How it Works**

Substitute plans are nothing new for industry professionals and a necessity for agricultural educators in the middle and high school setting. For students to understand the process, students developed sub plans for days that they would miss a university class during their block semester. The expectation is for students to turn in substitute plans for unexcused dates only. On these substitute plans, students are asked to provide lesson instructions for three different class periods and disciplines. This was implemented to show the diverse workload of an agricultural science teacher. These lessons needed to reflect what students should be doing at every aspect of the class period. Requirements for the plans included: beginning of class procedures, lesson work and how to access this work, final product, turn-in procedures well as end of class procedures. These aspects were required to instill the importance of establishing classroom procedures and explaining those procedures to others outside the classroom (Wong & Wong 2018). Any special notes needed to be added and the activity itself needed to be included. There was a big emphasis that the plans did not need to be busy work, but a continuation of the learning with the absences of the teacher of record. Substitute plans are to be turned in by 8 am the day of the students return to all professors in the agricultural education department that has pre-block responsibilities. This procedure is where the exercise would differ from the real-world. Failure to complete and submit the plans resulted in a point deduction from the

professionalism grade in the classes that the student missed. This procedure is what the expectations would be in the K12 educational setting, and that is the goal for students.

### **Results to Date /Implications**

The substitute plans were implemented at the beginning of October during the fall semester of 2022. After implementation, two students missed class. One set of plans was received in the timely manner they were requested. The other student did not get the plans completed in timeline and did receive a major deduction of points for professionalism. These plans met all the requirements that were set in place.

Initially this plan was created to help solve the excessive amounts of absences the pre-service block was seeing. The block had 19 students in the cohort and in a two-week span, there were more than 4 students absent at one time. It is no secret that the time before student teaching is crucial and limited. The amount of contact time became a true concern for students and their success in the program. This plan was created out of necessity to start connecting the real-world realities of what is to come for our 19 students. This implementation of a real-life practice curved our attendance, to which we only had 2 students who missed a class for the rest of the semester, one of which was due to an unforeseen family emergency. Not only did the sub plans help attendance issues, but they are also giving students the practice they need, by simulating what will be required of them on the job and guiding them into creating healthy and productive practices, which in turn could help with teacher attrition.

### **Future Plans/ Advise for Others**

This system will be used for the next year to come and will continue to be updated and used for the future. Giving students the opportunity to participate in a real-life experience and starting early for what is expected of them will better prepare students for student teaching and for their teaching careers. In the future Texas Tech University will begin this practice at the beginning of the semester. Time and date the plans are turned in by, may also be something to change in the future to portray an actual school setting more accurately.

A recommendation to any program that would implement this into their own curriculum is to have students use the classes that they will be completing student teaching in as the disciplines within the plans. This way it adds true meaning to the work as students could possibly use these substitute plans for when they will be out for FFA needs during their student teaching careers.

Consistency on this is key. It must stay consistent throughout so that all students find value and that programmatically there is one high standard. Adding it to all syllabi and adopting the plan along with the programs attendance policy will aid in having a cohesive policy without any questions.

### **Resources Needed**

Resources needed for this, would include a well-developed plan with a specific criterion that the substitute plans must have included.

### References

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