



# Social Awareness

## ABOUT CENTER FOR THE COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

The Caring School Community (CSC) program is a nationally recognized, research-based program for grades K–6 that builds classroom and schoolwide community while developing students' social and emotional (SEL) skills and competencies.

# Getting Ready for a Substitute Teacher

By: The Caring School Community



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**After the Lesson**

Collect the students' letters and bind them together in a class book.

Notify a substitute teacher coming to your class about the students' letters and ask her to read the letters and review them briefly with the class at the beginning of the day.

Plan to have a check-in meeting after the substitute day to talk about how the students did taking responsibility for themselves and welcoming the substitute into their community. Consider doing this whenever you have a substitute or other adult visitors to the class. Use the Model Daily Check-in class meeting (see Week 2) as a guide for your discussion.

# Getting Ready for a Substitute Teacher

**ABOUT STUDENT-DIRECTED DECISION MAKING**

This class meeting models a process for student-directed decision making in which the students generate ideas and suggestions about how to approach a topic or situation. After this meeting, the students try out their ideas and check in on how things went. You may decide to use this format to address problems or situations in which there are several courses of action (for example, how to welcome visitors to the classroom or what to do when students finish their work early).

If possible, plan to do this class meeting just prior to the first substitute teacher's day in your class. You may want to adapt this class meeting to discuss specialty teachers and other adult visitors to the class. This lesson may take more than one class period.

**Lesson Purpose**

**Students:**

- Discuss and agree on ways to behave responsibly with a substitute teacher
- Write a letter to a substitute teacher describing how they will act
- Give reasons for their thinking

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**The Lesson**

**1 GATHER IN A CIRCLE AND DISCUSS GIVING REASONS FOR YOUR THINKING**

Have the students come to the circle with partners sitting together. Briefly review the class meeting rules. Remind the students that they have been working to build a community in their classroom. Explain that today they will talk about how to be responsible and helpful when the class has a substitute teacher.

**Materials**

- Chart paper and a marker
- Writing paper and pencils
- "Class Meeting Rules" chart

Explain that during today’s discussion you would like the students to focus on giving reasons for their thinking whenever they share their ideas. Tell them that you will check in with them at the end of the meeting to see how they did.

**2 GENERATE IDEAS FOR BEHAVING RESPONSIBLY WITH A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER**

Ask and briefly discuss:

**Q What do you like about having a substitute teacher?**

**Q What can be challenging about having a substitute teacher?**

Describe what a day with a substitute teacher in their class might be like (or, if you are planning to be out, what will happen on that day). Facilitate a discussion about how the students will take responsibility for themselves at various times during the day. Use “Turn to Your Partner” to discuss:

**Q What are some ways you can welcome the substitute into our community at the beginning of the day?**

**Q How can you be responsible when it is time to begin [writer’s workshop]?**

**Q How can you be helpful when it is time to [go to lunch]?**

**Q What are some ways you can be responsible at the end of the day when [you’re getting ready to go home]?**

For each question, have a few volunteers share their ideas with the class; record the suggestions on chart paper. Remind the students to give reasons for their thinking as they share.

**Students might say:**

“I think we can put our name tags out on our desks because that will help the substitute learn our names.”

“We can take out our folders and quietly work on our stories. I think that is responsible because then we won’t get behind in our writing while you’re gone.”

“I agree with [Shana], because we should work as hard as we do when you are here.”

“In addition to what [Romeo] said, we could show the substitute how we use lunch cards. I think that is helpful because then the substitute won’t be confused.”

As the students share, ask follow-up questions such as:

**Q Why is it important to try to make the substitute feel welcome in our community?**

**Q What questions do you have for [Marla] about her thinking?**

**3 WRITE LETTERS TO THE SUBSTITUTE TEACHER**

Explain that each student will write a letter telling the substitute how he plans to be responsible and helpful during the day. Review the students’ charted ideas and encourage them to include some of these ideas in their letters. Explain that the letter should list at least three things they will do to be responsible or helpful when the class has a substitute teacher.

Have the students return to their seats and give them time to write their letters. When they have finished, have several volunteers read their letters aloud to the class. Let them know that all their letters will be bound into a book for substitutes and the class to read during the year. The book will let substitute teachers know that the students have agreed to act in responsible and helpful ways with them.

**4 REFLECT ON THE MEETING**

Remind the students that you expect them to act in the ways they described in their letters and that you will check in with them to see how things went after they have a substitute.

Briefly discuss how the students did giving reasons for their thinking during today’s discussion.



**For Grade 2**  
You may want to write a class letter to the substitute, using the students’ brainstormed ideas, rather than having each student write a letter.