

The Impact of Environmental Factors on  
Attainment of Delineated Objectives  
for Substitute Teachers

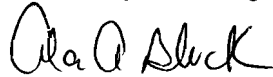
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*ABSTRACT*

The researcher studied the effect of environmental factors on the attainment of classroom objectives, including hidden and null objectives as well as objectives clearly stated, as a substitute teacher. This ethnographic study was conducted during the second semester of the 2006-2007 school year in grades 1-12 in Manistique Area Schools. Primary expectations for the substitute teacher were "Follow directions of permanent school workers" and "Contribute to order." Environmental factors impacting successful attainment of objectives are clarity of objectives, interjections by regular school workers, materials, lesson qualities, time, and student behaviors. By altering environmental factors, permanent school employees influence substitute teacher success. Future research should focus on how best to increase environmental factors contributing to substitute teacher attainment of desired objectives.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Mark Seaman (1997) quotes Jackson M. Drake's definition of a substitute teacher: "a certified and qualified professional who replaces the permanent classroom teacher for the purpose of continuing the instruction program, maintaining discipline and generally promoting the educational welfare of the students" (p. 4). Drake's vision of a substitute teacher as a competent educator was the reality in my childhood dance classes. There, I typically learned ballet and tap dancing from an instructor. When the instructor could not attend, a substitute dance teacher was found. On these days, my class learned hula instead of ballet or tap dancing, because this is what our substitute instructor was competent to teach.

When substitute teaching in schools, however, I often feel like a hula teacher trying to teach ballet, modeling steps with which I am unfamiliar to students who expect a different lesson. The 20-30 students in each class typically react to my awkward attempts much as I reacted to the efforts of the substitute teacher when I was a student; I had little respect for substitute teachers, believing they did not know as much about the classroom routines or the content areas as my regular classroom teachers. My classmates and I caused disruptions we would not have done if our regular teacher had been present. We took turns humming when the substitute teacher attempted instruction. We challenged substitute teachers' directions concerning assignments, dishonestly telling them our regular teacher would not have required us to work individually or that we were not required to complete all assigned questions. We complained when substitute teachers pleaded for or demanded change in our behavior as though their requests were unreasonable.

I cannot blame students, then, when they challenge, "You've never taught this before, have you." Quite possibly, I have never even taken a similar course similar to the one in which I

am substitute teaching. When students throw gummy bears when my head is turned, recognizing I cannot see where they are coming from, I suspect students are following the same traditions as when I sat in their position.

When self-reflecting on my substitute teaching experiences, I consider not only how I might decrease such problems in future classes through my actions, but also how permanent members of the school faculty might alleviate difficulties. Lesson plans frequently require students to engage in routine assignments the students can do with no teacher assistance or to participate in irrelevant time-filling activities, like word searches or movies; perhaps the substitute teacher would earn students' respect if lesson plans permitted meaningful interactions between the substitute teacher and children. Concerning classroom management, the regular teacher could conceivably demonstrate partnership with the substitute teacher by following through with consequences for misbehaving students upon her return to the classroom.

It may seem that substitute teaching is a tedious job, but substitute teaching is not always so chaotic and may often be quite rewarding. Once students test me and realize I am left unshaken (visibly, at least), students tend to work better; as students get to know me, they provide me opportunities to influence their lives through personal as well as academic conversations. On occasion, students and teacher aides have commented that students worked harder under my guidance than when their regular teacher was present, a much-needed boost to my confidence following a less productive class.

Such perks are necessary to make substitute teaching worthwhile, because the pay, while adequate, is only that. The substitute teachers at Manistique Area Schools, about 20 in number (Mary Hubble, personal conversation, August 30, 2007), are paid \$60 for each full day. I typically work two days each week, my days beginning at around 7:45 a.m. when I arrive at the

school building and ending at about 4:00 p.m. when I leave. This is a reduction in pay from when I substitute taught for this same district two years ago and received \$80 daily. (When I inquired about this change in the teacher's lounge, I was told that budget cuts resulted in lower substitute teacher salaries.) According to my pay stubs, I receive \$10 hourly, but time spent in preparation for class, after school, and in preparatory periods blocked between instructional periods is not considered paid time. A regular teacher who serves as a substitute teacher during a non-instructional period receives an extra hour of allowed personal leave in addition to the \$10 pay for each hour of substitute teaching.

Sixty dollars per day for substitute teachers is slightly lower than the national average of \$65-\$70 daily, but it seems a good salary when compared to other rural districts where the daily pay is "often as low as \$40-\$45" (National Education Association, 2005, ¶ 5). Still, many find the pay insufficient. I once overheard regular teachers discussing that they would never use their preparatory periods to substitute teach for the pay alone; they also mentioned that some retired teachers quit substitute teaching after the reduction in daily substitute teacher pay. One individual I know dedicates only one weekday to substitute teaching, despite the fact that teaching is his desired profession; he receives a better salary as a grocery store bag boy. To further illustrate the point: When I leave my two children with their babysitter, she receives more of my paycheck than I do. Most astonishing is that substitute teacher aides receive an hourly pay of \$1.42 more than substitute teachers receive in this same district.

One might initially think that substitute teachers should receive higher compensation than bag boys and babysitters for the important job of educating students, a job requiring qualifications such as credits from a college or university. After considering the menial knowledge and tasks required of substitute teachers, however, one might wonder why they are

paid to enter schools at all. Although most researchers concur that the substitute teacher's own education is important (Hamann, Hedden, and Legette, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2000; Bruno, 2002), to obtain my substitute teaching permit, I had only to pay \$75 for fingerprinting and a background check and \$25 for the permit and to provide a transcript from an accredited college or university demonstrating successful completion of at least 90 credits. These credits did not have to be in the area of education or any particular content area.

The tasks I receive as a substitute teacher, however, require little training. For the most part, my substitute teaching has consisted of following lesson plans students could follow independently. Regular teachers often direct me to have students complete routine assignments such as workbooks or word searches requiring no teacher instruction. Sometimes lesson plans dictate that I show students a video that has no apparent relation to any learning goal.

It is not surprising that a substitute teacher is asked to achieve objectives unrelated to course content in light of research by Ahwee, et al. (2004) concerning the hidden and null curricula. The hidden and null curricula are the messages conveyed implicitly or through their exclusion, respectively. Ahwee, et al. demonstrate that hidden and null curricula determine what is and is not appropriate concerning areas as diverse as gender, political values, culture, literature, and writing. They conclude, "These curricula may be subtle, insidious, and prejudicial, or may be positive, productive, and just. However...regardless of type, these curricula are operational and ever present. It is incumbent upon educators to recognize this reality" (p. 42). Novello (n.d.) adds that the rationale behind public education is less noble than the stated goal of educating students, explaining, "Of the theories and reasons suggested by these various writers for the rise of compulsory education, the most logical would seem to be that it became necessary

to fill the government schools [that is, the public schools] once they had been established” (“Why compulsory education was deemed necessary” section, ¶ 17).

It is apparent that hidden and null curricula are at work in the objectives for substitute teachers, since requiring students to complete word searches or watch videos involves minimal teaching, the objective one might assume from the title of substitute *teacher*. With approximately ten percent of classrooms in America taught by substitute teachers at any given time (Tannenbaum, 2000, p. 70), it seems logical that schools should be able to justify the importance of time students spend with substitute teachers. What is expected of the substitute teacher? Also, how do factors within the school ensure that objectives are attained?

#### *Statement of the Problem*

This study seeks to determine the connection between two variables, the quasi-independent variable of environmental factors and quasi-dependent variable of substitute teacher success in the classroom. For the purposes of this study, environmental factors are those features and occurrences that exist in the school in which the substitute teacher is present that are neither internal to nor behaviors of the substitute teacher, and that impact the actions of that substitute teacher and/or the students to which she is assigned. Substitute teacher success is here defined as the extent to which the substitute teacher accomplishes those classroom objectives set for her by other school personnel that she discerns from written and verbal communications and/or by observing others within the school.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

This research offers many potential benefits. Understanding problems impacting substitute teachers may lead to solutions so that substitute teachers effect greater student learning outcomes. Substitute teachers could then demonstrate they are more than mere “babysitters,” a

label given to describe substitute teachers even by many education students, according to a study by James B. Parsons and David Dillon (Seaman, 1997, p. 10). Substitute teachers and regular school personnel could apply knowledge gained concerning the nature of substitute teacher success to decrease student misbehaviors, encourage greater respect for substitute teachers, improve substitute teachers' sense of belonging, and improve substitute teacher acquisition and retention. Essentially, new insights could yield solutions to overcoming obstacles to effective substitute teaching.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Qualitative studies cannot be readily generalized due to their focus on isolated instances, and such a study based on the experiences of one substitute teacher is limited even for a qualitative study. Additionally, qualitative researchers always run the risk of viewing data subjectively, and results obtained are only as good as the analytical abilities of the researcher. A study based on the researcher's personal experiences creates greater risk of subjectivity.

Minimizing these concerns is the realization that this study, since it did not begin with preconceived patterns of what should be found, may actually involve less bias than that found in many quantitative studies. Focusing on substitute teacher success according to what is conveyed to the substitute teacher during her work minimized the possibility of overlooking elements of the hidden and null curricula. The researcher received guidance from professors more experienced in qualitative research and analysis and, in addition, used triangulation to ensure that conclusions reached were not, indeed, far reaches.

### *Methodology*

This study was conducted during the spring semester of the 2006-2007 school year through the researcher's employment as a substitute teacher in a small, rural school district in

Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Direction received relating to delineated classroom objectives and the factors impacting attainment of these objectives was recorded for compilation and analysis at the end of the semester. The procedures are explained in greater detail in the methods section after the literature review, with results and discussion following.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

How the current experience of substitute teachers compares to that of substitute teachers of ages past is difficult to discern because substitute teaching is only occasionally addressed in past or current literature. It is clear that substitute teachers were used at least occasionally in the early 1900's; one document first published in 1902 records that three substitute teachers were employed in Ross County, Ohio, at that time (Bennett, 2007, p. 159).

Reasons for use of substitute teachers are seldom offered, but they likely varied according to the philosophy of the district. Some schools utilized substitute teachers on a part-time basis, as is shown by one man's recorded memory of the Sedro Graded School: "Winnie McGrath...had taught as a substitute starting in August 1901 at \$50 per month and she was so pleased with the district that she decided to apply for full time" (Bourasaw, 2002, Mary Purcell and Franklin and Irving Schools section, ¶ 2). Whatever the occasion to hire Winnie McGrath for part time work, surely this differed from the reasons required to hire a substitute teacher in Marbletown's one-room "Little Red Schoolhouse," which was in operation during the 1930's. In this school, substitute teachers were only used in cases of long-term illness:

It was unthinkable to close school because the law required an exact number of days of instruction and any missed days had to be made up at the end of the school year. There were no substitute teachers. The teacher went to school whether she was well or sick. In case of severe illness of any duration, another teacher would be secured but sick leave was unheard of in those days. (Pelis, 1963, Last Days Of The Little Red Schoolhouse section, ¶ 11)

During that same time period in which a teacher in the Little Red Schoolhouse was not permitted time away from teaching even for illness, schools in Denver made use of substitute teachers so their permanent teachers could participate in "curriculum revision" as the district

strove to incorporate progressive practices in its classrooms (Cuban, 1984, p. 73)—a rather progressive move on the behalf of teachers, especially when contrasted with the earlier example of the one-room school. The expected functioning of Denver’s substitute teachers, such as whether they were expected to teach or to simply attend, unfortunately remains unknown.

Progressivism spread, and so, too, did the use of substitute teachers for everything from replacing ill teachers to filling in while a teacher participated in staff development. Despite this increase in substitute teacher usage, literature on substitute teaching remains scant. Yes, there are numerous articles about substitute teaching, but nearly all are personal opinion. The researcher finds that the words of Donald Fielder (1991), though written nearly two decades ago, still hold true today:

The practice of substitute teaching has rarely been objectively studied. A review of the research shows little information on the subject, and what does exist is simply opinion with no empirical basis. Ask any teacher or principal what makes for a good substitute, and each has an immediate answer. The problem is that there is no objective basis to these visceral reactions. Thus, the folklore of the substitute is reinforced by professional educators themselves. (¶ 2)

What information does exist today is geared, primarily, toward finding solutions to the problem of ineffective substitute teachers, something that either was not perceived to be a problem or was simply not written of concerning substitute teachers of the early 1900’s.

What might account for this change? Although it is possible that there is something about substitute teachers themselves that has changed from the early 1900’s to the present, in general, educational practices change little over time (Cuban, 1984, p. 1). Most, if not all, of the substitute

teachers I have encountered in my district hold a Bachelor's degree; this is more education than most permanent teachers had in the early 1900's (p. 72).

A more likely reason for the change in how substitute teachers are portrayed, then, is that societal attitudes toward education as a whole have changed, and that negative attitudes toward substitute teachers are only a symptom of a larger phenomenon. Concerning the years between 1890 and 1920, Cavallo writes, "Progressives viewed the home less as a bastion against the intrusions of materialism and more as a barrier which inhibited the child's integration into society" (Finkelstein, 1979, p. 169). For these individuals, schools promised children's salvation.

Contrast this with the view of education that emerged in the '60's:

What had changed more than anything were public attitudes. Belief in the legitimacy of the school board and staff as guardians of children's intellectual and moral development had eroded. During the post-World War II years confidence diminished in the public schools to do what they were supposed to do. (Cuban, 1984, p. 161)

It seems plausible that increased skepticism toward schools would result in increased skepticism toward agents of the schools, which include substitute teachers.

In the post-World War II climate of today in which respect must be earned by school employees, no longer being freely granted to those in positions of authority, how can the substitute teacher demonstrate that she does as she is supposed to do? How can she earn others' confidence, and what helps and prevents her from doing whatever it is she is supposed to do? To even attempt an answer to this, one must first contemplate the importance of today's substitute teacher and the role others expect her to fill.

### *Importance of Substitute Teachers*

Substitute teachers spend an astonishing amount of time leading classrooms. The most recent research found concerning this is referenced by Tannenbaum (2000) who writes that studies done in the 1980s showed that every day, substitute teachers taught in 10 percent of classrooms (p. 70). The number of students each substitute teacher encounters in a day varies widely, depending upon individual class sizes and whether the substitute teacher teaches all day in one self-contained classroom or teaches multiple classes. When teaching in a special education classroom for the duration of a school day, where class sizes tend to be smaller, I typically teach under twenty students in one day; when substitute teaching for middle and high school teachers who teach six classes of approximately 30 students each, I teach around 180 students in a day.

Tannenbaum (2000) estimates that students likely spend even more time with substitute teachers in today's schools than in the 1980's, due to teacher in-service responsibilities and recently instituted family leave programs (p. 70). Wyld (1995) comments on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) instituted in 1993, an act enabling teachers to take 12 weeks off work for the birth of a child, adoption, or serious personal or family health conditions (§ 3). This, of course, increases the amount of time substitute teachers are required.

A study of schools within the North Central Region, which encompasses Michigan schools, suggests that the percentage of time classes are taught by substitute teachers is less in small districts (Koelling, 2001, p. 160) such as that in which this particular study will take place. Supporting this conclusion are findings from a 1998 study conducted by the National Education Association which found that substitute teachers are used more often in urban than rural schools (Bruno, 2002, Policy Issues section, ¶ 1).

Although such findings suggest that the district in which this study takes place may have lower than average need for substitute teachers, Bruno (2002) notes that low-income schools have higher rates of permanent teacher absenteeism than schools where the median family income is higher (Policy Issues section, ¶ 1). This might suggest that schools in such a low-income area such as Manistique Area Schools is more likely to have frequent teacher absenteeism. Because Bruno focused on studying only high schools in a large urban area, however, his results may not apply to a rural area such as the district in which this study takes place or to elementary and middle schools.

Even if substitute teachers were seldom utilized, the legal issues surrounding substitute teachers could scare districts and administrators into concern over their handling of substitute teachers. Should a student be injured under the guidance of a substitute teacher, the principal and school district may be held liable in addition to the substitute teacher, since the principal and school district share the substitute teacher's responsibility to ensure that students are adequately supervised. In some states, including Michigan, school districts are protected from such liability by governmental immunity; individual administrators, however, are not. A principal's liability may even increase when a student's injury occurs due to negligence of a substitute teacher rather than to negligence of a permanent teacher, since the principal's "duties may entail more direction and closer supervision of a substitute than of a regular teacher" (Cotten, 1995, Substitute Teachers section).

Based on the research cited above, substitute teaching is clearly an important area for study. With the rise in use of substitute teaching, increased concern arises over the effectiveness of substitute teachers; American citizens must ensure that students' time in school is not wasted, that valuable learning opportunities are not lost. Although there is ideally no greater goal for the

school than students' education, Seaman (1997) appeals to readers' economic concerns, adding, "If that much time is being spent with a substitute in the classroom, and nothing is being done instructional wise, that much of the school district's budget is being wasted" (p. 12). Sadly, most literature suggests that both educational opportunities and money are wasted through substitute teacher lead classrooms.

### *Ineffectiveness of Substitute Teachers*

In recalling his experience as a substitute teacher, Warner (2003) writes, "Imagine the squirrel monkey cage at the zoo. Had the zookeeper on a devious, post-beatnik tear added Benzedrine to the tree gum, the ensuing scene wouldn't be incredibly divergent from the scene in my classroom" (p. 27). If the literature is indicative of the state of classrooms under the guidance of substitute teachers, such a scenario is not unusual. Seaman (1997) finds that substitute teachers are not focused on their students, but rather, on self-preservation (p. 8), while Nidds and McGerald (1994) list substitute teaching as a top concern of administrators:

Ask secondary school principals to list their daily annoyances by degree of irritation, and, inevitably, near the top of each column, you will observe responses alluding to teacher absenteeism or teacher substitutes. Ask the same question of deans or department chairs and the absentee teacher/substitute teacher/student misbehavior matrix will be at the head of their lists also, bold-faced, underlined, and starred" (¶ 1).

Substitute teachers are, it seems, notoriously lacking in classroom control.

Tannenbaum's study (2000) indicates that student misbehavior is only one of several problems that arise when a substitute teacher is called on to instruct students, reporting that permanent teachers are most bothered by substitute teachers not adhering to lesson plans, although classroom management problems are also a main concern. Tannenbaum then provides a

list of substitute teacher behavior deemed most serious: lack of experience, failure to leave notes about problems encountered and how they were handled, inflexibility, leaving the room different from how the teacher left it, failing to assign the correct work, and over-familiarity with students, to begin with. Also problematic were gum-chewing or eating candy, not sticking to the routine, not having the desired content knowledge, and failure to understand children with special education needs (p. 70).

Synthesizing the above research, it appears that when it comes to the problems of substitute teachers, failure to maintain control of student behaviors is the most frequent concern. Since the converse of problems quite easily yield objectives, it is fitting that classroom management appears as the most common objective for substitute teachers, expressed in a variety of ways.

#### *Delineated Objectives for Substitute Teachers*

Having no commonly accepted model for how students should be educated, it should come as no surprise that there is, similarly, no universal list of expectations for the substitute teacher. Lassmann (2001) alludes to this when she writes, “The role of substitute teachers is at best ambiguous” (p. 625). Wilson (1999) explains that different classes require different duties from substitute teachers. In a study involving the southwestern, southeastern, and north central regions of the United States, Hamann, Hedden, and Legette (2003) found that “over two-thirds of the schools had expectations for substitutes in place, but these could range from a mere stipulation of the hours of service required for payment to quite specific duties” (Results section, ¶ 6). In other words, a substitute teacher may be given no specific expectations beyond showing up for class or may receive a number of expectations likely to change from one substitute teaching assignment to another.

Despite having no concrete list of what a substitute teacher should accomplish, researchers have created lists of the characteristics desired of substitute teachers. One list arose from a survey of high school faculty within one school district, and it delineates a number of classroom objectives for substitute teachers. Items included were following lesson plans, maintaining order, recording tardies and absences, recording names of problematic students, and not being “conned.” Additional objectives were teaching seriously without seeking “to entertain,” requiring students to remain in their seats, grading work for which answer sheets have been given, and not eating or drinking in front of students. Final desired traits listed were that substitute teachers should dress and act as professionals, leave a note about how the day went and what occurred, let the office know about problems encountered, and submit evaluation forms before leaving the school (Shepherd, 1997, ¶ 4).

In a survey of music teachers, Hamann, Hedden, and Legette (2003) found that the teachers “expected substitutes to ‘simply maintain’ classrooms in their absence” (Results section, ¶ 6) as opposed to expecting that the substitute teacher might accomplish goals similar to those of a permanent education teacher. Concerning lesson plans, the teachers believed substitute teachers should follow them absolutely, and the majority also shared that substitute teachers should leave a description of their experiences. While most said that their schools also have set objectives for substitute teachers, unfortunately, the nature of these remain undisclosed (Results section, ¶ 8).

Tannenbaum (2000) conveys another set of expectations for substitute teachers. New Jersey students felt that the following items were important enough that substitute teachers ought to be evaluated based on their presence: looking like a professional, acting agreeably, performing as a teacher rather than a babysitter, and using befitting methods. Students also felt substitute

teachers should be evaluated on not showing favoritism and doing their job “without nagging” (p. 72).

And then there are the delineated objectives provided by Duebber (2000): “A substitute teacher is supposed to manage a class of strangers at a moment’s notice, teach all subjects from fractured plans, and maintain discipline and a sense of humor” (p. 73). Although her words are filled with sarcasm, they are truthful, nonetheless. As a substitute teacher, I often have little time to prepare for class; I have approximately one hour from the time I receive a call to substitute teach to get to class and begin teaching. The lesson plans provided may be difficult to follow or, just as often, reference materials I cannot locate. I am supposed to maintain discipline with students I am unfamiliar with, not knowing what practices are and are not effective with the group in front of me. And I must force myself to smile and not let my frustration rear itself out of fear that I otherwise would show bodily an inability to handle the assigned duties.

Perhaps the most important theme emerging on delineated classroom objectives for substitute teachers is that these vary according to circumstances. Although a couple of items emerge frequently, most notably that substitute teachers ought to follow lesson plans and maintain a well-behaved class, these items have different relative importance depending upon who is asked, and they are ill-defined. Because the research is inconclusive on what, exactly, is expected of substitute teachers, objectives assigned to a substitute teacher cannot be assumed from research, but must be gained through investigating the specific environment in which the substitute teacher works.

### *Problems of Substitute Teachers*

Having covered the ineffectiveness of substitute teachers and the classroom objectives substitute teachers are expected to follow, it is logical to wonder what contributes to substitute

teacher ineffectiveness, to their failure to meet the objectives assigned. Some, such as Wilson (1999), point to lack of qualifications as a culprit. Wilson finds problematic that “though many schools search for certified substitutes, some fail to place them in classes related to their field of study” (The Principal’s Responsibility section, ¶ 3). Hamann, Hedden, and Legette (2003) found that “music teachers do not have great confidence in substitute teachers’ preparedness, experience, or ability to teach” (Summary and Discussion section, ¶ 2).

Koelling (2001) offers mixed results on the level of substitute teacher preparation. On the positive side, most districts studied in the North Central region mandated that substitute teachers must hold a “either a regular teaching certificate or a substitute teaching permit” (p. 162) and must also have attained an undefined number of college credits. Furthermore, most districts attempted to pair substitute teachers with their respective subject areas for assignments in secondary schools (p. 169), and the largest districts, more often than not, implemented “formal orientation programs” for new substitute teachers (p. 166). Koelling also discovered, however, that such orientation programs were seldom used in small districts (p. 166) and that virtually no districts of any size required any prior teaching experience as a prerequisite to substitute teaching (p. 165).

Much literature focuses on the increase of student misbehavior in the presence of substitute teachers (Nidds and McGerald, 1994; Elstad, 2002; Hamann et al., 2003). As so aptly stated by Geiger, “The students’ game is often: ‘How can we drive the substitute crazy?’” (1996, Introduction section, ¶ 2). Some substitute teachers have responded by giving up on trying to teach, instead choosing to read or knit (Tannenbaum, 2000, What Students Want section, ¶ 1).

When Nidds and McGerald (1994) asked substitute teachers and their supervisors, “What is the most difficult problem substitute teachers face?” (¶ 7), one answer stood out:

All of the responses identified control of student behavior as the overriding difficulty of the substitute teacher. This problem was expressed in a number of ways: maintaining control, lack of knowledge of individual students with personal problems, lack of knowledge of school procedures, lack of knowledge of the “real” rules of a classroom (classroom routine), and lack of knowledge of where students should sit. (¶ 8)

Both Geiger (1996) and Elstad (2002) express a belief that student misbehavior may be a symptom of differences between permanent teachers and teacher substitutes rather than the cause of differences, and without blaming substitute teacher incompetence as its cause. Geiger comments, “Substitutes often lack the gamut of rewards available to the permanent teacher such as grades, offering long term rewards, or establishing rapport with the students” (Introduction, ¶ 2). Elstad (2002) illustrates that permanent teachers and students have a different “contractual relationship” governing their behaviors than do substitute teachers and students (p. 70).

By indicating that there are barriers to substitute teacher success beyond insufficient substitute teacher education and student misbehavior, these researchers provide hope that new avenues exist for decreasing the discrepancy between substitute teacher and permanent teacher performance. Perhaps the solution to newly discovered problems could result in reduced student misbehavior, a current obstacle to teaching and learning. Maybe substitute teachers can be more successful in their jobs.

### *Assisting Substitute Teachers*

When it comes to how best to improve substitute teacher performance, many researchers emphasize substitute teacher training. Hamann et al. states, “The disparity in qualifications and training between regular teachers and substitute teachers reinforces the idea that substitute teachers may be less prepared, which ultimately affects the degree of teacher effectiveness”

(2003, Qualifications and Training section, ¶ 3). Wilson stresses the importance of offering orientation for substitute teachers, explaining, “Like any teachers, [substitute teachers] need a basic framework for their job and a clear definition of their role” (1999, Make Them Feel at Home section, ¶ 1). Lassman (2001) goes so far as to say,

Appropriate inservice topics could be presented during staff development time that are directly related to substitute teachers. This could help substitutes feel a part of a professional team as well as enhance their performance in the classroom. Substitutes should not only be willing to go to these meetings, but they should be required to go in order to keep their job. (p. 627)

Researchers seemingly agree that training is helpful, if not essential, to the success of a substitute teacher.

Regardless of the consensus on this matter, the truth is, there is inadequate research to demonstrate that extra training of substitute teachers actually helps solve substitute teachers’ problems. Hamann, Hedden, and Legette (2003) admit, “Research needs to be conducted to determine the effectiveness of substitute teacher workshops and programs offered by school districts” (Summary and Discussion section, ¶ 8). Dickenson, McBride, Lamb-Milligan, and Nichols (2003) do not find school staff trainings useful, stating, “Reasons for the ineffectiveness of staff development programs are numerous” (p. 165).

When researchers Nidds and McGerald (1994) asked substitute teachers and their supervisors what they thought could decrease the problems of substitute teachers (¶ 9), they received many personal opinions on how substitute teacher problems could be decreased through administrative measures, additional guidance by permanent teachers, and departmental assistance. Advice for administrators included utilizing the most qualified substitute teachers

most, placing substitute teachers in the classes they are most qualified to teach, and offering inservices for substitute teachers. Teachers were told to provide seating charts, have three days worth of lesson plans available, and provide a list of classroom rules as well as how to handle infractions of known troublesome students. Requested of departments was to have one person assigned to greet substitute teachers; this person would provide the substitutes with lesson plans and necessary materials and would also tell them where to seek further assistance. An additional idea was that substitute teachers should complete a standard form at the day's end that would be copied for the permanent teacher and responsible administrator (§ 11-13).

Fielder's recommendations (1991) on how to assist substitute teachers, though also not validated by research, are at least derived in part from data obtained on what makes substitute teachers effective: "movement/monitoring behaviors..., on-task concern..., physical touch..., behavior expectation statements..., personalizing..., discipline..., [and] positive reinforcement" (Findings section, ¶ 2).

Fielder (1991) believes substitute effectiveness could be encouraged through multiple avenues: Principals and assistant principals can observe for what effective or counterproductive traits a substitute teacher displays, and substitute teachers could receive training in beneficial behaviors prior to being permitted to substitute teach. Interviews could be conducted prior to hiring substitute teachers, through which questions would be used to ascertain whether the applicants possess the desired traits. Substitute teacher applicants with education degrees should be hired ahead of those with noneducation degrees, with both of these being preferred to applicants with no degree; those with permanent teaching experience should be utilized over those without. Fielder also believes teachers should leave lesson plans geared toward typical

classroom activities and should make evident to students how they are to behave for the substitute teacher (Recommendations section, ¶ 1).

More work that investigates what helps and hinders substitute teacher performance needs to be done so that research-based recommendations can be developed and tested. To accomplish this end, research to discover the expectations for the substitute teacher is also required.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This study investigated how environmental factors influenced the researcher's success as a substitute teacher. As explained earlier, success was measured by the substitute teacher's attainment of delineated classroom objectives as perceived from sources such as lesson plans and conversations with others within Manistique Area Schools. Essentially, this is a case study, since it focuses on only the researcher's experiences. Its methods, however, are ethnographic.

According to the United States General Accounting Office (2003), ethnographic research occurs in four phases: preparation, where information about a community is gathered and a research focus is developed; field data collection, where a researcher obtains information through "human observation and interaction in a local setting, with the researcher as the primary data collection tool" (p. 6); coding of data; and, finally, analysis, which occurs throughout the research process. These phases were all utilized in this study.

Even more significant to ethnographic research, perhaps, is that the researcher focused on her success through the context of school culture rather than through imposed preconceived standards; that the researcher viewed her achievement from the standpoint of a member of the culture; and that the methods, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis emerged more fully with the progression of the study. All these are important according to Spindler's (1982) list of "criteria for a good ethnography of schooling" (p. 6).

There are, of course, limitations to naturalistic research. These are overshadowed by greater opportunities for understanding the complexities that impact how well the substitute teacher achieves delineated objectives.

### *Selection of Subject and Setting*

The setting is Manistique Area Schools' classrooms, grades 1-12, taught by the researcher during the spring half of the 2006-2007 school year. This was a matter of convenience, since the researcher resides in the Manistique Area School district and substitute teaches within this district. A wide grade range was chosen to ensure enough substitute teaching days were obtained for sufficient data collection. To obtain greater uniformity of the objectives and culture, the decision was made to include neither classes of students under first grade nor substitute teaching experiences that could have occurred in a neighboring school district, in a private school within Manistique, or in an alternative high school in Manistique.

This study focused on the researcher's own classes for many reasons. Convenience, again, was one factor. Another consideration was the researcher's optimal position for research. Already a substitute teacher for Manistique Area Schools, the researcher could view interactions of the school culture from an insider's perspective; conversely, as a fairly new substitute teacher who had not taught within most Manistique Area Schools' classrooms, the researcher was still enough of an outsider to perceive sources of delineated objectives not yet internalized and taken for granted. Another reason to focus on the researcher's own classrooms lies in a key benefit of such naturalistic research: observation effects are minimized when research remains unobtrusive.

### *Description of Subject*

The researcher is a married female in her mid twenties. She has earned a Bachelor's degree in education, a psychology minor, and more than half the necessary credits toward a Master's degree in education. She holds an elementary professional teaching certificate in Wisconsin; in Michigan, where the study takes place, she holds an elementary provisional teaching certificate and a substitute teaching permit. She has completed research courses both as

an undergraduate student of Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and through the University of Wisconsin-Stout of Menomonie, Wisconsin.

The researcher attended Manistique Area Schools as a student from kindergarten through grade twelve. She returned to the district as a substitute teacher in the spring of 2003, during which time she was called only to teach at the middle and high school levels. She took a hiatus from teaching for three years until the 2006-2007 school year. At that time, and now living in the city of Manistique, she requested her name be added to the substitute teacher lists for grades preschool through 12 in Manistique Area Schools, Manistique's Head Start program, and a private school in Manistique, as well as for the Big Bay de Noc school district that borders Manistique. During the time she was gathering research, only Manistique Area Schools requested her as a substitute teacher.

### *Description of Setting*

The Manistique Area School District covers 880 square miles (Manistique Area Schools, 2006, Geographic Size of District section, ¶1). It is located in the rural, central Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and its three operational schools are located in the small city of Manistique. First grade is held at Fairview School, where the kindergarten students attend; second and third are at Lincoln School, which also houses a four-year-old program. Grades four through twelve are in the Manistique Middle and High School building, termed "the high school" by area residents. The schools fall within a six mile span toward the western end of the district.

GreatSchools.net (2006) provides data obtained from the Michigan Department of Education on Manistique Area Schools for the 2005-2006 school year; in grades kindergarten through 12, a total of 1,132 students were enrolled in Manistique Area Schools (Introduction section). Of these, 81% were white and 17% were American Indian; 49% were eligible for free

or reduced price lunch (Student Economic Level section). This data indicates a student body that is relatively racially homogenous and economically challenged.

### *Early Data Collection and Analysis*

Extensive notes were taken on delineated objectives and their sources as well as the external factors impacting the substitute teacher's attainment of these objectives. Although there should be no confidentiality concerns in such purely observational research where the researcher herself is the subject of research, the researcher still chose the most general descriptors of classrooms and individuals that still carried required meaning (i.e., "3<sup>rd</sup> grade" rather than "Mrs. Doe's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade") to protect the identity of members of the school community.

After four substitute teaching days, the researcher used deductive reasoning to analyze data for emergent themes and to understand the relationships between environmental factors and classroom objectives. Although four days seems a small number, it encompassed a wide range of experiences, as I expressed in an e-mail to my research advisor on February 25, 2007:

I'd hoped to have more than four sub days in for elementary/middle/high school by this point in the semester, but you'll see from my notes that I did get many varied experiences in these four days--from elementary to high school, subjects including computer and Spanish and reading and science, and for 7 different teachers, so I hope this is sufficient to base some preliminary ideas on that I can look to support or refute. (Personal Communication)

The method of analysis was simple, albeit painstaking. First, delineated objectives were discerned from field notes. These objectives were recorded, and notes were reorganized beneath each objective to show more clearly the support for each objective from the array of chronicled experiences. Next, environmental factors that impacted objectives were labeled and placed next

to the delineated objectives they affected. As with the delineated objectives, notes were reorganized beneath the relevant environmental factors. Notes irrelevant to these purposes were not included in the reordered data. All notes, including those initially discarded as irrelevant; delineated objectives; and environmental factors were reviewed repeatedly by the researcher until she was satisfied that the list of objectives and related environmental factors was complete, coherent, and fully supported by the field notes.

The method I used to organize material into related themes was illustrated in an e-mail I sent to my advisor (Personal communication, February 25, 2007). On one line, I wrote a delineated objective: "Leave notes about absences and classroom occurrences." Below the delineated objective, I wrote evidence derived from field notes supporting that objective, such as presence of a form "with lines to write in absences and events" and having heard teachers complain about not receiving such substitute teacher notes submitted to the office. Having established the validity of the delineated objective, I then went on to a final section listing environmental factors that impact success in leaving notes about absences and classroom occurrences. In this section, I indicated that communication from regular teachers altered my behavior so that I took "more careful notes on post-its left on each class' pile of submitted work than on the sub sheets I pick up and return to the office each day. I left careful notes in the room rather than with the office because I have heard teachers complain about not receiving these notes submitted to the office." In this way, the objective "Leave notes about absences and classroom occurrences" was supported by field notes, as was the environmental factor of communication by regular teachers, a factor that clearly impacted the substitute teacher's effectiveness in achieving success in the stated delineated objective.

Once I had carefully outlined preliminary findings in this manner, I created an instrument to test my findings (Appendix A). This instrument listed each delineated objective alongside the environmental factors that field notes indicated might impact the objective. This instrument was included in the e-mail to my research advisor (February 5, 2007) so I could receive feedback on the instrument as well as on the quality of my notes and the validity of themes I discerned from those notes. This was required so the researcher could make needed changes to increase reliability and validity subsequent research. The research advisor offered the following constructive criticism:

These are accurate and good notes--though they are a bit dry--there is a lack of you in them. Oh, I get a sense of what you did--but not very much how you felt and what your interactions were throughout with teachers and administrators. I get a sense of some difficulty with the green slip--but except for the idea that the student could make you cry, I don't know how you feel during the day. (Personal Communication, 3/7/2007)

The researcher responded to these comments by adding more personal reflection to the hard facts recorded in the field notes.

#### *Development and Use of Instrumentation*

According to the United States General Accounting Office (2003), ethnographic analysis “begins with final coding of text data” (p. 8). Spindler (1982) states this principle quite clearly in relation to instrumentation, saying that instruments should be “generated in the field as a result of observation and ethnographic inquiry” (p. 7). After themes emerged concerning classroom objectives and the environmental factors impacting these objectives, then, the researcher created and utilized an instrument that listed the delineated objectives and the environmental factors that influenced their achievement (Appendix A).

The instrument provided a structure for observation and note taking. It directed the researcher to contemplate whether themes previously noted appeared were supported by subsequent research and to determine the nature of the relationship between environmental factors and success in objective completion. It furthermore prompted the researcher to note any classroom objectives and environmental factors that were previously not recorded.

Lines at the top of the form allowed space to record the date and class in which observations occurred. On the "class" line, I would write the grade level and, in middle and high school, also the subject taught to indicate the specific setting of the substitute teaching assignment. Sometimes, one form was used for an entire day; when level of objective attainment varied for different reasons, one form was not always sufficient to record all pertinent data, and then multiple forms would be used. A new form was used each and every time the date or setting changed.

Using this instrument, each delineated objective was given a whole number from 1 to 5, 1 meaning the objective was not at all achieved and 5 indicating complete objective attainment. If the objective was not delineated during the class indicated on the form, "N/A" was written to indicate "not applicable." Environmental factors corresponding to delineated objectives were rated using a "+," "-", or "N/A." The original intent behind the "+," "-", or "N/A" was quickly forgotten, and on April 9, 2007, I indicate in field notes that changes to the form are required:

Make this 2 sided so there is room for directions so there is no confusion about whether "+" and "-" indicates presence of item (or lack of) or whether or not item influenced goal. This is also needed if someone else is to use this form. Wording of this form also needs revision. Something like "Assignments inherently motivating" does not work; marking it with a + indicates that the assignment motivated students and that this impacted the

objective's attainment. A "-" indicates that the inherent motivation had no connection to the objective's attainment. No room is left to indicate whether *lack* of motivation impacts an objective.

In other words, the researcher became confused using her own instrument. She was unsure whether environmental factors should be rated on their presence, on whether they impacted delineated objectives, or on their positive vs. negative impact on delineated objectives. This confusion was compounded by lack of neutral wording on some environmental factors so that ratings could also be used to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements.

To increase the reliability, a new, revised instrument (Appendix B) was created prior to the next observation. The "+,-,N/A" prompt designed to offer possible ratings for environmental factors was replaced by the prompt, "Did the following impact attainment of above objective? ('Y,' 'N,' or 'N/A')." The environmental factors themselves were revised to be more neutral. "Expectations understood" became "Clarity of expectations;" "Others' assumed incompetence" became "Perceptions of substitute's competence;" "Assignments inherently motivating" became "Inherent motivation of assignments."

The prompt for rating delineated objective attainment was also altered for clarity. Replacing "Extent achieved, or N/A," was the more explanatory question, "To what extent was the above objective achieved?" Replacing numerical ratings were six possible answers, listed in multiple choice format: not applicable, not at all, a little, halfway, mostly, and completely. The instrument was expanded from a one-sided to a two-sided form, with extra space provided for comments on the nature of relationships between environmental factors and delineated objectives and for recording unlisted factors and objectives.

After using the revised form only one time, on April 13, 2007, the instruction to rate environmental factors as “Y,” “N,” or “N/A” was disregarded. The form was meant to aid observations, not hinder them, and it was easier to simply find those factors that were relevant and mark them with a “Y” and ignore the rest. Therefore, this was the practice used on all forms after this date, and some have the “N,” or “N/A” crossed out for clarity. The form used by a second rater had the “N” and “N/A” crossed out by the researcher in this manner before it was given to the second rater in addition to the words “or blank” written above the crossed out portion. Thus, the question and possible answers on the second rater’s form read as follows: “Did the following impact attainment of the above objective? (‘Y,’ or blank).” This was done to aid the self-explanatory nature of the form used by the second rater.

#### *Reliability and Validity Testing*

A second rater used the form only one time, and this was to assist in establishing content validity of the instrument and, through this, of the researcher’s tentative conclusions. Support was gained in favor of the test’s content validity.

A classroom aide agreed to assist in evaluating the researcher’s attainment of delineated objectives. Prior to her substitute teaching assignment, the researcher showed the aide the form, explained directions for its completion, and clarified areas the aide had questions on. The raters completed their forms independently to avoid influencing one another’s ratings. Their responses were astonishingly similar.

For the objective “Get to the appropriate room on time,” both the researcher and rater indicated that the objective was completely attained by the substitute teacher and placed a “Y” by the “Clarity of expectations” environmental factor. The objective “Record and submit student absences” also received a “completely” rating from both raters, and both raters additionally

marked the environmental factors of “Clarity of expectations” and “Accessibility of required materials” with a “Y.”

Both raters placed a “completely” near the “Maintain discipline in classroom” objective, although a slight difference emerged: the researcher placed a “Y” near the environmental factor “Consequences for student behaviors” and the second rater did not put a “Y” near any factor. Her comment in that section, however, indicates that she did indeed find consequences for student behaviors significant: “Explained assignment to children, which they all did & when inappropriate language was being she took care of it right away.”

Under “Follow the teacher’s plan for lesson,” both raters indicated the objective was attained “not at all,” and neither implicated a single external factor as significant to why the substitute teacher was not successful in this area. Rather, the comments written by both raters attribute the failure to substitute teacher error. The researcher wrote, “I gave students the wrong 2 worksheets. I don’t know that there was a single external factor contributing to me not making this one. It was an error on my part—I simply passed out the wrong worksheets. Instructions, all else had been clear.” The second rater’s comment said, similarly, “Gave wrong worksheets (accidentally).”

Under the objective “Keep students occupied for most of hour,” both the researcher and second rater circled “mostly,” and neither indicated that any environmental factors contributed to this. The researcher’s comment indicates that keeping the students occupied for this amount of time was due to personal factors rather than external—she could have given the students more work but chose not to. She wrote that she “could have given more worksheets on top of what I already assigned, but I hate to give students more work than [they] expected.”

The only objective in which the two ratings seemed at great odds was on the item, “Communicate with staff about daily events.” For this objective, the researcher circled that the objective was attained “completely” and marked “Clarity of expectations” and “Accessibility of required materials” as contributing factors. The second rater, however, marked that the objective was “not applicable.” Although the researcher did not put a written rationale near the rating in this section, it was her practice to write notes to the teacher about the day’s events, and she recalls doing so on this day and even handing the notes and the form from the office requesting notes to the second rater so she saw the same materials, just as she showed her the lesson plans, gradebook, and worksheets. The researcher believes her written response indeed fulfilled the objective of communicating daily events. The second rater’s notation in this section indicates that her idea of the word “communication” differed from the researcher’s in that it only included oral communication: “There was no staff members calling or coming in class room.” There was not necessarily a difference between views on what occurred in the classroom, then, but only in understanding of the word “communication.” If this instrument was again used by multiple raters, then, greater clarification of the word “communication” would be needed.

Also demonstrating reliability of this form and thus of the researcher’s conclusions is that the second rater did not add a single additional delineated objective to the form, nor did the researcher; both agreed that the themes written were adequate to describe the delineated objectives and environmental factors of the observed class period.

Support for the reliability of findings was mixed when an administrator assessed the substitute teacher using an alternate form. The substitute teacher requested this observation for the primary purpose of advancing career goals, but the form used by the administrator, like the

form used by the researcher, focused on the substitute teacher's success in a variety of areas, thereby affording an opportunity for comparison.

The form the administrator used was not typically used for evaluations on substitute teachers, but instead was used to assess permanent teacher performance; most objectives listed on the administrator's form interestingly did not correspond with those on the researcher's form. Although this could have indicated a problem with the content validity of the researcher's form, reflection and review of notes indicated that most areas assessed by the administrator's form had never been indicated as important for the substitute teacher. None of the six "Planning and Preparation" objectives on his chart, for instance, had ever been asked of the substitute teacher, though she frequently worked toward these for her own purposes.

Items related to the objectives I encountered were "Managing Student Behavior," which corresponds to the objective I had titled "Maintain discipline in the classroom," and "Maintaining Accurate Records," which could approximate "Record and submit student absences." There were no similar categories for the following objectives on my form: "Get to the appropriate room on time," "Communicate with staff about daily events," "Follow the teacher's plan for the lesson," or "Keep students occupied for most of the hour."

There were only two areas we each had in common, and the administrator did not rate me on one: "Maintaining Accurate Records." Concerning this, he wrote, "N/A." whereas I rated myself with a "4" in the category titled "Record and submit student absences," indicating I felt I mostly accomplished the objective. These ratings are not at odds with one another; the administrator was simply not observing at the time record keeping was being done.

In the area of student behavior, the administrator gave me the equivalent of a 3.5 on a 4 point scale whereas I rated myself with a 4 on a 5 point scale. These ratings appear similar.

However, the administrator commented, “The class was very well behaved and it is clear that the students are aware of your expectations.” My comment read, “I had students use the bathroom at recess to cut down on students leaving class for this and explained this to students. It worked.”

Even though the administrator and I both felt similarly about my attainment of the objective, then, we had each attributed this attainment to different factors, neither environmental but rather under substitute teacher control. In contrast to believing that one view is more right than the other, the researcher feels this indicates that any one view of a situation, including her own, is necessarily incomplete, a clear limitation to this type of research. This does not mean that either view is invalidated; each perspective contributes to understanding the substitute teacher in relation to other elements within the classroom.

To determine if findings could be generalized, the researcher used the form to record observations of her performance as a substitute teacher in a kindergarten classroom and as a substitute aide. Observations recorded of a guest who instructed during two periods in which the researcher was a substitute teacher also assist in determining whether findings can be generalized.

The observations during substitute teaching of the kindergarten class would not be identified as being different from observations in first through twelfth grade were it not for the “Kindergarten” label at the top; no obvious difference was noted (Field notes, April 9, 2007). The observations made when the substitute teacher served as a substitute aide, however, showed remarkable differences. There were no additional responsibilities for a substitute teacher, but two significant differences: “Maintain a disciplined classroom” and “Keep students occupied for most of hour” were checked “N/A,” whereas these were always listed as objectives for a substitute teacher. “Record and submit student absences” was also checked “N/A,” but this

occasionally occurred during substitute teaching, as well, depending upon whether this had already been taken care of by someone else. This latter objective, then, is not always clearly assigned to one person.

Where substitute teaching delineated objectives did apply to the position of substitute aide, environmental factors influenced success in objective completion in predictable ways. Student misbehavior, for instance, impeded substitute aide ability to follow the teacher's plan for the lesson. I wrote, "There was one student [the teacher] directed me to have read the directions aloud to me.... He would say nothing except that he'd read them already" (Field notes, April 29, 2007). This finding suggests that environmental factors likely impact individuals across situations similarly.

On April 23, 2003, the researcher had the opportunity to observe a guest teacher while substitute teaching. Although the researcher's ratings reflect the success of the substitute teacher, she marked that "Inherent motivation of assignments," something solely under the control of the guest speaker, was a factor in "Maintain discipline of the classroom," an objective marked as "completely" achieved. An accompanying note states, "Students very attentive with guest speaker who was talking about alcohol use." Again, environmental factors demonstrated a predictable influence, this time in the instruction of someone other than the substitute teacher.

Is this research helpful in understanding experiences outside that of the researcher as substitute teacher, then? From the tests described, it appears that delineated objectives applying in grades 1-12 apply also in kindergarten, and that other individuals serving in similar temporary teaching capacities are responsible for attaining the same objectives. Specific objectives are not necessarily applicable for other positions within the school system. Objectives in all positions are predictably impacted by environmental influences, however. This lends support to the idea that

findings on how environmental factors impact delineated objectives is valid beyond the experiences of the researcher and of substitute teachers in general—how far this can be generalized has yet to be determined.

#### *Final Data Analysis*

After all data collection was completed, data was again analyzed using deductive reasoning. Classroom objectives and environmental factors written on the instrument were typed into a word processing document, and statements that supported their existence from all phases of the research were typed beneath them.

Ratings provided on the instrument were less helpful than written notes in this process, both in determining classroom objectives and in determining the environmental factors. This was especially true concerning the way positive and negative ratings were used in conjunction with environmental factors on and prior to April 9, when confusion about the meaning of these markings was indicated; in fact, the positive and negative ratings on and prior to April 9 were disregarded for evaluative purposes, and only those appearing on the subsequent revised form were considered by the researcher to have any meaning. Even on the revised instrument, however, written notes remained the most valuable indicator of what objectives and environmental factors were of the greatest importance, and only written notes could explain the nature of the relationship between these variables. In the end, ratings served only as an additional check on whether environmental factors held the same directional impact from one scenario to another and to help compare findings between raters in tests of reliability.

Notes were analyzed to determine whether any evidence opposing the presence of objectives listed on the instrument emerged. No such contradictory evidence was found, so the researcher felt this supported the reliability of stated delineated objectives. However, the

researcher found that stated delineated objectives did not encompass the full range of delineated objectives emerging from field notes. To remedy this problem, delineated objectives were reworded to encompass experiences more fully, and relevant portions of field notes were placed beneath each delineated objective to demonstrate support for their existence. Delineated objectives were analyzed in light of their support to ensure that they were precise in explaining the specific examples of delineated objectives listed beneath them, and changes to wording of delineated objectives was made as necessary. “Maintain discipline in classroom,” for example, was made more specific through rewording it as “Enforcing rules.”

This process of reorganizing notes also brought to light whole categories of delineated objectives that had been ignored on the instrument used. “Following Directions of Permanent School Workers,” for instance, emerged as a significant factor so taken for granted that it was overlooked in the creation of the instrument.

As during the preliminary data analysis, environmental factors were typed beneath the delineated objectives they impacted, with field notes proving the existence of environmental factors grouped beneath corresponding factor. Relationships between environmental factors and corresponding objectives were noted. Notes were reviewed to determine whether environmental factors were contradicted by any observation.

Through this process of reorganizing notes to determine whether stated delineated objectives and environmental factors were truly proven by recorded data, “Perceptions of substitute’s competence” was removed as an environmental factor. Support for this factor was weak; every support provided for this factor could easily have been interpreted to have no connection to perceptions of substitute teacher competence. For instance, in the preliminary data analysis e-mailed to my research advisor on February 25, 2007, I had written as rationale for this

factor, “When teachers know that a substitute teacher is coming in, they provide easy-to-implement lesson plans that do not require me to know much about the subjects” (Personal communication). No evidence, however, supported that lesson plans were easy due to a perceived incompetence of substitute teacher. In fact, subsequent research demonstrated that simplified lesson plans are at least sometimes given to substitute teachers for reasons unrelated to substitute teacher ability. On April 26, 2007, for instance, I wrote in my field notes that a teacher “did not think it fair for a teacher to require me to plan lessons.” There was insufficient evidence to determine what, if any, perceptions of substitute competence might have on any objective.

“Proactive measures to head off problems” was also removed as an environmental factor. This factor was too vague to be of any productive use. It could refer to the substitute teacher’s actions, which would then not qualify as an environmental factor. (“Consequences for student misbehavior was eliminated for exactly this reason; this was a substitute teacher controlled action, not an environmental factor.) “Proactive measures to head off problems” could also redundantly describe actions taken by others within the school system that fell into another, more descriptive category. Neither possibility was deemed useful for understanding how environmental factors impact delineated objectives.

Just as a review of field notes indicated that certain delineated objectives were not recorded on the instrument, some environmental factors, as well, emerged as themes not evident at the time of creation of the instrument. This included the environmental factor of “time.” Any such factor emerging as significant according to field note analysis is regarded with equal importance to factors that were included on the instrument.

In all cases, listed delineated objectives and environmental factors are actually large categories of specific, sometimes isolated, environmental factors and classroom objectives

recorded in field notes. To ensure that stated relationships between these groupings was reliable, it was necessary to evaluate field notes for consistency of these relationships. If positive student behavior was said to increase effectiveness of rule enforcement, for instance, then any instance where positive student behavior decreased effectiveness of rule enforcement would have invalidated this claim. Specific instances where no impact was demonstrated between an environmental factor and delineated objective would not invalidate a stated relationship between the two. Analysis revealed that all final claims of relationships between environmental factors and delineated objectives were appropriate, with no contradicting data.

Finally, for ease of transmission to and use of information, the researcher reorganized classroom objectives into two overlying themes: the substitute teacher is to follow directions of regular school workers and the substitute teacher is to contribute to order. Environmental factors were grouped into six themes, all of which applied to both overlying objectives. The final themes of environmental factors are as follows: clarity of objectives, interjections by regular school workers, materials, lesson qualities, time, and student behaviors.

### *Limitations*

One must be cautious in generalizing findings drawn from a case study to new situations. Spindler (1982) points out, however, that this concern need not be greater than in a study of many participants randomly chosen to represent a larger population:

An in-depth study that gives accurate knowledge of one setting not markedly dissimilar to other relevant settings is likely to be generalizable in substantial degree to these other settings.... It is better to have in-depth, accurate knowledge of one setting than superficial and possibly skewed or misleading information about isolated relationships in many settings. (p. 8)

Another consideration is that researcher interpretation of the researcher's own experiences could result in more subjective data collection and interpretation. Limiting this concern is the researcher's extensive training in writing observations objectively. Training first occurred while taking undergraduate psychology classes. The researcher was trained again in objective recording as a prerequisite for employment with the Wisconsin Early Autism Project, where notes were taken on activities with and of a child with autism. Additional training in objective recording was received as a requirement of working with elderly residents in an assisted living facility. There, the researcher took notes concerning residents and significant events. The researcher was trained in taking notes twice more prior to two positions working as a technician for two community based mental health agencies, where she took notes on behaviors of families seeking and receiving behavioral health services, relevant environmental factors, and her own interventions with parents and children.

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) indicate that triangulation, specifically feedback obtained from people other than the researcher in the environment and from research team members, is sufficient to reduce concerns of researcher subjectivity (p. 544). The researcher did indeed have her research advisor review her work during the research process and received feedback that increased the level of personal information she included when collecting data. The researcher did not succeed at gaining advisor feedback on whether conclusions were appropriately rooted in data prior to development of the instrument, as planned.

Concern for researcher subjectivity was further alleviated through comparison of ratings between the researcher and a second rater on the instrument created to test preliminary findings. In the one area in which a discrepancy was noted, written comments by the second rater indicate that the problem was in the clarity of the wording of the instrument, not in conclusions gained

from observation. In another reliability test, a second rater using an alternate form demonstrated consistency with the researcher's rating on the one objective observed by both, her ability to manage student behavior, although in this instance, each contributed objective attainment to a different cause. The researcher believes that, although the differing views on causation demonstrated that she did not take all possible perspectives at the time of that observation, multiple observations over a period of months provided her the ability to take a greater number of perspectives over time.

The instrument had no established reliability or validity going into the research, as it was not developed until the research yielded preliminary results. Being derived from data obtained rather than artificially imposed, though, this self-created instrument could yield greater validity than an instrument supported by statistics. Additionally, reliability and validity improved over time as the instrument evolved to incorporate new insights gleaned as research continued. New findings from the final data analysis are not included in the instrument, however, and the instrument must necessarily evolve to incorporate all new data from this research and any further research to provide the most comprehensive picture possible.

Such limitations do not at all contraindicate the usefulness of the research. Limitations have been recognized and minimized where possible by measures such as use of multiple raters for data analysis. Practices with weaknesses in one area yield compensatory strengths in another, such as through sacrificing the knowledge of others' experiences while gaining a deeper understanding of one substitute teaching experience.

Such understanding should yield many important benefits. With knowledge of what increases and decreases the researcher's effectiveness as a substitute teacher, changes can be made to improve the researcher's ability to attain goals. Further research may show that certain

factors important to the researcher's effectiveness apply across situations, so that substitute teaching as a whole can improve, bringing increased peace of mind to parents and administrators, intrinsic reward to substitute teachers, and learning to students.

What follows is discussion of the data obtained through the application of the methods described here. The conclusions offered in the results and discussion section of this research report were written after the conclusion of this study that occurred, as planned, at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

#### Chapter IV: Delineated Objectives for the Substitute Teacher of Manistique Area Schools

This study used ethnographic research to determine how environmental factors contributed to the researcher's attainment of classroom objectives while serving as a substitute teacher during the spring semester of the 2006-2007 school year in Manistique Area Schools' grade one through twelve classrooms. Recorded observations demonstrated two overlapping objectives for the substitute teacher discerned through various verbal and written communications. The first objective is to follow directions of permanent school workers. The second objective is to contribute to order in routine operations.

##### *The Substitute Teacher Shall Follow Directions of Permanent School Workers*

Various circumstances demonstrated that the substitute teacher was expected to take direction from those who worked permanent positions within the school. Although written lesson plans left for the substitute teacher were the most common and obvious evidence that the substitute teacher was subject to others' direction, verbal communications with school workers provided further evidence.

One such verbal interaction demonstrated that I was to follow direction even from a person whose position might suggest that they would take direction from and assist me, rather than the other way around. In my field notes on May 3, 2007, I wrote the following:

My classroom had a [volunteer] who assisted, and she gave directives to the students from the moment they began entering the classroom. I do not recall a single positive statement she made to a student the entire time she was in the classroom. She had many corrective statements, mostly telling students to be quiet, once telling a student, "Shut up." When students filed into the classroom minutes before I began teaching, she told students, "Sit down!" and told them not to talk. She especially singled out one student.

When I passed out the initial worksheets, she told the student to sit next to her to do his work; immediately, he began protesting. She explained, first to him and then to me in front of him, that unless he sat next to her, he would do no work. I wanted to intervene on the student's behalf and ask that he be given the chance to work with the others, but I was in unfamiliar territory.... I began to feel more badly for the student when I heard the grandma correcting him repeatedly for his efforts; when doing the first spelling worksheet assigned, I heard her saying, "Erase that! That's supposed to be an 'n,' not an 'h.'" I glanced at his paper; it looked like an "n" to me.... I told the student that if he did his worksheet, we could try him at the table with the other students, hoping I was not causing a problem between myself and the [volunteer] by my interference.... When I returned [from recess], the [volunteer] explained, again, why she felt the student should work with her. A short time later, a teacher entered and told me that the student we had been discussing should be working with the [volunteer] because he worked best this way. I knew from what I had seen already that this was not true; however, the message seemed clear to me.... This teacher was intervening to make sure that what the [volunteer], a regular in the classroom, wanted would be respected by me.... So, from one recess to the next, the student sat with the [volunteer]. She kept him in the next recess for refusing to work with her.

Through this exchange, I learned that my professional judgment and ethics were placed on lesser footing than the judgment of a person I had assumed to be my subordinate.

More commonly, direction came through written directions of the teachers for whom I substitute taught. The importance of following written plans is suggested in my field notes from February 7, 2007, when I wrote that a teacher for whom I substitute taught "covered the written

plans with me, explaining that students have questions to answer from their book and on a worksheet. He also covered questions I could assign if students were off task, which also were written in the plans.” This teacher’s oral communications reinforced the notion that the teacher meant for me to follow his plans, not merely view them as a suggestion.

Occasionally, plans left were strictly verbal. This was the case on February 12, 2007, when my field notes include the following:

The teacher told me what chapters to have the students finish on the tape that was already playing and told me in a stern voice that students were to listen silently and pay attention until done. When done, she said, I should give the students the three worksheets she showed me and explain the directions to the students. She then told me that students would be entering for math at 10:30 and that I was to explain congruence to the students and have them do a math worksheet.

This teacher’s directions were, again, given in a manner that demonstrates that the directions given were to be followed by the substitute teacher.

Another occasion that underscores the importance of the substitute teacher following another’s direction occurred on January 29, 2007. On this day, my field notes reflect one teacher’s insistence on obtaining a lesson plan for me to follow even though I had brought my own material from which I could have taught.

Another teacher asks me if I found the classlist; I say no. She finds the list. She says the regular teacher called her this morning and asks if I have the lesson plans. I say no; she...calls the sick teacher from the phone in the room, taking notes on what needs to be done throughout the morning classes. She explains them and hands them to me. This teacher then gives me her name and extension number, telling me I can call her if needed.

She locates and hands me the Harry Potter video the students are to watch first hour and tells me the location of the video for third hour, then leaves. (January 29, 2007)

Field notes I wrote on March 14, 2007, reflect the infrequency with which I was permitted to even decide how to teach:

I've never had so much fun subbing! The objectives were clear—I knew what the kids were working on. But how to attain those objectives was largely up to me. My dialogue wasn't scripted—no “Read paragraph from page whatever of the teacher manual and then assign the work.” There were some workbook pages, but they weren't just self-explanatory busy-work. They actually covered ground the students hadn't covered before. So I got to do what I enjoy most—teaching.

Although this segment demonstrates my desire for greater freedom in teaching style overall, it also shows that not every aspect of substitute teaching was scripted by another. In this case, the teaching method was left to my discretion.

While lesson plans often dictated what must be taught, there were occasions on which the substitute teacher had freedom in selecting course objectives and material. Sometimes this came in the form of a notation on the lesson plan explaining that I could modify the plan if I so chose. When I took this liberty, however, the reaction I received from another teacher surprised me:

After the last class, I went to the teacher's lounge to assign grades for student work. A teacher asked what I was doing, and I explained the lessons I had developed and that I was now grading them, using students' grading of one another to guide me. She said she did not think it fair for a teacher to require me to plan lessons for the students. I told her I was not required to and that the regular teacher had left me plenty of videos to show to the students, but that she had left a note saying I could teach the students as I saw fit, and

so I chose to follow their interests. She commented something to the effect of, “Well, at least she left videos.” I said that I appreciate lessons that allow me to teach as I see fit because then I do not feel obligated to follow a lesson that does not seem effective to the students. She then said something about that being true, then said that she always writes her lessons out point by point, but that she does not care if a sub deviates from that.

(April 26, 2007)

From these field notes, there are two items worth noting. First, not every teacher who leaves a lesson plan expects it to be carried out explicitly by the substitute teacher. Second, at least one teacher connects leaving lesson plans with being fair toward the substitute teacher, showing that lesson plans are intended to help rather than encumber the substitute teacher.

From such examples, it is evident that the substitute teacher is expected to follow the rules of others within the school. The substitute teacher’s rank when it comes to decision-making falls below every regular worker in the school, no matter if the individual is a paid employee or a volunteer.

#### *The Substitute Teacher Shall Contribute to Order in Routine Operations*

The substitute teacher was assigned many responsibilities related to maintaining orderly operations during the teacher’s absence. Although the specific responsibilities assigned varied between substitute teaching assignments, they included taking phone calls, admitting visitors, and leading students in school drills. These objectives occurred only occasionally. Other objectives such as arriving on time, communicating items of significance to other staff, and enforcing rules among students, occurred on a regular basis.

### *Occasional Objectives*

Some delineated objectives, which I term “occasional objectives,” were not typically required of the substitute teacher. For instance, only my field notes for May 3, 2007 reflect that I was required to answer and direct all phone calls made to the school and to admit visitors to the school building. On this day, the school’s primary phone lines, video surveillance equipment, and door entry button were located within the classroom in which I substitute taught. During other substitute teaching experiences, I was not expected to perform such security-related duties; thus, answering the school’s main phone line and admitting visitors count as occasional objectives.

Another example of an occasional objective was that I was to assist with school drills occurring on two separate days. My field notes on May 17 express that I was required to assist with a lockdown drill, and on May 18, my field notes share my experiences guiding students through two tornado drills. There were not any drills during any other substitute teaching assignments.

Although these objectives were infrequent, they are still important to note. Their presence demonstrates a pattern of objectives designed to keep routine operations in effect during the teacher’s absence.

### *Typical Objectives*

Other responsibilities—that the substitute teacher is to arrive on time, enforce rules among students, and communicate significant events—were expected daily. Some objectives given to the substitute teacher within these categories, such as what constitutes a significant event in need of communication, varied from one substitute teaching experience to another.

However, these overlying categories of timeliness, rule enforcement, and communication of the significant remained constant.

### *Timeliness*

That the substitute teacher was to arrive on time was discerned from a couple sources. Firstly, school personnel called the substitute teacher and told her when to arrive at school for substitute teaching assignments. Secondly, a sheet given to the substitute teacher by an individual who scheduled the substitute teachers' teaching days indicated the time at which classes began and ended alongside the names of permanent teachers, their classroom numbers, and the subjects they taught.

There was one occasion on which the substitute teacher was not on time, and this scenario further reinforced that the substitute teacher was expected to be on time. On February 7, 2007, I was in the staff lounge at the time the class to which I was assigned began. My notes on that day state, "The secretary retrieved me from the lounge." This shows that being somewhere other than in class at the appointed time is not acceptable.

### *Rule Enforcement*

The importance of enforcing rules was expressed in many ways. A sheet titled "Procedures for Substitute Teachers" given to new substitute teachers listed the following rule:

*Do not* allow students unlimited bathroom passes. Some students may try to convince you that anyone may use the pass at any time. There should only be *one student out at a time!*

If it appears that student after student is asking—just indicate that *no more may go*.

This rule actually includes three rules: one student may not leave the classroom too many times, multiple students may not leave the classroom at once, and students may not leave the classroom if too many have already gone.

What constitutes “too many” absent from the room is admittedly subjective, and on May 22, 2007, my field notes show that I was rebuked for allowing just one student out of my room:

Some students are exempt from exams based on having less than a certain number of absences. One student told me she was exempt from the exam and this was her last day of school, and she asked if she could use the class time to clean out her locker. The exam was so pointless that I felt it was a better use of her time to clean out her locker than to sit through the preparations for it, and so I told her she could. The student soon returned, followed by a teacher who told me that students were not permitted to clean their lockers during class time.

Although the specific rule cited in this instance was that students may not clean their lockers during class, it again demonstrates the expectation that substitute teachers will keep the students in the classroom.

The expectations regarding bathroom passes and students’ time out of the room seems related to another rule expressed on the same procedural sheet: “*Never!* leave a class unattended. If you need to leave, ask a teacher next door to cover – or use the call button and ask for an administrator to come up.” It makes sense that if a substitute teacher’s job is to maintain order and to enforce rules among students that the substitute teacher would be present with students to ensure that these expectations are fulfilled.

The main rule the substitute teacher is to enforce, as delineated through encounters with permanent school personnel and teacher aides, is that the class is to remain “quiet,” another ill-defined rule. During one class, “One student sang as he worked while I was leaning over him to see whether he needed assistance. The noise level in the classroom did not strike me as excessive. A principal looked into the room, looked at the student I was standing over, and said

while looking at him, 'I can hear you down the hall' (February 7, 2007)." In my field notes on another day, I wrote, "A teacher told me I'd been disturbing her class the prior two days with movie volume and asked if I would close classroom door while movies playing, adding that closing her door would make her 'claustrophobic' (April 25, 2007)." Concern for low noise levels within, not just emanating from, classrooms is desired, as shown by one aide's actions: "The [aide's] insistence on a quieter classroom let me know that in this classroom, I was not meeting the objective" (Field notes, May 3, 2007). At times, even students indicated that a quiet classroom was in order, as shown on April 13, 2007. On this day, I wrote, "Students were most rambunctious when their own work was completed. This was problematic for other students who were still trying to work; some said 'Shhh' to the louder students. I redirected them to be quiet...". The main requirement for an orderly classroom, then, appears to be a quiet classroom. Enforcing the rule that students must be quiet is essential to this, although controlling other factors, such as movie volume, contributes as well.

Although maintaining quiet was the most frequently delineated expectation relating to enforcing rules among students, it was not the only requirement. Classroom-specific rules I was to enforce were found within lesson plans on February 8, 2007, as indicated in my field notes:

I enter the school and get the room key, enter the room, turn on the lights, and look over the plans. The plans specify that students should not use the Internet when they should be doing research, that students should not stand by the door before the end of class, and that I should take down names of students who are tardy or cause problems.

By requiring students to use the computers only for research and stay in their seats, I again would again contribute to order within the classroom.

Once, my role extended beyond contributing to order within my assigned class to contributing to order within the school. On March 16, 2007, my field notes show an atypical substitute teaching experience in which my room was transformed from a place of learning to a place of punishment:

Students were in my room as a punishment for misbehavior in other classes while other students were having fun in other classrooms or finishing homework. My room was termed the “Black Lagoon” for this time, which lasted about half an hour....

This suggests that the expectation that the substitute teacher should enforce rules stems from a larger culture of rule-enforcement, that it is not unique to the substitute teacher.

#### *Communicating Significant Information*

Although most objectives thus far have related mainly to activities within the classroom, one classroom objective reaches beyond the classroom: communicating significant information. It is included among classroom objectives because it occurs firstly from within the classroom.

This objective is made clear in an attachment to the “Substitute Teacher Attendance Sheet” that substitute teachers pick up upon arrival to substitute teach for middle and high school levels. On this attachment are the words, “Please give an hour by hour account of the significant events of your day.” Following this prompt is lined space for writing, and the bottom of the page states, “Please feel free to use additional paper for your comments. Thank you.” Nowhere was it stated whether “significant events” meant lessons completed, student behaviors, or something different entirely.

The importance of communicating also was expressed on January 29, 2007. On this day, I wrote the following:

I took notes on absences and daily activities and students' behavior, taking more careful notes on post-its left on each class' pile of submitted work than on the sub sheets I pick up and return to the office each day. I left careful notes in the room rather than with the office because I have heard teachers complain about not receiving these notes submitted to the office."

It is therefore evident that communication is important to regular classroom teachers, not just to inform administrators.

Sometimes, expectations of communication revolved specifically around student behavior. I recorded one such instance on February 7, 2007: "At the end of the school day, before leaving for home, the [administrator] who responded to my request for assistance calls me into his office, asking if I had any more trouble with the student he had taken into the hall to speak with." Later, on April 24, 2007, I wrote, "Left notes on work completed and on students who were misbehaving, something the teacher requested in a note left [with] lesson plans." I believe these demonstrate that student behavior is something significant to be communicated.

Student attendance always required communication, although on occasion someone other than the substitute teacher was responsible for transmitting this information. For middle and high school students, this was indicated by the "Substitute Teacher Attendance Sheet" substitute teachers are directed to pick up when they enter the high school office to grab keys for the classroom and to drop off before leaving for the day. This sheet requests the classroom teacher's name, the substitute teacher's name, the date, the class, and the names of absent students. Evidence that student absences are to be communicated to the permanent elementary teacher was shown by the dialogue that occurred on March 14, 2007:

I recorded absences on the lunch count sheet, not knowing this would be taken by the students at lunch time. This sheet likely was taken to the office, another teacher told me later that day. She asked if I had recorded absences in [an attendance] book; I hadn't. She said that was probably okay based on the office receiving absences.

Attendance books in every classroom, elementary through high school, further reinforce that record keeping of student attendance is important.

There were substitute teaching experiences in which recording and submitting student absences to the office or teacher was not required. On May 3, 2007, next to where I selected "not applicable" from the choices on how well I attained the objective, a very brief notation indicates why I was not required to perform this duty: "Aide did this." Other days, I mentioned that I did not have to take attendance because it should have been taken before my arrival for a partial day of substitute teaching. On April 9, I wrote, "Second half of day, all students present, role should've been taken earlier in the day." My note on April 13 is similar: "I didn't worry about student absences; from prior experience, my understanding is that absences are recorded only at the beginning of the school day." This objective of recording and submitting student absences to the appropriate person, then, must be accomplished at least daily, but not necessarily by the substitute teacher, although usually, it is the substitute teacher who fulfills this obligation.

On May 23, 2007, the last day of the school year, my field notes indicate a final objective for communication listed on no other day: "Submit student grades." Never before had communication of student grades been an objective that was mine to attain. However, to maintain routine operations, this was a requirement when the regular teacher was unavailable to perform this duty.

Regarding the objective of maintaining order in routine operations, then, there are a variety of subordinate objectives. Some change from one substitute teaching experience to another while still supporting the idea that maintaining order is of optimal importance. Others, especially the subordinate objective of enforcing rules and more specifically of enforcing the rule “remain quiet,” are remarkably stable.

The list of delineated objectives is quite extensive, but all point to two primary goals to be achieved across all substitute teaching assignments: follow directions of permanent school workers and contribute to order in routine operations. What follows is an explanation of the environmental factors that contribute to attainment of these objectives.

## Chapter V: Environmental Factors Contributing to Objectives' Attainment

Six categories of environmental factors emerged as important to the substitute teacher's objective attainment. These environmental factors are clarity of objectives, interjections by regular school workers, materials, lesson qualities, time, and student behaviors.

### *Clarity of Objectives*

Clarity of objectives was clearly a significant factor in the substitute teacher's success in meeting objectives. While clear, present directions increased the likelihood of objective attainment, objectives that were unclear or not expressed in a timely manner lead to less success in objective attainment.

Clear delineation of expectations certainly influenced adherence to the regular teacher's written directions. On March 15, 2007, I recorded, "There was a worksheet for a group of students that didn't get done because...I didn't understand where it fit in, and giving special needs students extra work seemed atypical." This problem was expressed again in field notes from April 13, 2007, when I wrote, "I was unsure what all students were supposed to be doing. There is a lesson plan, but students concur that some students do not participate in the regular classroom activities. When these students asked if they could spend their time drawing, then, I let them, because I did not know what else they were expected to do." In both instances, unclear expectations negatively impacted my ability to follow the regular classroom teacher's instructions.

In my notes from February 7, 2007, I express that unclear directions also created a problem in maintaining order in routine, resulting in me being late for class:

After teaching the classes I was instructed to for the morning teacher, I went to lunch, believing that the morning and afternoon classes were separated by the lunch hour.... The

secretary retrieved me from the lounge; I was supposed to report for the afternoon teacher even before his lunch hour. I was 15 minutes late. No one had ever explained what made a class a morning or afternoon class. I determined to ask for specifics the next time I had a split day.

This was the only time I was late for a substitute teaching assignment.

Clarity of instructions was also important on May 3, 2007, when I did not know the appropriate place for recording attendance. On this day, I wrote, "I recorded absences on the lunch count sheet, not knowing this would be taken by the students at lunch time." This resulted in disordered communication in which record of student absences was accidentally brought to the office instead of being left for the teacher to view.

Another example of record-keeping gone awry without clear instructions occurred on May 23, 2007, when I was supposed to submit student grades. I wrote the following:

Not knowing what students are required to complete exams and what students are exempt is a barrier I must overcome to [submit grades] successfully. Not understanding the computer programs is another barrier, although other teachers are assisting me. I had trouble figuring out what grades I was supposed to average together to determine an overall semester grade for the various classes, although with another teacher's help and the breakdown of grades already entered into the computer, I hope I now understand what I am supposed to do—two marking periods plus exams combined into a semester grade for the high school students (their class is a half credit class and has two marking periods listed in the electronic grade book), just a quarterly grade and exam grade averaged for middle school (a quarter credit class and only one marking period listed). In addition, I need to make a comment alongside the grades for each high school student per written

teacher instructions. Not knowing the students and having a limited number of options of comments for each, especially of positive comments (only seven are positive out of 25) makes this difficult; I prefer to make positive comments on each student, but there are some students for whom none of the seven positives seem to fit. There are additional memos and teacher notes regarding special grading procedures for certain students, some who are special education students and some who were out of school before the end of the school year. It is going to be quite the headache trying to wade through all the special requirements of grading to get this finished tomorrow.

Of course, these notes also mentioned instances where teachers increased my ability to succeed in entering grades through clarifying instructions, such as teachers assisting with my understanding the computer program and teachers helping me figure out how to properly average the grades. My words “I hope I now understand what I am supposed to do” show that my confidence in my ability to succeed increased with the teachers’ assistance.

Perhaps the scariest example of how unclear directions emerged as a problem is shown in my notes on May 3, 2007, when it was my job to admit visitors to the school. I wrote the following in my field notes: “I did not bother to ask why the people were there; what’s the point? They could just lie to me anyway, and I wouldn’t know the difference. I just let everyone in.” With no directions on how to discern between visitors I should and should not admit, I easily could have admitted someone who was not safe for those within the building, threatening the order I was supposed to maintain.

That same day, I failed in another expectation relating to maintaining order in routines. I wrote, “I had some problems figuring out which of two telephones was ringing and how to

answer the phone, so I missed a call” (Field notes, May 3, 2007). Had instructions on how to use the phones been present, I could have followed them to receive the missed call.

I do not want to leave the impression that clear communication of objectives occurred only through teachers providing assistance as I was attempting to submit student grades, which I mentioned earlier. For instance, on February 8, 2007, I wrote that the teacher forewarned me “not to let students turn on the fan because they throw things in it.” There was little to mistake about this command, which even provided me the rationale, and I followed this direction completely. Another example occurred on May 18, 2007, when my field notes state the following:

Today, I was to successfully lead classes through two tornado drills. [An administrator] called me first hour to ask whether I was aware of the procedure for the tornado drill; I told him I didn’t think I needed to be, because the drill was not posted as occurring until the second half of the day, when I would be gone. He informed me that there would indeed be a drill that morning and explained the proper procedure over the phone.

Without this explanation, I would not have known where to take the students. An intercom message helped, too, explaining that there would be a drill and that students would have to sit on the floor away from outside windows but not worry about sitting in any specific position. Students moved efficiently to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade hallway, where I directed them, and they sat against lockers alongside other students from other classes.

Thus, clear expectations were helpful, even essential, to my attainment of objectives.

On February 12, 2007, my field notes indicate another route to clearer expectations: visual cues.

I walk around, monitoring the students, and I redirect those who do not seem to be listening to the tape. There is a beeping noise, and the tape announces that chapter 10 is beginning. Is this where I was supposed to stop the tape? Such short and simple directions, and I cannot remember; I feel anxious. I ask a nearby student, but the student says the teacher did not tell them where they were to stop. I believe we were supposed to continue to the end of chapter 10, but I am not certain. I leave the tape on and, since there is no written lesson plan, I turn to the block plan. I do not see that it tells what chapters we are to read today. I check the worksheets and am relieved to see that they list the chapters they cover; they state that problems are from chapters eight to ten. I am pleased to see this, because this means I did as I was asked to in leaving the tape on.

Since most lesson plans are written, there are typically words to refer to that serve to remind the substitute teacher of many expectations. On this particular day, I search for written instructions that would aid me in following the teacher's verbal directions and finally find a clue to what I am to accomplish on the student worksheets, thereby clarifying the instructions I had forgotten.

It may seem obvious that a direction must be given and must be clear in order for a person to understand and follow it. Through the examples provided, however, it is apparent that clear direction is not always given to the substitute teacher. Having other teacher's support in addition to visual reminders of instruction seem helpful in assisting a substitute teacher when there is a problem with expectations' clarity.

#### *Interjections by Regular School Workers*

Interjections, moments when a regular school worker not typically a component of the classroom would interrupt my activities with physical presence or information, helped the

substitute teacher attain objectives. Data suggests the possibility that the method of interjection may impact the level of an interjection's effectiveness.

On February 7, 2007, my field notes share an interaction that alerted me to potential problems so I could head them off: "A teacher motions me to the hall to let me know that a student has a musical greeting card so that, if I heard music, I would know where it was coming from.... When I heard music, her heads-up came in handy, and I knew who to ask to stop."

Another interjection, already mentioned because it alerted me to and clarified an expectation, occurred on May 18, 2007. My field notes on this day state the following:

[An administrator] called me first hour to ask whether I was aware of the procedure for the tornado drill; I told him I didn't think I needed to be, because the drill was not posted as occurring until the second half of the day, when I would be gone. He informed me that there would indeed be a drill that morning and explained the proper procedure over the phone. Without this explanation, I would not have known where to take the students.

(May 18, 2007).

In this example, as the previous example, the interjections were proactive in nature, providing information helpful to my success in attaining objectives.

Most interjections, however, were reactive, alerting me to the fact that I was not performing according to expectations. This allowed me to correct actions to remedy this failure. On March 16, 2007, for instance, I wrote in my field notes, "A teacher told me I wasn't supposed to have two students next to each other who I hadn't realized were next to each other; she told them to move. I already had been told by her not to let them sit by one another, but the room was silent and I was absorbed in correcting papers so didn't see the one student move closer to the

other.” In this case, I was made aware of a problem I had not noticed prior to this teacher’s intervention.

Two reactive interjections related to noise levels of the classroom. The first occurred on February 27, 2007, and is recorded in that day’s field notes:

One student sang as he worked while I was leaning over him to see whether he needed assistance. The noise level in the classroom did not strike me as excessive. [An administrator] looked into the room, looked at the student I was standing over, and said while looking at him, ‘I can hear you down the hall.’

The student stopped singing. Shortly thereafter, I noticed the door closed—I assumed a student shut it so our noise wouldn’t be noticed by the [administrator]. I decided to leave it closed, hoping that the door being closed would mean the students could remain at their current volume.... I did not wish for [the administrator] to give orders in the classroom in which I was teaching again, an act which left me feeling as though I had been deemed incompetent to handle the class myself.

Before the end of class, the [administrator] again opened the door and looked in. Most students, at this point, were done with their worksheets and were talking. I was working with one student not yet finished. Assuming that the [administrator] would be less impressed with the current classroom atmosphere than he was with the class the last time he appeared, but not wanting him to pass judgment against my teaching or the students for what I felt was acceptable, I looked at him very deliberately and smiled, hoping to indicate that I was happy with the state of the classroom and not desiring his intervention.

This interaction resulted in partial compliance with expectations; I reduced noise by closing the classroom door, but I did not succeed in quieting the students. Interestingly, this failure to succeed accompanied my view of the administrators' interjection as an unwanted intrusion rather than as helpful information.

A similar reaction occurred on May 22, 2007, when I recorded the following in my field notes:

Some students are exempt from exams based on having less than a certain number of absences. One student told me she was exempt from the exam and this was her last day of school, and she asked if she could use the class time to clean out her locker. The exam was so pointless that I felt it was a better use of her time to clean out her locker than to sit through the preparations for it, and so I told her she could. The student soon returned, followed by a teacher who told me that students were not permitted to clean their lockers during class time. I felt a little angry; who was she to tell me what the students in my class should be doing? But there it was.

In this instance, I did comply, and the student remained in my classroom for the rest of the hour. My words, "Who was she to tell me what the students in my class should be doing?" indicate a level of resistance to the interjection similar to that in the prior example, however.

Upon analysis, there are similarities between the interactions that correlated with feelings of resistance in the substitute teacher. Firstly, there does not seem to be any back-and-forth dialogue in the instances that resulted in resistant feelings; rather, these interactions were one-sided. Secondly, both instances were reactive rather than proactive in nature.

Contrast this with the earlier proactive examples suggestive of dialogue, and one sees that the proactive, conversational interjections were viewed as helpful "explanation," a term used to

describe the administrator's interjection during the drill. This is very different from the substitute teacher's attitude following the reactive interjections lacking dialogue, which were perceived as "judgment," a term used in the field notes to describe the administrator's actions in the classroom he found too noisy. Although all interjections seem to have a positive effect on the substitute teacher's attainment of objectives, then, it seems that proactive interjections may be more effective than reactive and that interjections that create conversation with the substitute teacher may be more effective than simple directives.

### *Materials*

Availability of materials is seen as helpful in attaining objectives. The materials required from one situation to another may differ, but lack of a material essential to completing an objective leads to lack of success in objective attainment.

Presence of materials was important to communicating attendance on February 7, 2007, when I wrote, "I asked [the permanent teacher] about attendance and whether it had been taken; he said it had. Only first names were on the list of absences, and there was no student name list, so this is all I provided the office regarding absent students on the sub sheet for that hour—first names." I partially met the expectation of communicating student absences based on the partial names provided.

Lack of materials prevented was also an issue on April 24, 2007, when I noted that the permanent teacher did not leave enough worksheets for the number of students in the room. The result: "Many students had to wait for duplicates of worksheets to be made to begin work." Although the students completed the work assigned, then, the orderly routine was compromised.

Presence of materials also emerged as a problem on May 17, 2007, where my field notes reflect that "green slips," records of student misbehavior that serve as the basis for school-wide

rewards and punishments, were not readily available. On this day, I wrote, “I did not give out green slips when I should have because they were not in the room 2<sup>nd</sup> hr.”

Although having required materials is present, ease of use is also important to substitute teacher success. This was evidenced on January 29, 2007, when I recorded the following in my field notes:

In the third hour, students tell me they’ve already been watching the video I am to have them watch; the video tape is half on one reel and half on the other, so I assume it is in the correct place.... When I press play, students tell me they have not watched that far yet. I rewind until everyone is satisfied that we are at a place they have already seen so that they do not miss anything.

Class was less orderly because the tape was not ready for viewing.

Both order and my ability to follow directions given were compromised during a lockdown drill on May 17, 2007, when my field notes state, “Eventually, I had a student assist me in locking the door, since I simply could not get the door to lock. I frequently struggle with getting the school keys to open the doors.” A key that worked easily would have prevented me from requiring assistance from a student who was supposed to be away from the door.

Potential problems related to ease of material use were recorded twice, the first on March 30, 2007, when I noted, “Green slips locked in drawer, but not required *this* class.” Another potential problem, although not noted in field notes within the direct scope of this research, emerged in notes taken to corroborate the findings of this research. On April 29, 2007, I recorded the following in my notes as a substitute aide:

I was only on time by a couple minutes and feared being late because I was locked out of the building and did not have the pass code to enter into the keypad to enter the school. I

pushed the call button once and there was no answer. After a time, I pressed it again; still, no answer. Again, and no answer. A man stood beside me at the door and held the button down until someone answered, saying, “You know, you only have to push the button once.”

Although this situation did not emerge as a problem in my notes as a substitute teacher, had I been a substitute teacher on this day instead of a substitute aide, it would have.

When materials were present, easily available, and easy to use, no problems relating materials to objective attainment were noted. In fact, on April 13, 2007, a brief note relating to my ability to communicate successfully states, “Paper, pen readily available.” Another note relating to presence of materials helping me reach objectives was written in my field notes on February 8, 2007:

With the lesson plans, there is a seating chart—with color pictures of the students! I am excited; I have never had a sheet that listed students’ faces with their names. Now I won’t have the problem I had yesterday and on other sub days, trying to figure out what student I am reprimanding when a student will not give me his name, hoping to avoid consequences. Also, this could help me to remember students’ names.

Clearly, presence of materials required or helpful to objective attainment assists the substitute teacher in meeting expectations. In addition to materials being present, it also is important that materials be accessible, functional, and ready for use, as explained in earlier examples.

### *Lesson Qualities*

Two lesson qualities emerged as significant to the substitute teacher’s success in meeting expectations. The first quality is inherent motivation; the second, lesson activity level.

Motivation level of assignments frequently related to student willingness to complete work. Student compliance with lesson plans due to motivational qualities of assignments, and thus my ability to complete their objectives effectively, is shown on multiple occasions.

On April 24, 2007, I indicated motivation of assignments as a factor, writing, “Students clearly not interested...nothing else seemed to be preventing them from working.” On field notes for another class that same day, I wrote, “Half the class was not working.... Students unmotivated by work.” In both cases, student interest level appeared low.

On May 23, 2007, another motivational quality is implicated as significant: importance of the activity. On this day, I wrote the following:

Student perception of the importance of the activity, in third hour, played into how well they complied with requests to be quiet. I had a student verbalize that since students were done with the exam and only doing extra credit, he felt those who were done should be permitted to talk. I responded that I felt those students not yet finished had the same right to complete their work in silence as those who were already done had previously had. Thus, students did not feel they needed to remain quiet if students were doing “only” extra credit versus an exam.

On February 8, 2007, my notes reflect an assignment deemed inherently motivating because students continued working even when told they could stop. My notes from this day state the following:

The students set to work; I monitor the room, walking around to see that they are on task. A couple were talking when they first sat down to work, but the room shortly becomes amazingly quiet. All I hear is the tapping of keys. I find this especially interesting because I have subbed for many of these students in other

settings and know that I have had difficulty keeping some of them on task in every other class. Here, all seem busy. Only occasionally, a student will whisper to a neighboring student, looking and gesturing toward one or the other's assignment book.... I give the students 10 minutes at the end of class to talk, since they worked hard and the teacher said this particular class could have 5-10 minutes at the end. Students remain quiet; some begin whispering, but the sound of students typing is louder than that of students conversing. Many students chose to continue working even after being given permission to stop.

In this classroom, a motivating lesson assisted successful completion of the teacher's lesson plans and order.

On May 17, 2007, I note another assignment quality that helped keep students on task: "challenging." I wrote, "For 1<sup>st</sup> hour, we got through the discussion material quickly and moved on to an assignment where I required students to make sense of a difficult research article in groups. The noise level decreased dramatically as the students immersed themselves in this challenging assignment...". Thus, easier assignments are not necessarily the most helpful to the substitute teacher for achieving success.

Not only the students' performance was affected by assignments' motivational quality. Field notes from February 7, 2007, indicate that my performance also changed according to assignments' motivation level:

The next class was mostly working, so I did not assign the extra work. Students finished early, and I did not wish to punish them for their hard work by assigning the extra that was provided both for punishment and to fill time, according to the written directions. (Years ago, on my first day ever as a substitute teacher, I assigned extra work after

students worked diligently as the regular teacher had instructed me to. The student backlash to the extra work was severe; they felt they were being punished for having worked. I determined I would not again follow the teacher's instructions on such matters.)

Although I was directed to assign extra work as a time-filler, then, I intentionally failed to meet this expectation because I viewed the work as punishment—not very motivational.

Not all motivational assignments lead to greater success in achieving order, however, for activity level of assignments also plays a role in success on this objective. This was true on May 18, 2007, when my field notes describe a chaotic scene:

I thought that adapting a Jenga game, truth or dare version, to incorporate learning material, sounded like an idea that might be fun for students. On the blank blocks, I taped on my own prompts students had to respond to, applying their classroom learning.... I left in a dare block that read, "Spin around ten times fast," which proved a mistake when, five minutes or less before I was scheduled to be done teaching, a student was spinning and hit a wall, putting a huge hole in it....

In this instance, students were highly motivated and highly involved. Still, the high activity level resulted in disorder rather than order.

Contrast this with my observation on May 21, 2007, when I wrote, "The students sat in their seats all hour. It seems that students are less rambunctious when seated." It would seem, then, that work that is both motivational and inactive in nature is most helpful for achieving the expectations of following directions and of order.

*Time*

Time is very stable. One can stop a clock, but one cannot stop time. A person can move back an hour by crossing into another time zone, but that person has still grown an hour older. Use of a sundial at night instead of a clock may alter one's knowledge of the passage of time, and yet the earth continues to revolve around the sun at the same rate. Still, use of time is not static, and how time is used impacts the substitute teacher's success.

For instance, student motivation to complete assignments decreases when students are allowed to use time outside their current class to complete assignments. This was found twice on February 7, 2007, during two substitute teaching assignments, both high school classes but for different teachers in different subject areas. My field notes indicate that in the first instance, "Some students insisted they did not have to work on difficult material until their teacher was present to explain it personally;" in the second, "I had students come to the front and read to classmates; students stopped listening and started talking midway through. I did not stop them. Indeed, they could read this at home, and I was just killing time." In both cases, students did not need to use class time to complete lessons, and in both cases, students did not. Order and my success in carrying out the lessons decreased in both instances.

Unstructured time also leads to decreased effectiveness in maintaining order, as I noted most explicitly in field notes on May 23, 2007:

The amount of student disciplinary problems was directly proportional to the amount of unstructured time after all students were done with the exam. The class that had students completing the exam up until the last fifteen minutes of class did not cause problems. In the class that had an hour to spare after students were done, I repeatedly had to tell students to be quiet, had to tell two students to separate because they were sharing a chair

and one had his arm around the other, and had to demand that students not fling objects across the room to one another. The class that had around half an hour of free time needed a moderate amount of redirection to not be bounding across the room and to remain somewhat quiet so as not to disturb other classes.

If work runs out before the time does, it seems that order may be less easily attained.

Sometimes, extra time after assignments was not the problem; instead, the problem was not having enough time. This was the case on May 23, 2007, when I wrote in my field notes, “I wrote down student absences, but I was very busy with grading and did not get to the office until it was closed. I will attempt to submit the student absences tomorrow.” In another time-related occurrence, my failure to communicate student absences was because I did not feel like using the valuable commodity of time on an activity I deemed less than worthwhile: “Today I knew where the book was to record absences. I just didn’t feel like taking the time; I didn’t see the point in it. The kids were there or not. Writing it down wouldn’t change that” (Field notes, March 15, 2007).

Limited time also prevented my attainment of all lesson objectives on May 3, 2007, when I wrote, “There was not enough time for students to complete all the work the teacher’s plan indicated the students should do.” Time is limited; if a substitute teacher is to succeed, the expectations must fit within the time allotted.

Another way time influenced objective attainment is through when a class is situated in a day, week, or school year. On April 13, 2007, I recorded two instances attesting to this, firstly, “Students were rowdy, but not misbehaving. I told a teacher who came to get the children for gym that they were wound up, and he said that is typical for a Friday afternoon.” Later in the same day’s field notes I wrote of encountering a teacher who “was coming down the hall with a

group of students. ‘Fridays,’ she said to me in an exasperated tone, rolling her eyes.” Then, on May 17, 2007, I recorded time as a factor yet again: “All classes came in more talkative than I’ve seen these classes in the past, and they continued talking over listening to one another and to me during class discussion. Is it because it is towards the end of the school year, I wonder? Students’ behavior differed from the moment they entered the classroom, so I doubt it was due to a difference in the class itself.” It seems that as students move closer to school’s end for the day, week, or year, order becomes more difficult to obtain.

On May 22, 2007, timing influenced my reactions to student misbehaviors so that I had less success in maintaining order of students, as I wrote in my field notes:

In all classes, I probably could have implemented punishments that would have increased student compliance from that point onward.... It being the last true instructional day of the school year (very little education will occur in the final exam), I wanted to keep it light and let the kids have as much fun as possible during a mundane exercise in cramming.

Thus, my efforts at controlling student behavior decreased with the quickly-approaching end of the school year.

### *Student Behavior*

As stated prior, student behavior is often altered by factors such as lesson design. Student behavior is also a product of the students’ themselves, however, and is a factor in its own right in the substitute teacher’s attainment of expectations. My field notes on February 8, 2007, record a breakdown in order attributable mainly to student behavior. On this day, “Between classes, a couple girls warned me that a fight was brewing between other girls in their class that was entering. Before I’d even finished taking role, one girl announced that she was leaving to the

office and that she would not sit in this class.” Here is evidenced a breakdown in order that cannot readily be blamed on actions of anyone other than the students.

Student misbehavior again contributed to a breakdown in order during a lockdown drill. On May 17, 2007, I wrote, “Students moved out of view, but they were not quiet as directed— student behavior was a factor here.” Student behavior was also a factor in my ability to follow a regular teacher’s directions, as recorded in my field notes on April 24, 2007, when I wrote, “It’s hard to say the plan was followed when half the class was not working.” Thus student misbehavior negatively impacts the substitute teacher’s success in meeting expectations of both order and following directions of regular school workers.

Not all student behavior caused difficulty in the substitute teacher’s meeting of expectations. Sometimes, as my field notes on April 26, 2007 demonstrate, student behavior influences other students’ behavior in ways that assist the substitute teacher in attaining expectations. I wrote, “I told students they could listen to music during the last 15 minutes of class if they behaved; students then urged one another to stay on task. Students responded to peer pressure, settling to work.” A similar instance was noted on February 8, 2007. On this day, I wrote, “The student asks if they can have more free time than what the teacher specified. I said no. The student asks again, and another student tells him that if he doesn’t stop asking me about it, they could lose their free time. The student who was questioning me about it then sits down.” It is perhaps significant that in both cases of peer pressure increasing students’ adherence to expectations, potential consequences for behavior would be implemented for the entire class rather than for individual students.

Student behavior also prompted the substitute teacher to alter her behavior to better achieve expectations, an occurrence written of in field notes on April 13, 2007: “Students were

most rambunctious when their own work was completed. This was problematic for other students who were still trying to work; some said ‘Shhh’ to the louder students. I redirected them to be quiet....” Student behavior, then, can both contribute to and impair substitute teacher success in meeting delineated objectives.

It is apparent that several key factors influence the substitute teacher’s attainment of the delineated objectives “follow directions of regular school workers” and “contribute to order.” The clearer the objectives, the more likely the substitute teacher will attain them. Interjections by regular school workers are beneficial to objective attainment, more so when offered in a helpful, proactive manner. Motivational lessons involving a low student activity level increase substitute teacher success in meeting objectives; lessons that are not motivational for students and those requiring greater student activity levels decrease substitute teacher effectiveness in meeting objectives. Time can be an asset when students must use a limited amount of time to complete assignments but is problematic to substitute teacher objective attainment if there is not enough time in which to complete objectives or if it is unstructured. Student noncompliance with directives decreases substitute teacher effectiveness, a phenomenon decreased by peer pressure from compliant students.

It would be inappropriate to view any of the environmental factors as “good” or “bad” or to try to influence substitute teacher success by determining which environmental factors are essential and which should be eliminated. The environmental factors are ever present, and it is how they are treated that determines whether they will be advantageous or problematic for the success of the substitute teacher in meeting delineated objectives.

## Chapter VI: Discussion

Much has been written on attempting to solve the “problem” of the substitute teacher. Substitute teachers are notoriously unsuccessful in areas including classroom management and following lesson plans (Tannenbaum, 2000). For this, researchers have blamed a number of causes, most relating to substitute teacher ability (Wilson, 1999; Hamann, Hedden, and Legette, 2003).

To curb substitute teacher problems, then, most concur that training for the substitute teacher is in order (Fielder, 1991; Hamann et al., 2003; Lassmann, 2001; Nidds & McGerald, 1994; Wilson, 1999). The effectiveness of this solution has not been adequately studied, however; additionally, this study demonstrates a variety of reasons why training of the substitute teacher may indeed not be sufficient.

First, no amount of education will contribute to the substitute teacher’s success if she is not allowed to put that education into practice because of objectives requiring her to follow the plans and wishes of others. Second, there are many factors that impact a substitute teacher’s success that are not within the substitute teacher’s control, and education of the substitute teacher cannot change this. This is not cause for despair; this study brings to light a variety of practical solutions likely to increase substitute effectiveness.

### *Recommendations for Increasing Substitute Teacher Success*

The most important solution is increasing communication of information to substitute teachers, especially regarding expectations for the substitute teacher. It is possible that some form of training session may benefit the substitute teacher, especially if school-wide expectations and practices are explained at this meeting. The problem is that specific expectations differ greatly from one substitute teaching experience to another, even within the same classroom, and

these cannot be addressed in a training or inservice. These expectations typically come in the form of a teacher's lesson plan. Thus, the permanent teacher should be advised to clearly write out expectations for the substitute teacher.

Another simple solution is making sure that any materials needed to complete objectives are available. Materials that are difficult to find and materials locked in inaccessible locations are not available.

Student misbehaviors, a common obstacle to objective attainment, can indeed be curbed by substitute teachers, but only to an extent. More significant to student behavior is the motivational quality of student work; the more motivational the assignments, the better students behave. The practice of assigning work simply to keep students occupied is of no use if students are not self-motivated to complete it. It should also be remembered that students lose motivation to complete work during their time with the substitute teacher if they know it can be completed and turned in at a later time without penalty. Teachers should, therefore, be educated in creating assignments that are motivational to students and should also specify that student work is to be turned in for a grade before the end of the time in which the substitute teacher and students are together.

Another factor to consider is activity level of assignments; the less activity, the easier it is to maintain a quiet classroom and enforce rules. If substitute teacher success requires attainment of these objectives, a teacher should assign lessons involving minimal student activity.

Asking the question, "Were the lesson plans clear, complete, and reasonably easy to administer?" as asked on an attachment to the Substitute Teacher Attendance Sheet, a form given to substitute teachers to complete during middle and high school substitute teaching assignments, is an appropriate way to gain feedback on whether teachers are doing these suggestions

effectively. This would be beneficial if also used for the elementary grades. Adding a question such as “How could lesson plans be better?” could assist in gathering feedback more helpful for explaining what teachers could improve in lesson plan content.

Less under the teacher’s control is the environmental factor of time, an intangible object not so easily manipulated. It should be considered when assigning objectives, however, for some objectives may be more easily completed at one time than at another, and where possible, such objectives should be assigned accordingly. If an objective is assigned within a limited time frame, care should be taken to ensure that the objective can be completed within the time allotted; if not, the objective or the time permitted should be altered to permit success.

Finally, interjections should be expressed in a way that is likely to be perceived by the substitute teacher as helpful rather than judgmental or interfering to increase the probability that the substitute teacher will attempt compliance. To accomplish this, staff trainings in effective communication may be helpful, but all that is really required is courtesy. People should speak to one another as they would wish to have others speak to them. They should listen, not only talk; use tact, not severity; and redirect privately, not in view of others. It makes perfect sense that when regular school workers interact in an orderly, respectful manner, substitute teachers and the environments in which they work will be more orderly and respecting of expectations.

#### *Caution to Examine Educational Philosophy Before Seeking Increased Success*

Before rushing to increase substitute teacher attainment of classroom objectives, however, the wise should contemplate whether the stated objectives are truly in line with what school ought to accomplish. Consider, for instance, the following instance in a classroom in which a student was working, recorded on May 23, 2007:

I was actually very impressed with [one student's] ability to remain quiet through the exam. Unfortunately, I do not think he actually used his time productively. He managed to get less than 50% on a test that was almost entirely true/false, even when his extra credit was taken into account.

According to the classroom objectives noted, the substitute teacher was successful in this instance; order was maintained, the exam given and completed. The student's failure is inconsequential to the substitute teacher's level of success, since she is responsible only for following lesson plans, not for student learning. (Following lesson plans and encouraging student learning are not equivalent, as I believe my notes concerning unmotivational assignments have demonstrated.)

The objectives discovered through this case study seem oriented toward rules and order and control. There are many reasons for such an approach to education, some which are explained by Cuban (1984):

The ways schools are organized, the curriculum, and teaching practices mirror the norms of the socioeconomic system. Those instructional practices that focus on obedience, uniformity, and productivity through, for example, tests, grades, homework, and paying attention to the teacher prepare children for effective participation in a bureaucratic and corporate culture. (Cuban, p. 9)

Not everyone agrees with this rationale. Pinar (2004) says, "For intelligence to be cultivated in fundamental ways, it must be set free of corporate goals" (p. 29). He states that by rising above the corporate model, "We Americans might then model to our children how we can live in this society without succumbing to it, without giving up our dreams and aspirations for

education. Teachers can become witnesses to the notion that intelligence and learning can lead to other worlds, not just the successful exploitation of this one” (p. 30).

Is there anything wrong with desiring that students follow rules? Are substitute teachers capable of developing meaningful instruction based on their own expertise, or is it safer to require them to follow the lesson plans of others? Is the substitute teacher the person best suited for taking attendance? The researcher is not prepared to answer these or many other questions relating to classroom objectives, but they should be considered by all desiring to improve the success of schools, not just the success of substitute teachers. “Successful completion of objectives” sounds noble, but it is only beneficial if the objectives themselves are worthwhile.

### *Limitations*

Themes that emerged that defined overlying classroom objectives and environmental factors are subjective. Certainly, notes could have been categorized in different ways and the objectives and environmental factors could have been labeled differently. The themes, however, are supported by notes and usefully convey the relationships between environmental factors and classroom objectives in a way that offers greater predictive and testable potential than a mere record of isolated occurrences that occurred only at one very specific time, never again to be witnessed. Themes were reconfigured in light of new data and were relabeled as required to best convey the meaning of supporting data. Furthermore, they were reviewed for accuracy by the researcher’s research advisor.

The instances recorded by the researcher were also subjective. Some classroom traits, such as the color of flooring in the classrooms, were not noted. The researcher tested the appropriateness of her observations through obtaining professor feedback on field notes, which directed her to write more concerning her feelings during substitute teaching, a direction she

implemented to improve her note taking. Comparing the responses of a second rater who used the same form as the researcher indicated reliability; a second rater's responses on a different form indicated that although findings related to objective attainment were similar, some subjectivity existed on what environmental factors were seen to impact an objective. The numerous opportunities to record the relationship between environmental factors and classroom objectives allowed the researcher to take a greater number of perspectives during the research, minimizing this concern.

Another limitation is that the focus of qualitative studies is generally too narrow to be generalized. Observations in a kindergarten classroom, however, yielded results like those in grades one through twelve, suggesting that results may easily generalize to this age group. Field notes taken during an experience as a substitute aide demonstrated that objectives differ between job types within the same school system, but that where objectives remained the same, environmental factors impacted attainment of the objectives the same way. This also was noted in observations of a guest speaker; if objectives of the substitute teacher were attributed to the guest speaker, environmental factors predictably influenced their attainment. It cannot be stated with any certainty, then, that the objectives and environmental factors noted during this case study would remain the same for those serving in capacities other than substitute teaching. However, where objectives do remain the same, it seems likely that environmental factors present will influence these objectives in the same direction demonstrated in this research study.

By comparing classroom objectives found in this research to classroom objectives for substitute teachers as listed by other researchers, it appears that they may indeed generalize to substitute teachers in other settings. A review of literature revealed that the substitute teacher ought to, first and foremost, maintain classroom discipline and follow the teacher's lesson plans.

It is appropriate, then, that of all the objectives listed in the results section, those relating to classroom discipline and following the teacher's lesson plans receive the greatest number of pages.

There are many other objectives, as well, and Wilson (1999) claims the objectives assigned to a substitute teacher are inconsistent. True, when taken individually; yet, most objectives grouped quite easily into themes. Through this method, the researcher was able to identify a few main objectives that encompassed most others, and her list was quite similar to a list of objectives for substitute teachers created by Shepherd (1997).

Both listed objectives relating to recording student absences, following the teacher's lesson plans, managing student behavior, and communicating events of significance to others. Objectives noted by Shepherd that were not listed as objectives in this research study were that the substitute teacher was required to grade work, to not eat or drink in front of students, and to dress professionally. Objectives recorded by this research study that were not similarly listed by Shepherd were that the substitute teacher should follow directions of permanent school workers, which seems implied by Shepherd's other objectives, and that the substitute teacher should be on time. The researcher feels that Shepherd merely overlooked this point, finding it unlikely that schools typically do not care about whether substitute teachers arrive late. It seems, then, that the findings of this study may indeed apply in districts beyond Manistique Area Schools.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

A variety of interesting avenues for research presented themselves during the course of this study. Conducting similar studies in other school districts would help to establish with greater certainty the generalizability of this work. To obtain a greater degree of objectivity,

however, use of multiple observers, or at the very least, additional team members reviewing emergent themes, is desirable.

If a researcher wishes to use the form developed in this study (Appendix B), it should be revised to contain the classroom objectives and environmental factors stressed in the results, as it was not altered to include information from the final data analysis. Directions should be added to clarify any terms that are unclear, such as “communication.” Instructions should also be added as appropriate to ease use of the form, such as an explanation of what to include on comment lines. The form should be expanded to allow sufficient writing space; the researcher of this study wrote a great deal in the margins, but this decreases legibility and organization. Additionally, following the instruction to place “Y” by factors that impacted objectives, “N” for those that do not, and “N/A” for “not applicable” creates unnecessary work. A simple “Y” by applicable factors is sufficient.

Logically, researchers ought to determine the most effective method of implementing district-wide changes to increase those environmental factors most conducive to success on attainment of classroom objectives. This is contingent, of course, on first determining that the objectives are indeed suitable, for if objectives are judged inappropriate, changes to effect their attainment are hardly practical.

Another research opportunity is based on the observation that the form the researcher used to record observations on objective attainment listed very different objectives from the form used by an administrator, a form typically used to rate permanent teachers. Are the goals for substitute teachers that different from those of permanent teachers in the school, or is the form used for rating permanent teachers unrepresentative of objectives encountered in their everyday activities?

On a related note, researchers could determine the extent to which objectives perceived from school environments correlate with espoused school and district objectives (for example, the objectives expressed in a mission statement). In this way, the hidden curriculum could be investigated.

Finally, none of the negativity toward substitute teachers noted in the literature review was recorded during this study. Researchers could investigate whether the negativity recorded elsewhere is exaggerated, if negativity in Manistique Area Schools simply went unnoticed (indeed, this was not the focus of the research), or if Manistique Area Schools is exceptionally positive toward substitute teachers. If the latter were true, Manistique Area Schools may prove fertile for research on district characteristics contributing to positive perceptions of substitute teachers.

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Appendix B: Revised Instrument (Page 1)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
**Objective 1: Get to the appropriate room on time.**

**A. To what extent was the above objective achieved?**  
 not applicable    not at all    a little    halfway    mostly    completely

**B. Did the following impact attainment of the above objective?**

("Y," "N," or "N/A")		If applicable, how did the environmental factor impact attainment of the above objective?
_____	Clarity of expectations	_____
_____	Other: _____	_____

.....  
**Objective 2: Record and submit student absences.**

**A. To what extent was the above objective achieved?**  
 not applicable    not at all    a little    halfway    mostly    completely

**B. Did the following impact attainment of the above objective?**

("Y," "N," or "N/A")		If applicable, how did the environmental factor impact attainment of the above objective?
_____	Clarity of expectations	_____
_____	Accessibility of required materials	_____
_____	Other: _____	_____

.....  
**Objective 3: Communicate with staff about daily events.**

**A. To what extent was the above objective achieved?**  
 not applicable    not at all    a little    halfway    mostly    completely

**B. Did the following impact attainment of the above objective?**

("Y," "N," or "N/A")		If applicable, how did the environmental factor impact attainment of the above objective?
_____	Clarity of expectations	_____
_____	Accessibility of required materials	_____
_____	Other: _____	_____

.....  
**Objective 4: Maintain discipline in the classroom.**

**A. To what extent was the above objective achieved?**  
 not applicable    not at all    a little    halfway    mostly    completely

**B. Did the following impact attainment of the above objective?**

("Y," "N," or "N/A")		If applicable, how did the environmental factor impact attainment of the above objective?
_____	Clarity of expectations	_____
_____	Accessibility of required materials	_____
_____	Proactive measures to head off problems	_____
_____	Perceptions of substitute's competence	_____
_____	Inherent motivation of assignments	_____
_____	Consequences for student behaviors	_____
_____	Other: _____	_____

.....

