

# Babysit Less, Inspire More



20 Colorful Ideas To Launch You  
Soaring At An *Extra*-ordinary Level  
As A Substitute Teacher

How To Work *EVERYDAY*- If You Want, Promote Yourself So Teachers Call *YOU* Before Anyone Else, And Reach An Extraordinary Level As a Substitute Teacher Who Encourages & *CHANGES LIVES*- Not Survives Or Acts As A Drill Sergeant.

**BY CHRISTOPHER VON SPITZER**

# **Babysit Less, Inspire More**

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You have consent to email, post, print, share this manifesto free of charge to anyone you'd like, as long as you make no changes or edits to its contents or digital format. In fact, you'd make my day and even better for the kids in schools, if you share it with as many people as you can that might benefit from this manifesto. The right to bind this and sell it as a book, however, is strictly reserved. Now, if you have any sweet ideas to transform this sub manifesto into another platform, let's say a comic book, I'm all ears.

This is the 1.0 version of this manifesto current as of December 7th, 2010. After that date, please go to [www.babysitlessinspiremore.com](http://www.babysitlessinspiremore.com) as updated versions become available (Please note: About the Author section updated as September 21<sup>st</sup> 2012) I'm thinking of making this available in print form as a fun souvenir for people (including myself) who enjoy the feeling of holding a real and tangible book.

This manifesto is dedicated to my loving mother who always pushed me to stop talking so much and take action.

...and to any of my past students, don't ever let anyone tell you "to be realistic," think bigger than big. You are our future.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- 2) Thanks to all my past students who sharpened my childlike quality that I exude now. You also taught me to be wackier, which I exude now too.
- 3) Thanks to all those extraordinary mentors who shifted my way of thinking in a whole different direction giving me the courage to write this book such as Anthony Robbins, Jack Canfield, John C. Maxwell, Seth Godin, Tim

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- 4) Thanks Alex, my awesome aunt, for you gave me that loving family encouragement that I might just have something here of value to share after reading a first draft of the book. Thanks.
- 5) Thanks again Mama for being that example that if you work really hard and fight for what you want with passionate persistence, you can achieve it.
- 6) ...and to you! Yes, you the reader. I am truly grateful! Enjoy it and share it!

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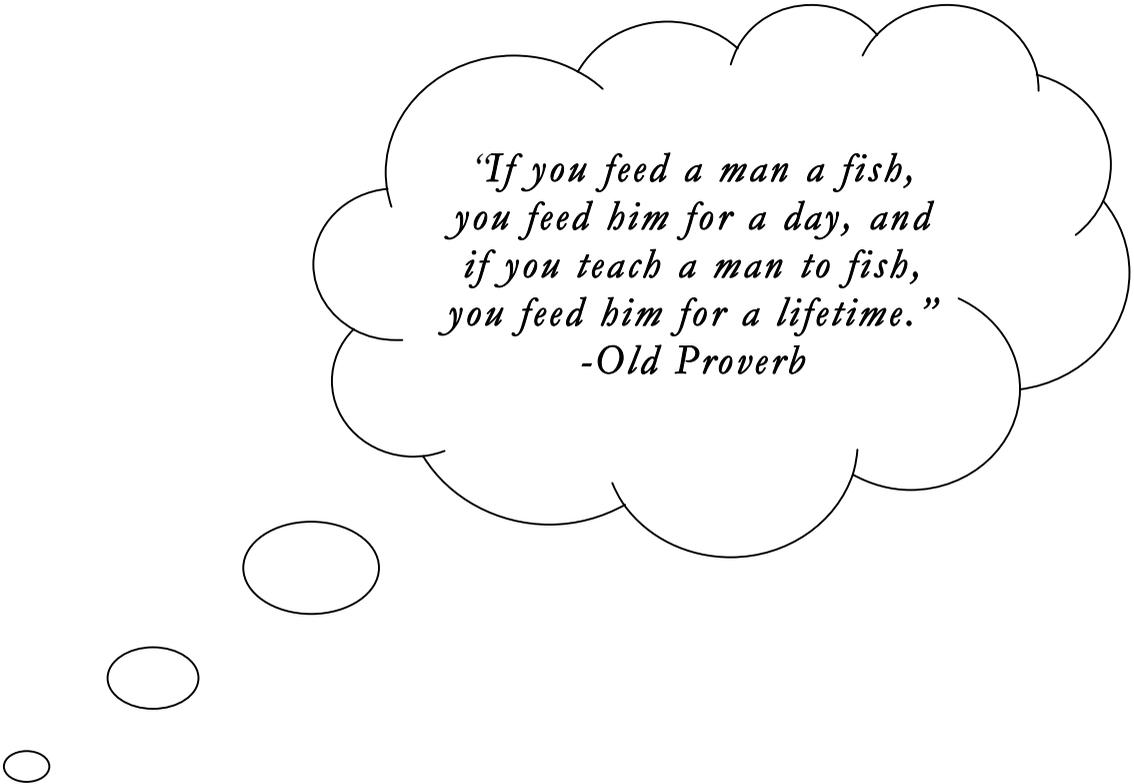
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*“If you feed a man a fish,  
you feed him for a day, and  
if you teach a man to fish,  
you feed him for a lifetime.”  
-Old Proverb*

# THE INSTRUCTION MANUAL

**D**o you have the wherewithal to be an *extra*-ordinary substitute teacher? Chances are if you are reading this, then you *have* the wherewithal. Here are some common doubts and fears about substitute teaching and questions you might have about this sub manifesto (if you don't have any doubts, then feel free to skip this section).

*Who are you and why did you write this manifesto because it just looks like another rehashed, exaggerated, self-help book with the author trying to make a quick buck?*

Wow! Intense question but I'm glad you asked. I'm not trying to be some guru or a superhero (although I'd love to be one, without the tights) or know-it-all that is here to preach to you success commandments to follow or else you'll fail as a sub. Look, don't get me wrong, true excellence takes sacrifice, mistakes, trial and error, and

an enormous amount of effort and I can see in this fast-food culture we want everything now, now, now and quick fixes. No, this is not my intention. But as an intense and possibly brash young man passionate about learning and growing and inspiring others to do the same, I was dissatisfied with what information was available for substitute teachers to thrive on this unique track. Sure, there was *some* substitute teacher information like books (a lot of them outdated), and “tips and tricks” websites found online that was helpful no doubt in my mind; however, far too often when I subbed at a middle school and high school level, I found there were too many missing puzzles that needed to be addressed for someone to truly be successful and effective in this undervalued field.

Now, I am assuming you have probably heard of some of these ideas in this manifesto before which is phenomenal; as the old saying goes, repetition is the mother

of all learning and fundamentals must be reminded of and deliberately practiced for true success to happen. Therefore, my purpose here is to share with you the most vital, practical ideas that I believe helped me have *extra*-ordinary results (my story on page 28) compared to all those around me and enjoy more days being a substitute teacher than not. Hopefully, I can make you smile and cause a chuckle here and there in the process. If some of the ideas resonate with you-great, if not-and you think it's garbage, then that's perfectly alright too as we all have different viewpoints. As corny as it sounds, only you know what works and doesn't work for you.

Also, I would like to mention writing a book like this (call me selfish if you'd like) allows me to do what I love- even though we may not have physically met with each other- to help and inspire you to improve your life. I originally had thought of charging a small amount for the countless amount of hours that went into making this

project a reality but over time, I realized this is not where I wanted to go with this manifesto and I rather spread the ideas for free online. If I release this in a print format, maybe I will charge-we'll see. Now, I know that if you have read this far, then you are somewhat curious and this means you also care enough about improving your service as a sub. I tip my hat off to you, as our kids desperately need *extraordinary* substitute teachers in this overlooked and underrated profession.

Now, I don't know about you but I wouldn't want ANY days for our kids to go to waste by not having an effective sub. Imagine how many *total* days kids have with substitute teachers throughout their whole K-12 experience! Look, I was not a perfect substitute teacher. Sure, I achieved success as a sub in a very short time (as you'll read later on) but I made countless mistakes that if I look back, I simply *cringe* at. At times my intention was wrong, at times I was a sloppy leader, at times I was self-centered,

and at times I just nearly gave up. But, my heart was deep into inspiring these kids, and they sure kept you honest with your personal values in line. Something inside me told me to get back on my feet, dust my shoulders off and just keep going.

This is not just an ordinary book you read from Chapter 1 to the end. I made this manifesto as a series of timeless, practical but more importantly inspiring ideas that I am certain will bring you more joy, peace, and success as a substitute teacher-if you apply them of course. The kids will much *appreciate* it!

*Why only 20 “colorful” ideas?*

As I mentioned before, I wanted to share with you what I thought were the most significant, juicy ideas that were responsible for my *extra*-ordinary results as a substitute teacher. I originally had more ideas than this mysterious number of 20 but I

decided to keep it simple and stay with the ones that were the most important. Where do all the ideas mostly come from? Well besides personal experience, my own research, and talking to other subs, I was also influenced and inspired by many sources that helped me during the journey as a substitute teacher: The main ones were: Jack Canfield's, *Success Principles* check it out at [www.thesuccessprinciples.com](http://www.thesuccessprinciples.com), *Leadership Gold: Lessons I've Learned from a Lifetime of Leading* by John C. Maxwell you'll find everything about his work here [www.johnmaxwell.com](http://www.johnmaxwell.com), and *The Super Sub Solution (The Bible of Substitute Teaching)* by Charles Prosper (he gives an awesome workshop about substitute teaching. This is where I took his workshop: <http://www.saddleback.edu/ce/>).

*Fair enough, but you still don't have 20+ years of experience in education or a PhD at the end of your name, so why bother?*

You're a persistent one! In fact, I do have over 20 years of experience in education, being A STUDENT most of my life and OBSERVING what worked. (If you want theories or statistics this might not be the book for you. If you want *practical* information with true success stories to improve your subbing, read on). If I asked you to remember your favorite teacher from middle school or high school, even college, would you remember? I am assuming most of you would, and why is that? Because that specific teacher/substitute teacher/professor made an impact or added value to your life in some way or another that made you resonate with him/her. Maybe it was the way they carried themselves or the way they inspired you to pursue your unique gift or to write, read-whatever the reason, they made an impact on you. With substitute

teaching you get the chance to enter numerous classrooms in various schools in quite a short time, giving you the opportunity to inspire numerous groups of students.

When I reflect back at all my years as a student from elementary school to college, I discovered there were particular characteristics of what made a teacher extraordinary that made them effective in the classroom and remembered. Sure there are certain teachers that resonate with particular students with reasons for what that exact teacher did, however, this is the exception rather than the norm. When there is an extraordinary teacher present, most students will notice and agree with one another. These extraordinary teachers I found acquired essential principles that made them successful and inspirational. As I applied some of those same ideas tailored to a substitute teacher (at a middle school and high school level), it radically changed everything for me. This is what the book is mainly about-*those* ideas. And to answer

your last question, yes I do have a PhD, a Public High school Diploma! Thank you-it was well earned!

*We all know substitute teachers are not really teachers; they are more like babysitters and simply there to follow the lesson plan left by the “real” teachers. They don’t really get the time to teach or make an impact to the kids-come on-aren’t I right?*

True-if you’re an ordinary kind of substitute teacher. But since you are reading this book, I imagine this does not describe you at all. See, when you close that door of the classroom, most of the time, there is not a “boss” or “supervisor” present to check your progress or monitor what you are doing in the classroom. An ordinary substitute teacher does what is expected and survives; an extraordinary substitute teacher exceeds expectations and inspires. I agree that the mission of a substitute teacher is to

follow the guidelines and lesson plan left by the regular teacher. However, it is a known fact that a hallmark of high achievers is those who exceed expectations and over deliver on their promises. As a result, they experience more rewards and are more influential with those around them. To be extremely humble with you, I cannot count the number of times I would receive a card or letter, even a drawing from students or teachers to thank me for everything I had done on top of what they requested. (Now if you have fear of what you can or can't do or are afraid of butting heads with a teacher's request-we'll discuss all of this in more detail later in the book).

*I notice you keep using the terminology: extraordinary and ordinary substitute teachers but teachers are not so black and white. Are you looking down at those who are not defined as extra-ordinary substitute teachers?*

Not at all! I agree that things are not so black and white, as I truly believe there are different shades of gray and tones in life. However, to keep things simple in the context of this manifesto in communicating these ideas, I thought it would be best to keep it consistent with the terms extraordinary and ordinary.

*I heard that substitute teaching is not stable and the sub desk rarely ever calls you?*

Extraordinary substitute teachers are always in high demand. Once you apply these essential ideas to your everyday adventures as a substitute teacher, teachers will literally be fighting over you to have you as a sub in their class. I had one middle school teacher text me repeatedly every week requesting me and I had to keep telling her I was booked every day she wanted me. In another instance, I had one teacher dispute with another because he thought he had me for that day and did not want

anyone else but me. Now I know this sounds like I am bragging or exaggerating, but I'm just proud of that fact that these colorful ideas you will learn in this book will literally transform your substitute teacher experience. Once you become well-known at more than two or three schools, you will have enough work to book yourself for job opportunities as much as two, three, even four months in advance. Also, the longer you are a sub, the more you'll be called by the sub desk of your school district. In no time, you'll be working 5 days a week-if you want, of course.

*Isn't true that substitute teachers are at a disadvantage when they come to a classroom in regards to dealing with behavior?*

Nope! In fact, they are at an *ADVANTAGE*. Let me explain. Instead of having the mindset that you are walking into a chaotic, uncontrollable group of

students who think that having a sub is a “free day,” what if you think of yourself rather as a “famous guest speaker” who is a fresh face for the students who are already too familiar with their regular teacher? A guest teacher who is there to follow the teacher’s lesson plan, *inspire* them and bring a spark of *passion for learning* in the short amount of time you have with the students? See, when you apply these colorful ideas of an extraordinary substitute teacher, students will ask the teacher-when you will return, or where Mr./Mrs. Your last name here is. When you walk around that same school because you’re subbing other classes (since all the teachers are requesting you of course) students will shout out your name and ask when you’ll be back in *THEIR* class. More people will enjoy your presence and remember the value you brought to them (warning-if you are subbing at the middle school level you might have to sign autographs...). Now I know some of you might be telling yourself, “Yeah, this

“famous guest speaker” mindset will never work in MY school district.” I completely understand where your coming from as I’ve taught in these “tough” schools in certain parts of Los Angeles where some middle school kids were coming up to me to tell me why gangs are cool or fights were breaking out everyday. We’ll get into this in more detail later in the book and what you can do to handle these more difficult schools; however, the timeless ideas taught shared in this manifesto apply to *all* environments, situations, and/or type of student body no matter how CHALLENGING you think it is. It all begins with your attitude and outlook.

*Ok last question; we all know substitute teachers earn less than full-time teachers-right?*

Certainly not true! I know subs that earn *MORE* than full-time teachers. How do I know? I was one of them! In less than six months, I became a long-term

assignment substitute (the opportunity to teach in the same classroom, in the same school, and with the same kids for usually more than 30 consecutive days where they increase your pay rate\* for as long as the assignments does for!) realizing I was making more than a first year full-time teacher! Now, don't get me wrong, this always doesn't happen and it shouldn't be the most important thing. However, I still included some colorful ideas in this book to *increase* your chances of having more guaranteed and consistent work days-if you want them of course.

\*each district is different, so check the district you're working in to see the pay benefits of a long-term assignment.

# WHY BECOME A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER?

Great question! I was asked this *ALL THE TIME* during my beginning months of substitute teaching. The answer is: there is no one concrete answer as it depends on *YOU* and what you want. Some people substitute to pay their bills and/or gain teaching experience while they are studying for an advanced degree or starting a part-time home-based business. Others enjoy the flexibility of school hours and days while they are pursuing acting, music, dance, art, or any other creative career field that requires flexible hours. I know even some subs where this was their sole career, and they had been subbing for years. The bottom line is if you like kids, enjoy all the benefits a substitute teacher acquires, and love embarking on a valuable and much needed service that creates a difference in the lives of others-then subbing might be the perfect fit for you!

# MY STORY AND WHY YOU NEED TO READ THIS MANIFESTO

My face drew a huge smile. Staring down at my hands was a large green card I received by one of my students, Alicia, on the last day together as a class before summer started. As a class we had developed a close relationship as teacher and students during this particular long-term sub assignment. I taught them valuable life lessons over those couple of months on top of the subject material we covered. Today, it was all going to come to an end and it was time to move on. Before I could say “thank you,” Alicia had ran off, I presumed embarrassed for what it contained inside. I opened up this special green card to read its contents, *“Well, what can I say? Well I am going to miss you cuz you are the best teacher I have ever had. Well I just wish you could stay over here. But oh well hope you the best wherever is it that you’re going to go. Well I am going to miss you”* with an adorable cartoon created by her. It’s difficult to describe the feelings of fulfillment I felt that day from the feedback I received from all

my students including receiving special cards like that. I still have that large green card to this day and it inspires me every time I read it.

This book will share with you the precise colorful ideas that I implemented to:

- Begin working everyday consistently as a sub in less than four months of subbing
- Become one of the most requested substitutes in all of Los Angeles
- Known to everyone in the district as The Magic Sub
- Doubled my income in less than a year of subbing
- Was personally offered to interview for two full-time teaching positions in a high school and in a middle school *demanding* I should interview- in less than a year of subbing

-Students continually requested for me to sub to their teachers (talk about word of mouth!) and had my picture professionally taken for a yearbook (as a substitute teacher of course!)

-and the most FULFILLING of all, after most of my sub days: I was smiling when leaving the classroom knowing that I contributed in leaving an impact to a child's life without having to desperately survive or act as an angry drill sergeant.

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE MAGIC SUB** (this is a bit long but I wanted you to get a sense of my journey as a substitute teacher. It may feel a bit exaggerated, but if you meet me in person, this is how I truly am {I secretly started drinking coffee at age 5}. Feel free to skip this section to get to what you really, really want, those 20 colorful ideas!)

**FALL 2007** After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a theatre major, I plan to move to Los Angeles but I'm too scared to make the jump so I move back to my mother's house briefly "to prepare to get prepared" where I end up having a nervous breakdown. I am stressed out like a maniac of what to do and my grandmother starts to chuckle in a loving, wise way after hearing my over-the-top dramatic declarations of why life doesn't work for me and I ask her why she's laughing...and she just continues to laugh. Arg!

**BEGINNING OF WINTER 2008** I finally move to Los Angeles in hopes of starting an acting career and living the dream. I apply to be a substitute teacher (my only stint in education work experience was a part-time job during my undergraduate years

tutoring middle school students) and they accept me. I am overjoyed until they presume to tell me the sub finder will call you starting at 5:30am everyday-so be on call- if you want to work. Did I hear you correctly?!? 5:30am?!??

1.5 MONTHS LATER Every cold morning I am waking up at 5:15am, getting in my truck, driving to a nearby location where I park and read the newspaper waiting for the sub finder to call me promptly at 5:30am. Oh did I mention why I am doing this? Here's why: my cell-phone has no reception in my apartment building and I don't have a landline phone nor the \$\$\$ to get one. Yikes! Some days the morning call would never come, and those days were far more frequent. Two weeks had past, and I had only received one call. On top of that my girlfriend at the time asks me, "Sooo, are you w-o-r-k-i-n-g tomorrow?" I decide to be more proactive and after a spark of inspiration

I create a brand for my services as a sub, called “The Magic Sub” and I proceed to make business cards, brochures, and pencils engraved with my message, “I Can Make It Happen,” and I drive to numerous schools to market my services. Here we go!

SPRING 2008- Success! Confidence restored. I am working now at least three to five days a week as teachers and students are taking notice of my services and requesting me more and more. I have now worked in over 15 different schools across Los Angeles in an incredibly short time. I question if I really want to be an actor in the future and I leave that behind finding greater fulfillment as a teacher. I even get the courage to start a part-time home-based educational business on the side. Life is good.

**TWO WEEKS BEFORE SUMMER-Oh no! What do subs do in the summer? I proceed to market more of my services to only year-round schools only to be rejected one school after another, “Sorry, we do not need your services this summer, Mr. Spitzer. Thank you!” \$1%#\$I!!! Luckily, my hard work finally pays off; one of the front office staff from a nearby school where I live calls me to personally request for me to be a permanent Summer English teacher. YES MA’AM!**

**FALL 2008- Back for the school year, and The Magic Sub’s “business” is booming! I am receiving an overflow of voicemails and emails from teachers and the front office staff more then I can handle. I am working almost everyday and I am booking dates two to even four months in advance! I am now working in only one particular school with at least 80% of the teachers there requesting me and another school as a back-up.**

I have my picture taken in one of the school's yearbook and they also ask me to co-direct one of their drama performances. Overconfidence gets to my head and I take numerous days off to focus on my part-time educational home-based business that is falling apart. Consequently, I lose focus and my "Magic Sub" business starts slipping.

WINTER 2009 I catch myself before things get really ugly for my sub track and I reinvent myself and improve my sub services than ever before. Front office staff and teachers begin to notice and the Magic Sub us back working 4-5 days a week where things seem to run smoothly. YES! I get personally asked for my resume so that they can interview me for two different full-time teaching spots at a high school and a middle school. Although extremely grateful, I happily decline as my goals in life have shifted and I get clearer on what I must do for the next chapter in my life. I get asked if

I am willing to do a long-term assignment at a middle school till the school year ends and I accept as I prepare for the future.

**SPRING 2009** Even though my paycheck as doubled, I get “reminded” of what a full-time teacher has to do (this being my second time with a long-term sub assignment) which includes creating lesson plans, grading in books, meetings after school, having a sub when I had to miss a couple of days (what a concept-a sub having a sub!), working with other teachers, parent conferences, dealing with test-taking, calling parents, working overtime and then I realize substitute teachers are spoiled brats.

**FALL 2009-PRESENT** Taking note of my youth and passion for education and traveling, I decide to drop my failed attempt at developing a part-time educational

home-based business and expand my horizons by teaching overseas. This takes me to Oxford, UK (where I am suddenly using big words with strangers) to get certified as an ESL teacher, Florence and Rome, Italy to go door-knocking school after school for an ESL teaching job (where I am suddenly using romantic words with the English schools' staff) only to have someone tell me in Italian to get the \*&^! out, and finally setting my feet in Beijing, China to teach English for EF English First.

Originally I had written a first draft of this manifesto before I left for Oxford, UK but it's funny how our heads can overcomplicate the process of a project when in reality is just a series of progressive steps. Anyways, I hope these valuable ideas will bring you much success as a substitute teacher and you can learn from my experience.

Successful author and speaker John C. Maxwell says it best, “Smart leaders learn from their mistakes. Smarter ones learn from others’ mistakes-and successes.”

This book is a result of listening and observing countless teachers and other substitutes to find what they do, reading an array of teacher/substitute books, watching “inspirational teacher” films such as *The Freedom Writers* and *Stand and Deliver*, attending a workshop for successful substitute teaching and learning from my own dumb mistakes and what actually worked.

The lessons I’ve learned are personal and often simple, yet they can have a profound impact. As I said before, you might already heard some of these ideas before, but we all know that most of the time we need to be constantly motivated and reminded of what works and what doesn’t in order to re-sharpen what were doing. In

the hands of the right person, these colorful ideas can add tremendous value to your career as a substitute teacher.

### What Makes this Book Different?

First, I'm not going to spend much time on anything on "how to become a substitute teacher" as this book's focus is to help you after you've been accepted as a substitute teacher in your particular district and area. Application requirements/questions-like do I need a BA?, CBEST information, benefits and salaries vary greatly from state to state and even between school districts within each town and city of every state. It depends on *YOU* and what you're after. We cover what you're specifically pursuing in more detail in **The Asparagus Idea #2** but the bottom

line is you will need to thoroughly research all of the school districts keeping in mind the pay that you exactly want and the teaching environment you prefer. My recommendation is simple: google, “how to become a substitute teacher in enter your city and/or state\_\_\_\_\_as requirements are subject to change every year and are constantly updated. Doing your research online in the initial stages is what I would do.

Second, this book is not a guarantee of any immediate success. I cannot guarantee when you will have the success you desire-whether it is the first month or even the first week. I will share with you these colorful ideas, but you will have to *apply* them. You must do them yourself if you are to get any value out of them. I will give you the sea voyage map, but you are the captain of the ship. If you choose to put in the effort, I promise you the rewards will be well worth it.

Third, this book is not overly complex, filled with boring facts, data, “emergency” lesson plans nor is it a handbook of clever thoughts to just spoon feed you for what you have to exactly say, do, and act-like to be a fabricated robot substitute teacher. This book is a bundle of insightful and valuable ideas that gives you a strong foundation to then explore your own unique teaching style, techniques, and approach to the world of substitute teaching. Who knows, maybe you’ll apply these colorful ideas someday into your everyday life and the results will surprise you!

# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR READING EXPERIENCE

As a teacher, one of the hardest things to grasp is that everyone has a particular learning style that best resonates with his or her learning process. You are the only one that knows how you learn best through the platform of books. Here are some of my suggestions that may be of use for you:

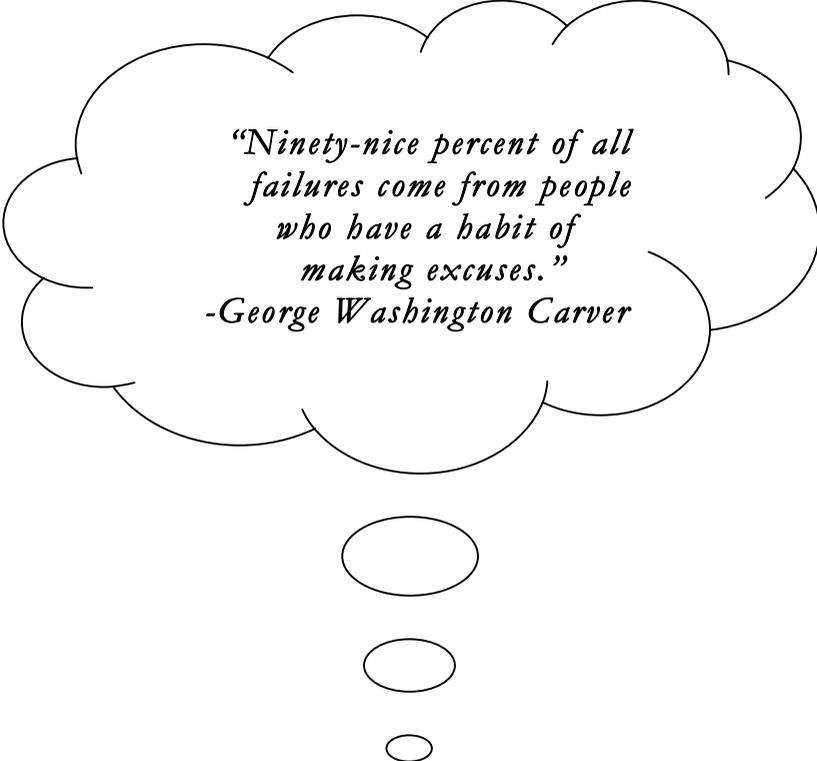
First, I suggest you read this manifesto through once to get a feel for all the ideas that are communicated here. So go ahead and skip doing the “I Challenge You” sections. Just read it and enjoy. You’ll realize that the ideas are in somewhat a particular order as they build upon one another.

Second, after you’ve read it once, I strongly suggest that you start taking notes on a separate piece of paper or even better, a journal so you can look back at everything that you feel resonates with you. As I’m sure you know, it takes repetitive exposure to a new idea before it becomes a natural part of your way of thinking and

being. If you're already familiar with some of these ideas-that's wonderful, skip them if you want, however, ask yourself if you are currently implementing them *consistently* as a substitute teacher.

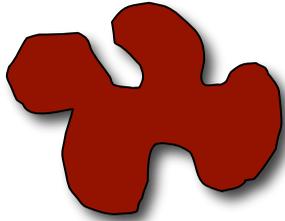
Lastly, as I already mentioned, I have included "I Challenge You" suggested activities at the end of each colorful idea to make this manifesto more like a workbook to further guide you in incorporating these ideas. If you want to truly take it up a notch, find a friend whose also on the same journey as a substitute teacher (**The Mocha Idea #8** goes into this in more detail) so you can go through it together and help each other implement the ideas that resonate with you both. So feel free to take the challenge if you dare!

**A WORD TO THE WISE:** Obstacles and common fears and questioning if these ideas actually will help you as a substitute teacher will show up, but this is all part of the adventure. So don't let this stop you. Take what makes most sense to you and move forward. It's now finally time to launch you soaring at an *extra*-ordinary level...



*“Ninety-nine percent of all failures come from people who have a habit of making excuses.”  
-George Washington Carver*

## THE ART OF UNCOVERING THE ROOTS



## THE CAYENNE IDEA #1-

### BE A GRUMBLEBUSTER

There is only one person in charge of the quality of your substitute-teaching career. Guess who that person is? That's right, *YOU*. If you want to be *extra*-ordinary, as a substitute teacher, you must take full responsibility for everything that you experience inside (including outside) the classroom. This consists of the results you produce with the students that specific day (or days), the quality of your relationships with your students and administration, your feelings after a school day, your teaching, your marketing efforts as a substitute-everything.

Since this sounds so much like common sense why do some people seem to grumble about the subbing experience? From my experience and observations, a lot of us enter substitute teaching with great intentions; however, we can easily get influenced by the environment around us and get bogged down to the point that we start blaming and complaining for the parts of our sub track we don't like.

We blame the class clown

We blame the parents

We blame the administration

We blame the class sizes

We blame those cell-phones and mp3 players

We blame the education system

We blame those violent video games and TV

We blame it on a sub's income

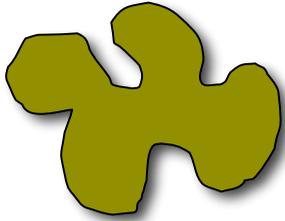
We blame the old worn out school textbooks

We blame the kids' for our bad mood

We never want to look at where the true obstacle is *ourselves*. You will never become extraordinary as a substitute teacher as long as you continue to blame or complain about your lack of success in this field. If you don't like what you are producing and experiencing, you have to change your thoughts, words (the vocabulary you use has a huge effect on your psyche), and actions in your particular situation. I remember when I used to sit in those teacher lounges listening to one complain after another of how this devil student ruined class or how hot the classroom is to teach in; complaint-after complaint. Let me be clear, I'm not suggesting you be one of those extreme positive thinking, way too optimistic individuals rather being a person that acknowledges the truth-it is *YOU* who has control over your thoughts, the words you use with yourself and others, and the kinds of actions in response to the events surrounding you. Sure, times will be tough in the classroom, and yes-maybe there are

ineffective systems or situations that could be handled in a better way but at the end of the day, you know as well as I do that it's our empowering thoughts, words, and actions that can change our perception of the experience and lead to better results. You made the decision to substitute teach, so now it's up to you decide how you want this experience to turn out.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** For three working days in a row, avoid complaining when you substitute teach. If a complaining thought emerges, zap it away with these three questions: What is great about this that I am complaining about? What am I committed to do to make it the way I want it? What am I grateful for in this moment? After no complaining for 3 working days, increase it to 5 days in a row. Don't forget to have fun during the process! Begin now!



## THE ASPARAGUS IDEA #2

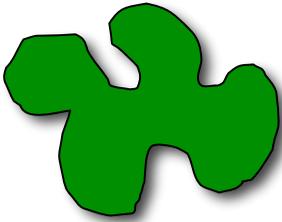
### HAVE SUPERHERO FOCUS

What do you want to get out of substitute teaching? What do you want to accomplish? How long do you plan to substitute teach? Why are you subbing? Not being absolutely clear about what you want during your journey as a substitute teacher will only make the road bumpier, but if you have an unclouded direction of where you want to go and what you want to accomplish-everything can change for you.

When I first started subbing, I'll be honest; I had no clue what I truly wanted. I had a small inclination of what I thought I wanted with subbing, but I never was crystal clear. I simply was riding the boat without a rudder, simply drifting hoping to latch onto something. After several months of the process of preparation to become a

substitute teacher (passing the CBEST, applying, interviewing, getting accepted, attending a week long teacher academy) and a month and half of unsatisfied subbing, I finally stopped drifting in my boat in the vast sea of confusion and sat down to answer the most important question that changed everything-What do I want out of my substitute teacher career? I sat down and I made a list of what I wanted to accomplish. An ordinary substitute teacher would say, “I’ll let substitute teaching track just happen. Go with the flow.” An *extra*-ordinary substitute teacher would say, “I REFUSE to let my substitute teaching track just happen, I’ll flow with a go (strategy or plan).” There are people who might laugh at you for taking this “substitute teaching track” so serious and try to take you down to their level. Don’t listen to them. At this stage in the journey, it is not necessary to know exactly how you are going to get there. All that is important is that you figure out where *there* is.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Make a “10 Things I Truly Want To Accomplish for my Substitute Teaching” list. One of the easiest ways to get crystal clear on what you want out of your substitute teacher career is just to write it down. What do you desire? Then post this list somewhere where you’ll see it everyday-in your bathroom mirror or on the refrigerator. This is a powerful technique that builds momentum for you and gets your creative juices flowing. When a plan comes to you that helps you accomplish one of the items on your list-write it down with all the *possible* steps to how to get there. Eventually, you’ll want to transform the most items on that list into specific goals with a strategy to make them happen.



## THE CLOVER IDEA #3

YOU'RE NOT ONLY A TEACHER,  
BUT A STUDENT

The highest achievers of our time –whether in business, sports, or the arts are committed to a continual improvement that never ends. Why not apply it for substitute teachers? President Harry Truman once said, “You cannot lead others until you first lead yourself.” That is only possible if you invest in yourself.

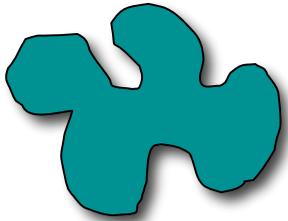
If you want to become an inspiring leader to the students, you must learn. If you want to *continue* to lead, you must *continue* to learn. As educators we can get so distracted by so many different elements that sometimes we forget to continue to progress and improve our skills even though we are helping others to learn and grow! Who are the best teachers of this colorful idea? **YOUNG KIDS**. Most young children are filled with excitement, curiosity, and a sense of wonder. One of their most

engaging characteristics is their infectious desire to keep moving into the future, asking questions, and getting a sense of their world around them. We must learn from them if we want to acquire this simple idea. If you want to lead by example in front of your students, then adopt the attitude to grow each and every day.

There is no fixed destination to head for and then to arrive completed. Ordinary substitute teachers have the mindset, “I know it all-there is nothing else for me to learn.” *Extra*-ordinary substitute teachers have the mindset, “I don’t know it all-I am committed to constantly learning and growing.” This book is not my final answer on the subject of becoming an extraordinary substitute teacher. Within months or even weeks of this book being available online and shared with others, there will be ongoing thoughts/ideas I would like to add. Why? Because I continue to improve, progress,

and make new distinctions. See if you can adopt that same mindset inside the classroom.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Start a daily substitute teaching reflection journal. Buy one of those composition books with 100 sheet of regular college-ruled paper or something similar and everyday write these two questions down: “What was the most important thing I learned today? What is one particular skill or element in my subbing experience that I can improve upon? Take only 5 minutes max to write your answers down -that way you don’t second guess yourself or spend too much time over-analyzing everything. Remember to improve in *small daily increments* because if you do too much, it will overwhelm you and you will fail-reinforcing the belief that it’s difficult.



## THE TEAL IDEA #4

### BE THE “HOLY COW!” PERSON

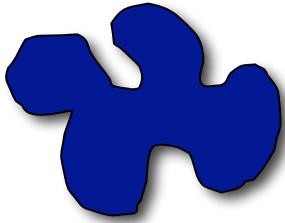
Ask yourself this question, are you someone who gives what is expected or gives MORE of what is expected? So many of us have been conditioned to do what were told and not go the extra mile from either fear of rejection or thinking it's unfair. It's when we over deliver on our promises that the law of reciprocity kicks in and *results* happen.

When I first started subbing, I gave genuine thank you cards with a candy, my business card, and a quality report attached of how the day went, which I thought was plenty enough. However, when the “Magic Sub” idea came about, and I “branded” my services to that theme-I came up with new, juicy ideas and it pushed me to go even further. The NEW “modest package” that I would leave for the teacher included: a sub report envelopes spray painted gold (I bought a can of gold \$6 at Home Depot) to give it the effect of Willy Wonka's golden ticket. Also, I included pencils I had made with

my “Magic Sub” logo and my catch phrase engraved into them, a delicious chewy chocolate mini candy bar, a sub report printed on *resume* thick paper not regular printer paper, a creative business card made from a deck of playing cards, the teacher’s name written artistically on the envelope, a genuine wonderful thank you card and an exceptional teacher report with specific names of students who were excellent and ones who misbehaved. Why did I do so much? Because I truly believed that my services were special and like a luxurious hotel, I wanted my customers (teachers) to feel like they got a quality sub service when they were absent. Now I know some of you might say “Wow-this sounds extreme, you had a lot of time on your hands didn’t you? - no, just one hour on a Sunday to pre-set. How about those of you who say, “Wow you spent a lot of extra wasteful money on this “package” and what’s the payoff? Actually, my spending costs for the extra goodies were more or less under \$15

every month. Then if you put it into perspective, all your hard work (one hour on Sunday) does pay because if a teacher likes your unique marketing service (not to mention what the kids say about you) and request you again for another school day- that ONE school day alone pays back all your expenses and MORE (profit). Plus, the word of mouth you'll get for being creative, bold, and novel will pay off like you wouldn't imagine!

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Answer this question: Where are areas in my substitute teaching career where I can give above and beyond where people expect? Then in your next sub workday, immediately apply the top two that could make a big difference in your services. Don't think about it too much or question yourself, take a risk, stretch yourself, be playful and make it happen.



## THE MIDNIGHT IDEA #5

### RESIGN YOUR MEMBERSHIP FROM THE WHINE CLUB

One of my favorite quotes that goes along with this colorful idea is, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with,” by the late inspiring speaker and author Jim Rohn. This idea simply states, if you want to be more successful as a substitute teacher, you have to start hanging out with more successful teachers.

Ordinary substitutes have a membership with the *whine* club (most of the time the club is held in the teachers’ lounge\*) where the atmosphere is filled of negative judgments, criticisms, blaming, and complaining. Extraordinary substitute teachers have a membership to the *celebrate* club where the atmosphere is filled with laughter, ideas, funny stories of the classroom and encouragement. You must be selective of the people that you surround yourself with, as I’m sure you know people who only have to

walk into the room to totally drain you of energy. Find those dedicated teachers that have the mindset that they can handle anything that is thrown at them. Maybe you'll get new ideas to implement in class or better yet, these dedicated teachers will get to know you better and will most likely ask you for your contact info to sub their class!

Are there people at the schools you are subbing at who are always complaining and blaming others for their circumstances? You might ask, what about the students complaining in the classroom that you are surrounded with? Again, going back to **The Cayenne Idea #1**, whether you know or not, when you are teaching you become a *role model*, and a leader responsible for his/her students. Napoleon Hill, author of the best-selling personal development book of all time-*Think and Grow Rich*, explains it best, "The successful leader must be willing to assume responsibility for the mistakes and

the shortcomings of his followers. If one of his followers makes a mistake, and shows himself incompetent, the leader must consider that it is *he/she* who failed.”

If you are going to be an *extra-ordinary* substitute, you have to start hanging out with successful teachers. This may be one of the most difficult ideas to grasp because no one wants to be lonely as a teacher but your psyche and success as a sub depends on it.

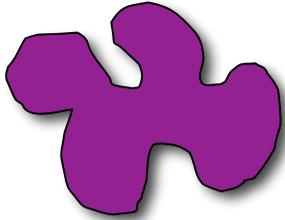
**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Create a list of everyone you spend time with from the schools you normally sub at (if you don't have regular schools you sub at yet-then hopefully this exercise will be helpful in bringing you more awareness). Include administration, teachers at lunch, anyone you spend time on a regular basis at work. Now, which adults do you find yourself spending most of your time with? If you are constantly

surrounded by strong negative influences than maybe it's time to rethink your strategy of where to go for lunch or who you want to spend your school time to exchange ideas, stories, so forth. If it's friends of yours at the schools who unfortunately have a negative impact on your psyche, then be that inspiring, role model colleague for them.

Associations are subtle but powerful so the message here is the same mothers around the country share with their children, simply be careful of whom you hang out with.

The goal is to free yourself from the negative influence of others as much as you can.

*\*every school is different. Please check your schools' local teacher's lounge/cafeteria.*



## THE PLUM IDEA #6

YOU HAVE *HOMEWORK* TOO...SO DO IT!

I will illustrate this principle with two different and *extreme* scenarios.

### First Scenario of Sub #1:

7:31am: Wake up, look at alarm clock and  
JUMP out of bed to the bathroom for a quick 5  
minute shower since school starts at 8:00am.  
7:39am: Out of shower, look at alarm clock,  
7:40am?!?! Look for clothes to put on,  
but all pants dirty...Oh no! You forgot to

### Second Scenario of Sub #2:

6:02am: You wake up to wind  
chimers from your alarm clock  
and put on some pants to go  
on a morning power walk.  
6:20-7:15am: You do your  
morning stretches, then eat

do laundry! Well, I guess, whatever-  
shorts and funky t-shirt will have to  
do.

7:45am: Where are my car keys? **WHERE  
ARE THEY?!** Yes! Found them under the  
mattress! Gather everything and rush  
to the car to drive to school without  
having time for breakfast.

8:05am: Arrive to the school, the front office  
staff reminds you “you’re late.” You hurry up in  
the classroom where the students are waiting  
for you. They see you and yell, **YAAA.**

breakfast, read 15 pages from a  
book, write in your journal 5  
things you are grateful for,  
you shower and dress (of course  
professionally), then gather all  
appropriate materials for the  
day and head off to the school.  
7:31am: You arrive at the school  
greet the front office staff with  
a smiling “Good morning!”  
You arrive at the classroom, read  
over the lesson plan for the day

## **A SUB! FREE DAY!**

**You feel stressed and unfocused.**

**You presume to sort of enjoy the words the kids use, FREE day, however you rush through the day hoping you do everything right with the lesson plan left for you.**

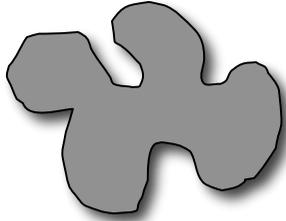
**4:05pm: You finish surviving the day, exhausted, defeated and remind yourself, “Why did I get into subbing?” You say, “Whatever” and hope that you can get called by the sub finder tomorrow.**

**as well as some neat highlights of each student so that you can establish rapport with the students in class because you spoke with their regular teacher beforehand to provide you with this info, and greet the students when they come in as the bell rings at 8:00am.**

**4:05pm: You finish fulfilled and and satisfied with another great day.**

So what homework do you have to do? The work at home BEFORE you sub. That's your HOME-*work*. This idea will set you off on the right path; you'll be more focused mentally and physically, which will make you more prepared for anything thrown at you. I am not suggesting you become exactly like the second scenario but that you do your best to move towards that direction so that less stress fills your days.

I CHALLENGE YOU: So your homework is to find a consistent time so you're ready to go for a great sub day. It doesn't matter if you are a morning or evening person, simply just find a routine time to get everything all prepared (professional clothes, your package, getting in touch with the regular teacher about sharing with you highlights of specific students, extra materials) so you are not as frantic in the morning. Just do something in preparation to get you in the *right* mindset to foster a great sub day.



## THE TIN IDEA #7

TICKLE AND SHARE YOUR FUNNY SIDE!

*...and that's what L stands for in LEADERS (written up on the white board). Now the first E stands for electronics are forbidden! So no mp3 players, video game devices, cell-phones including texting your cute boyfriend or girlfriend in another classroom, [in a high pitched squeaky voice] "Hey baby boy. Wax up?" The whole classroom erupts into laughter. So do me a big favor and put them on vibrate or better yet silent. That way we can have a fun, productive day and I can write up in the sub report who my leaders are in this classroom.*

A sense of humor is **KEY** for success in the classroom. Humor creates trust and a welcoming environment to learn. Look at it from this perspective- when we are up in front of a group of students, there's some **PERFORMANCE** aspect to the teaching. Part of your job is to **ENTERTAIN** the audience, keep them captivated and willing to listen to you talk about the history of the Battle of Gettysburg or how to divide irregular fractions. Author and acclaimed speaker Jeffrey Gitomer reflects on this point best, "You have a responsibility to inform and entertain. No one wants to listen to a boring speech. The secret to entertaining the audience is to make them laugh. At the end of laughter is the height of listening."

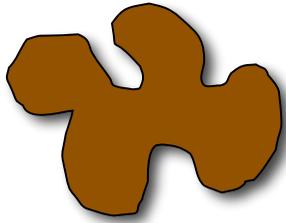
Now I know what some of you might be thinking right now, "I can't tell jokes, are you kidding me? I'm not a funny person!" Or, "easy for you to say, you were an actor!" True, I did have some prior experience with delivering humor on stage but I

am no great comedian, I do know being funny is hard work and not everyone is natural. If you want mountains of success with humor you must- like with anything else, deliberately practice, practice, practice. If you want to sharpen a great sense of humor or to be funnier as a person than watch quality comedy films (*Some Like it Hot* or *Young Frankenstein*), attend stand-up comedy routines and proceed to take notes or read a book like, *How to Be Funny* by Jon Macks (especially the “How to Be a Funny Public Speaker” section on pg. 115).

Others of you might say, “Humor in the classroom? In the classroom we get to work, stay focused, and don’t fool around! Teaching is not a performance!” I completely understand the perspective, since it’s easy to get sidetracked in the class and lose focus if it’s all fun and games. However, your students are a young crowd who in this ultra-connected multi-task world we live in has developed a very short attention

span and can “get bored” quicker than ever before. Humor helps students get engaged, connected, and ENJOY the learning process. You have nothing to lose, so loosen up a bit, go ahead and tell a joke or funny story to break the ice during a lesson; you get extra points if related to the subject matter!

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** After doing a bit of “sense of humor” research as mentioned above (watching films, attending comedy clubs, etc.) begin to ask yourself how can I use humor in the classroom when I sub? Instead of relying on an organic moment, maybe pre-write some jokes/stories in the lesson related to the information before class starts and share them with the students. Be creative with the humor and apply it in the classroom the next time you sub. Then follow this joke/story formula: test it, review it, revise it (if needed) and repeat (if you want it in another class).



## THE MOCHA IDEA #8

### HAVE A CHEERY COMPEER

It took me nearly a year to truly instill this idea as I learned the hard, hard way. Don't make the same mistake I did. Since we all know that when it comes to solving an issue at school or creating a result, two heads think better one.

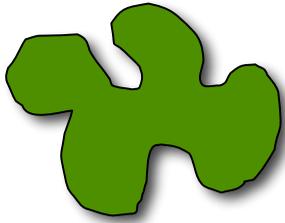
Imagine having a partner substitute teacher, who you can talk to for the purpose of problem solving, brainstorming, and encouraging each other. A cheery compeer can provide that essential enthusiasm when yours is waning because of any challenges or discouraging days. How do you choose a cheery compeer? Simply pick someone who is as excited about reaching his or her achievements as a sub as you are about reaching yours-someone who is committed to both your success and theirs.

For almost a year I had no real partner when I was subbing, and a lot of time I felt lonely working. Sure, I was with a different group of students every period, and I connected with them but as teachers you sometimes get those feelings of loneliness when you don't have the opportunity to truly and deeply communicate with another adult in the day. It's just you and the kids. It was not until at one particular middle school where I found someone by chance who shared my empowering mindset and commitment to improvement after he noticed my enthusiasm and passion when I talked about teaching. We kept each other on track by exchanging ideas to improve our teaching quality and sharing what worked and didn't work. I learned a lot from him and vice versa.

Having a fellow co-worker committed to success made me work not harder but more smarter. Ordinary substitutes do it all alone, while extraordinary substitutes find

cheery compeers. To sum up this idea, critically acclaimed connector and best-selling author of *Whose Got You're Back*, Keith Ferazzi, puts it best in his book when he says, “accountability isn’t a cool passing idea but the start of a commitment and a habit.”

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Make a list of “potential” cheery compeers. If they are substitute teachers-even better (if there’s competition-great this will make you get you playing at you’re A-game). Pick your top 3 and approach each one with the idea of accountability. If you get a NO, no sweat, move on forward. If you are having trouble creating a list-then that means you need to step out of your comfort zone (discussed in more detail in [The Tangerine Idea #18](#)) and go meet more people/teacher/substitute teachers. You never know what ideas, information, contacts, resources, and/or more importantly, friendship awaits you.



## THE FERN IDEA #9

MOVE FROM THE MINDSET OF IT BEING  
JUST A “SUB JOB” TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

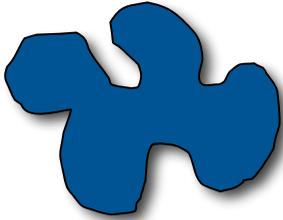
The greatest gift you can give anyone is a gift of empowerment and love. What could be more loving than walking into classrooms in numerous schools and helping an absent teacher keep the momentum of a group of young minds learning and growing? Have you ever been in a classroom where the spark of passion, thrill of learning, and the positive/supportive culture is *lost*? Now, not all classrooms are like this but for the ones that are, your duty as an extraordinary substitute teacher is to *rekindle* that flame and bring back the passion of learning into the classroom. If you really think about it, substitute teachers are spoiled when compared to all the work full-time teachers must do *everyday* from grading countless papers and tests, attending parent conferences, to creating engaging lesson plans just to name a few. My point of this principle in the

simplest terms is wonderfully explained by best-selling author Harry K. Wong of *The First Days of School*, “Some people go into teaching because it is a job. Some people go into teaching to make a difference.”

One of the best contributions you can do to reawaken that passion in the classroom is to make learning the most exciting thing ever and lead by example. Now I know if we’re talking in pure economics, I can see how subbing can be viewed as a part-time job while you are pursuing another career, preparing for a full-time teaching career, or simply for other reasons. Either way, subbing is considered by many to be a “temporary” position while you are on track to do something different. That’s fine, but we must get out of the hypnosis that since it’s looked as a “temporary” job we should treat it *carelessly*. Some cynics may think the creation of even *this* book is a waste, as subbing is not too important enough to talk about or that they are not “real” teachers.

I beg to differ, as whenever we are in front a classroom of some of our future leaders, we have an incredible responsibility in our hands when we step inside that classroom. To sum up, we simply cannot be careless with this responsibility as a substitute teacher.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Answer these two questions after a week of subbing: What have I given this week to the students to make a real difference? How have I added this week to the quality of life to the students? Start making this a weekly habit.



## THE OCEAN IDEA #10

### WHAT'S YOUR EXTRA-ORDINARY SUBSTITUTE TEACHER SENTENCE?

What will you leave behind? How will you be remembered? This idea is effective at reminding us of what's *most* important in our time as a substitute teacher. We all can lose sight of the bigger picture of what we're doing, focus on the negative, and label subbing as one big survival experience or a battle with the kids.

When we look back at all the classrooms we subbed in, how many of us are going to be pleased at how uptight we were in class? How many of us will wish our priorities had been different when we were subbing? I love the concept of “don't sweat the small stuff” coined popular by the late Dr. Richard Carlson, best-selling author of *“Don't Sweat the Small...and it's all Small Stuff,”* who shares this wonderful idea in

the book, “People wish they hadn’t “sweated the small stuff” so much. Instead they wish they had spent more time with the people and activities that they truly loved and less time worrying about aspects of life that, upon deeper examination, really don’t matter all that much.” In the context of substitute teaching, this is an excellent quote to put you back into perspective in your journey as an extraordinary substitute teacher. When that student is talking to his classmate about the latest skate park, is it really then necessary to raise your voice in front of the class and put him/her on the embarrassing spotlight? When one of your students asks question after question for lack of understanding because of their particular learning style, is it really necessary to lose your temper at them in front of the class?

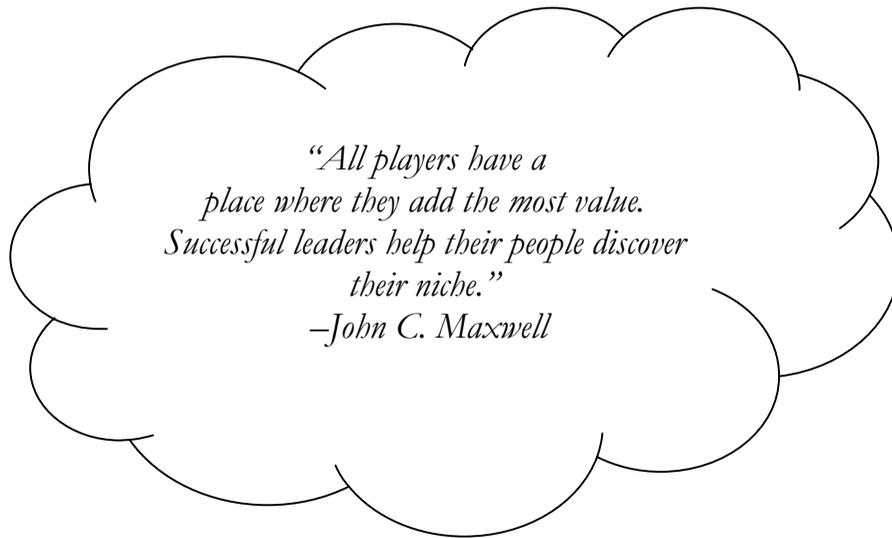
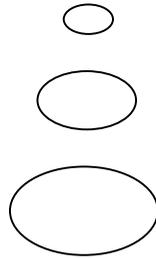
Ask yourself then this one important question, “How will students summarize me in one sentence?” Fully define your “guest teacher legacy” in that one sentence.

This won't be easy to do but it will be a rewarding experience. If you were to ask me what's my teacher sentence it's this, "He did his very best to make the learning process the most productive, entertaining, and memorable experience where students felt appreciated." A simple thought but a *powerful* reminder. As corny as this colorful idea sounds, this will bring you much success and fulfillment as a sub while providing you the extra motivation to keep you going when days get tough.

When you come to the end of your subbing career, I hope you have no regrets, that you taught your students to the fullest without bullying or begging, and did everything you could every day to make the most of your time in the classroom. Being intentional about your "guest teacher" legacy sentence and living it out every time you teach will help you do that.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** It's never too early to start thinking about what you want to leave behind as an extraordinary substitute teacher. Make this colorful idea a priority. To get the ball rolling answer these three questions (you can refine your answers later)

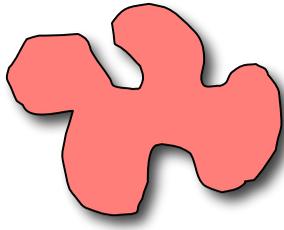
- 1) How important has a “guest teacher” legacy been to you?
- 2) What do you want students to leave with in the classroom?
- 3) What's my *extra*-ordinary substitute teacher sentence?



*“All players have a  
place where they add the most value.  
Successful leaders help their people discover  
their niche.”*

*—John C. Maxwell*

# THE ART OF MANAGING THE CLASSROOM



## THE SALMON IDEA #11

### ESTABLISH INSTANT, BONA FIDE RAPPORT

One of the major reasons why many substitute teachers can struggle to manage the classroom behavior is that we can stay so frantic and hurried *assuming* we know what's best. We can quickly label students immediately without at least taking a small portion of time to get to know whom we have in front of us and listening to their feedback during class.

A lot of the time we get responses coming from the students but we can easily label it as just naughty behavior because confronting the real roots of the situation would make us uncomfortable. It is uncomfortable to confront your own mistakes or to know you are doing a bad job teaching. It is uncomfortable to hear the students tell you, "this is boring!" It is uncomfortable to hear students talking to one another during a lesson because maybe you're approach is ineffective that doesn't resonate

with them or because you didn't take the time to get to know them first. So you pretend to be in control by shouting at the class to be quiet, sit down, and listen when in fact, it's *YOU* who is the problem. An important understanding to develop is every class is different, and doing your best to understand where the students are coming from and truly listening to them will *transform your subbing experience*. Ordinary substitute teachers wait for disasters to occur in the classroom and then blame something or someone for their challenges. Extraordinary substitute teachers do the uncomfortable, look at the student's point of view, find ways to connect with them, acquire fair feedback from them and then take the steps to create the desired outcomes.

No matter how much passion or tools of the secret substitute teacher bag you use, if there is no instant rapport with the students, this will lead to an ineffective way

of managing the classroom. You must establish *a sense of connection* and see things from *their point of view* if you want success as a sub.

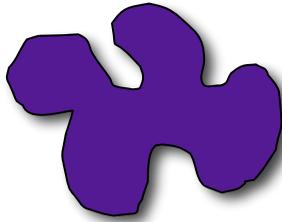
A great extreme illustration of this is from the story of Erin Gruwell described in the book, *Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them* which then became a movie starring Hilary Swank, *Freedom Writers*. In 1994, Erin was an enthusiastic, positive individual from Newport Beach, CA ready to be a first-year student teacher at Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. It was there where Erin confronted a room of “unteachable, at-risk” inner city high school students as they were called who had been ignored or written off by the education system. It was grueling and challenging for Erin as she struggled day after day, as the kids felt how could this high energetic, happy teacher understand where they were coming from or what they had to go

through outside of school? After almost losing hope, one day she intercepted a note with an ugly racial caricature and angrily she declared that this was precisely the sort of thing that led to the Holocaust-only to be met by uncomprehending looks. So they embarked on a journey with the books: *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* and *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* as their guides and many other experiences where they began to see parallels to their own lives. They recorded their thoughts and feelings in diaries and dubbed themselves the “Freedom Writers” in homage to the civil rights activists the “Freedom Riders.” Every one of Erin's 150 students who were called “unteachable, at-risk” graduated from high school and most went on to college. Although I can't give you all the details of this incredible story, (you'll have to pick up their book for that) this at least gives you an example of a teacher who found a creative way to build rapport with them that led to her making an astonishing difference in

these kids' lives when everyone thought it was impossible. You might ask, "She wasn't a substitute teacher so she had the time to establish a connection!" This may be the case but the principle is the same: let me ask you a scenario and a question, imagine having a new substitute teacher who says your name *correctly* and they sincerely compliment you because they heard from your regular teacher that your soccer team won the championship and that *you* made the winning goal (an example of the **The Plum Idea #6** being put into practice). How would you feel towards that sub for the rest of the day?

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** The basic challenge here is to ask yourself as well as your classes the *right* questions and simply listen. This big challenge will broaden your perspective and can tremendously improve how you manage the classroom as a sub by

looking at from *their point of view*. What is the reality of a kid's life in today's world? What is their relationship with the main teacher? What do you think is the first thing that comes to their mind when they hear substitute teacher? What's the best way for you to connect with this particular group? What type of area is this school in and where do most students come from? If you are having trouble answering these questions you might have to talk to more teens to try to get an idea where they are coming from-with respect to their privacy and personal matters. Spend some time in the beginning of class getting to know the students (make a strong effort to remember their names) because this will establish a foundation for the rest of the lesson. Now of course, you might not connect with every single student since some students have deeper issues that's beyond your scope but know that implementing this idea is when you start crossing the line from being ordinary to becoming an extraordinary substitute teacher.



## THE EGGPLANT IDEA #12

### USE THE GANDHI APPROACH

*“Alright. I’ve HAD It!” Everyone. GET up!-NOW! You bark in a furious, deep voice that is so loud that it almost shakes the student’s desks. Everyone quiets down and stands still, shaken and scared out of their mind. You proceed to slam the bottom of your closed fist on the desk. “I don’t know who you thinking you are used to having as a sub, but my name is Mr. Jones, and I DON’T PLAY around in my classes.”*

If the only thing you get out of reading this book is the consistent use of this colorful idea, it will have been well worth the time invested in reading this book. The use of fear should never be used in the classroom for disciplinary issues, yet it’s still one of most common mistakes of substitute teachers.

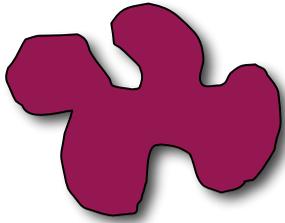
One of the most typical reasons why teachers use the emotion of fear for discipline issues is simply because it gives them instant results in the short-term. However, in the *long-term* it destroys your reputation with the students as a respectful and listening leader and you INSTANTLY become the *enemy*. Students talk. Do you want your students to fear you like a dictator or look up to you like a role model?

Do you see why some kids can get so excited when they have a new sub? It's FREEDOM for them as some teachers still rely on FEAR to discipline them. It's not always easy. I know, believe me I've been there, losing my temper and yelling at them when I finally learned a valuable lesson: once you've established a sense of rapport and respect with the students (as described in [The Salmon Idea #11](#)) and developed a sharpened skill of *patience*, no matter what class environment you're in, then there is no need to use fear.

One of the best role models of this point is Mohandas Gandhi, the preeminent political and ideological leader of the Indian independence movement, who quotes in his autobiography, *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, “When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won.” Remember, you want the classroom to be a place of character and support where *appropriate* mistakes are welcome in order for the learning process to take place effectively. You might still say, “I’ve tried to be a patient teacher and to not raise my voice, or act angry but this fear approach has actually worked for me!” Now, I do agree that all of us get motivated in different ways. Some of us need to be presented with the possibility of pleasure to get going while others need that association of future pain to follow-thru. However, the challenge with using a fear approach is it’s far easier to create a classroom of stress, worry, fear of making mistakes, and a reinforcement of the

belief of why they hate school or the learning process than if you don't use it. Many students will observe your behavior and lack of self-control and decide not to respect you as a leader. It will take an astonishing amount of effort and patience not to use fear, especially as a sub, but the rewards are priceless. If you still must communicate to them in this fashion, then it must be done in a fair and respectful manner *after* you've established rapport with them and they expect it, because if not-it can cause resentment and a lack of respect. Remember to ask yourself, "What kind of example do I want to set for them? Would I want a substitute teacher to approach me the same way?" If Gandhi could lead a whole nation to freedom with the principle of not striking back, you can lead a whole classroom to freedom from them being struck back with a fear-based approach.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** For your next sub day, *avoid* using fear at all costs to any surprise discipline issues that come up. Use your resourcefulness and find creative ways to handle the situation. When you successfully handle one FULL day of using no fear, then push yourself for two sub days and then three, five... with the goal of making this type of behavior coming from you rare. At the end of the week, review all the times you used fear or lost your temper and ask yourself, what could I have done differently to approach the situation in a more effective manner? If you think you must use fear as a motivation for certain students, then become more aware if you are doing it in a fair, respectful and elegant manner.



## THE MAROON IDEA #13

### BE ZEALOUS

Have you ever met someone who just lighted up the room? It was something about them, their energy, and their fire in their belly? They seemed to vibrate at a higher-level frequency. This is a powerful colorful idea that if applied can do you *wonders* and help you manage an effective classroom. This factor of personality is sometimes refereed to as “personal magnetism” or also called “enthusiasm” and any extraordinary substitute teacher has a plentiful supply. Naturally people that are highly enthusiastic about what they do attract success into their life. This enthusiasm or passion makes your sub days fly by. It helps you become more efficient and effective. It helps you make better decisions inside and outside the classroom.

Through cultivation and understanding, this vital force may be drawn upon and used to a great advantage for success as a substitute teacher. Here are just a few ways that it can be communicated:

Your tone of voice

Your posture and how you carry yourself

How you dress

Your sense of humor

Your thoughts

The words you use

Your handshake

Your eye-contact

With enthusiasm for what you're doing, you will become a magnet for others, who will take notice of this high level of energy. They will want to help you, work with you, and support what you're doing. As a result, more students will want to listen and

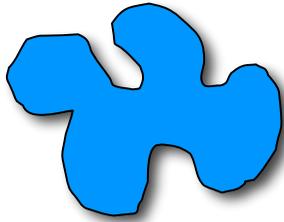
learn to join in on the enthusiasm which will make managing the classroom far more easier and disciplinary issues will began to reduce.

Rafe Esquith, an extraordinary 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and author, well known for his remarkable ability to shine his light in his classroom at the third largest elementary school in the US, located in a gang and drug-infested neighborhood in Los Angeles, tells us best, “I would not allow today’s educational fiasco of systemized mediocrity and uniformity to crush me into the robot so many potentially good teachers become. I kept my own spirit and personal passions alive in my class.”

Ordinary substitute teachers lack enthusiasm and passion in the classroom, thus invite feelings of lack, limitation, worry and doubt making it *impossible* to manage an effective classroom. Extraordinary substitute teachers are full of enthusiasm and

passion in the classroom, thus invite marvelous moments, creativity, and joy making it *possible* to manage an effective classroom.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** If you are reading this book, then I assume you're more passionate about subbing than the norm. So what do you do for days when you feel passionless in the classroom? Ask yourself 2 important questions: "What's the **WHY** behind everything I do and what I am I grateful for with subbing? In my experience, the more compelling reasons you come up with, the more drive you're going to have with what you do. Even if subbing is not your dream job, you can at least come up with grateful learning lessons that you can take with you throughout your life that when you look back, you'll say, "I can now connect the dots." I know I am now.



## THE AQUA IDEA #14

### HAVE SOME CLASSROOM RULES-FOR YOURSELF

What if you establish great rapport, avoid using fear in the classroom, have high enthusiasm, and you **STILL** can't seem to manage the classroom that seems outside of your control? Don't stress. No one is perfect. We must set rules for *ourselves* organized in ways that allow us to adapt, be flexible and move on. Then you can leave a thorough substitute teacher report knowing you did the best you could.

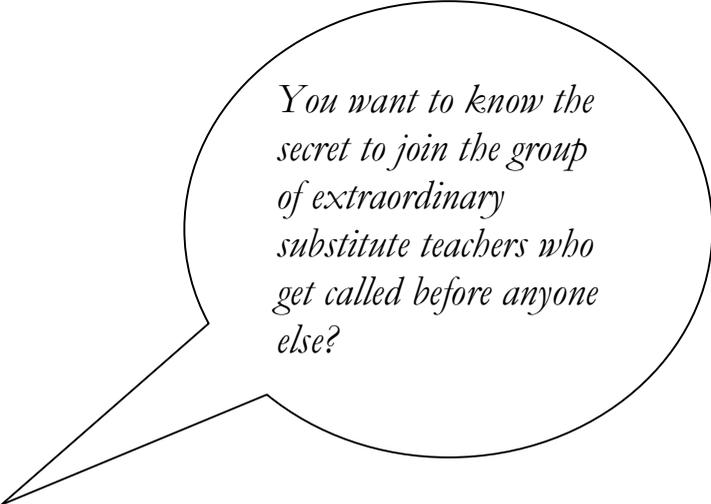
You see if your rules for success in the classroom are for everything to go as planned, I guarantee you're not going to experience joy in a consistent basis as a sub. The peak performance coach, author, and entrepreneur Anthony Robbins states in his book, *Awaken the Giant Within*: "As long we structure our lives in a way where our happiness is dependent upon something we cannot control, we will experience pain."

This might seem a contradiction to **The Cayenne Idea #1** of being not complaining and taking full responsibility in the classroom but it's not. For example, what if this happens: two boys walk into your class who just got into a heavy argument at lunch earlier over a girl. Sooner or later a fight breaks out during the lesson where fists are thrown at each other, disrupting the lesson. All the students get up and shout, FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT and it takes about 25 minutes to break it up, get all the students back in their seats, and get re-focused. You lose such valuable time that you don't finish the lesson and you write it in the sub report that you simply could not get through all that was requested because a fight broke out. You feel terrible that you couldn't get the job done and feel frustrated at the same time because these boys disturbed the class. Now, was this your fault or was there a way you could have stopped it from occurring? Most likely, this was out of your control as both of the boys were broiling a fire towards a

fight to erupt. Could this have been a class lesson in teaching the kids how to find *other* ways to resolve conflicting issues instead of simply fighting? Possibly. The important thing to remember is **HOW you react** to this situation.

Don't me wrong, it's not always easy, as it can be extremely difficult-since it takes constant practice to handle surprises of frustration but the rewards of having a mindset that you will enjoy class *no matter what* happens is powerful. We can react in a way of feeling like we failed or we can feel empowered in a different way by figuring out *other* ways to approach the situation. Remember that whether or not you feel like you're achieving in the classroom is totally dependent **on the rules** you've set for yourself.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** It's time to design your rules so that you're *in control* in the classroom, so that it's not the students that determine whether you feel good or bad. Set it up so that it's *extremely easy* for you to feel good and *extremely hard* to feel bad. To get the ball rolling, ask yourself these two questions: "What does it take for me to feel successful as a sub in the class? What does it take for me to feel I made a difference?" Add more questions if you would like. Now look at your answers and ask yourself, "Have I made it really hard to feel good and easy to feel bad? After a sub day, you want to know you did your best and that the outcome shouldn't be the defining factor in how you feel at the end of the day.

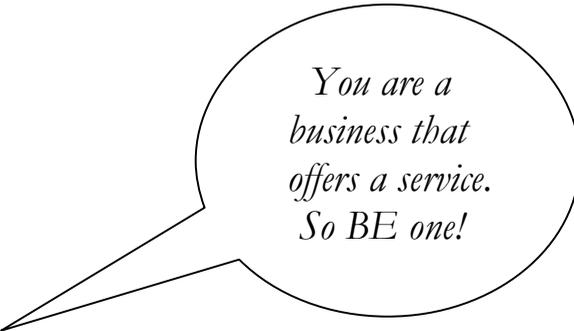


*You want to know the  
secret to join the group  
of extraordinary  
substitute teachers who  
get called before anyone  
else?*



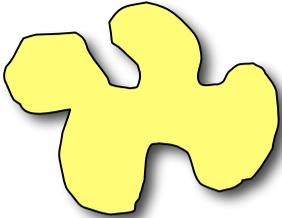
**YEAH!**

*Tell me!*



*You are a  
business that  
offers a service.  
So BE one!*

# THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION



## THE BANANA IDEA #15

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOU ARE A BUSINESS

This can seem like a new concept for many substitutes. You might ask, “Wait a minute, I am a substitute teacher-not a “business” person who sells! In fact, YOU ARE! When you look at yourself as a business offering a service, this mindset alone will take you to the next level where you start to distinguish yourself from an ordinary substitute teacher to an extraordinary one.

I don’t consider myself an expert in business by all means, but I do know the basic core idea of a business: a legal recognized organization designed to provide a product and/or service to consumers in the marketplace. So who is the business? YOU. What is the service? Filling in for absent teachers to keep the momentum of the

class going. The marketplace? Middle School and/or High Schools. Customers? The absent full-time teachers AND the students. The Product? The outstanding substitute teacher report you leave along with a few surprise goodies like a genuine thank-you card. Like any good business, your job from now on will be to care of your business by offering outstanding customer service and innovate ways of serving the marketplace.

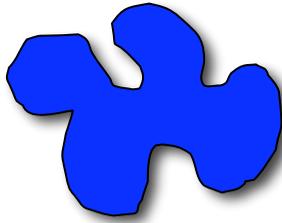
Now, you have a choice: Ordinary substitute teachers don't self-promote, and enter the luck of the draw with the computerized "sub finder." Extraordinary substitute teachers self-promote, and do not rely on a computerized "sub finder" to get work. The core of your "sub business" will be ongoing with pro-active self-promotion and excellent customer service. It might take some time for you to recognize your groove and style of subbing. However, make a commitment to be world-class like companies such as Apple, Google, and Ritz-Carlton, by exceeding expectations with

everything you do in your sub service. Think about it, as with any excellent company that provides quality customer service, the word will get around FAST!

Now you might ask yourself, if I am a business, I have competitors, right? Well sure, *you can* look at it like other substitute teachers are your competition. Competition can be great because it makes you be conscious of your own “sub company” to keep it strong and constantly improving in the “marketplace” (which in this case is teachers and students). Another way that is a bit *less* stressful is to look at it from a *win/win* frame of mind-when appropriate-where it’s more of a cooperative arena and not a competitive arena. Have the belief that there is *plenty* for everybody and that one person’s success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. Always make sure, as with any company that it’s built on ethical values and principles.

Embrace the idea that you are a business and offer not a ordinary service but an extraordinary one!

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** What's the mission (or philosophy, creed) of your “sub business”? This could be your “guest teacher sentence” from [The Ocean Idea #10](#) or it could go further into detail. A mission statement provides your “sub business” focus, becomes the basis for making decisions outside of class, and gives you strength in the midst of change. What are your “sub business” core values? With a sense of mission and clear values, you can direct your sub business on the right path.



## THE BLUEBERRY IDEA #16

CREATE A UNIQUE “BRAND”  
THAT REPRESENTS YOU!

A powerful idea that will skyrocket your “sub business” to success! What is your name or trademark connected with your sub business? Brands are increasingly important components of culture and the economy-why not apply to the school “marketplace” and create a playful sub identity?

Some of you might feel uncomfortable creating a “brand” for your sub service and will simply go off your own name. I wouldn’t recommend it. Create a brand that is original and catchy. Not only do you have the fun chance to have a theme for your service and marketing but also it makes you stand out which gets you remembered quicker by the teachers and front office staff. Can’t think of any off the top of your head? Here is a list to get your creative juices flowing:

Wizard Sub

Captain Sub

Wonder Woman Sub

Dr. Sub

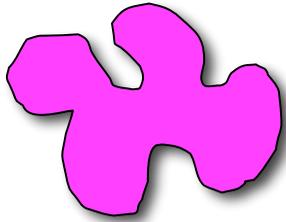
Princess Sub

Kung Fu Sub

Imagine how fun it would be to have one of these sub “brands” or better yet, creating your own? This colorful idea is all about being creative and having fun in the process. This will also help you in your marketing efforts as allowing you to think of more imaginative ways for your message to *stay* in front of the customers. If you want to be really clever, you can have a sub “brand” related to the mascot of the school that you want to specifically sub at. Make sure to have a distinguishing attribute that makes you the unique sub you are. For example, as Magic Sub, if the kids were good, I would occasionally do a magic trick here and there-*even* teachers requested to see it! I

guarantee you will have fun in creating your own sub brand and all the teachers and front office staff will get a kick out of it!

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Awaken your creative self, and start brainstorming. Spend some time writing a list of possible unique brands for your sub services. What special skills, talents, or abilities do you have? What's a childhood superhero you loved? If you have children, ask them for advice! See there is no right or wrong way to approach this, as long as you find a "brand" for you sub services that resonates with you and makes you smile. It's when you chuckle and can't stop smiling that you know you've got a winner.



## THE MAGENTA IDEA #17

### TELL YOUR SUB STORY WITH PLAYFUL MARKETING

Now I just want to mention before I go further that I'm not some marketing guru but I do know that in the area of my marketing my substituting teaching services, I had tremendous success in a very short time than the average substitute teacher. I can only share with you what worked for me and for others that I observed. Now that we got that out of the way, let's get back to business. Your business that is!

So you've decided to enter the fascinating world of extraordinary substitute teaching, great! It's time to lay down some fundamentals for your marketing campaign so that you can communicate **YOUR STORY** to the "school marketplace" for success. Without a *quality* marketing campaign, no one will listen to your incredible services making you a sitting duck.

Once you have a business identity, it's time to have fun and be creative with your marketing. Ordinary substitute teachers think negatively about selling and promotion. Extraordinary substitute teachers are willing to promote themselves and their value. Now I am going to avoid spoon-feeding you exactly what to do in your marketing campaign. Quite frankly it all depends on what kind of story *you* want to convey. I will simply give a foundation so your campaign can be a success.

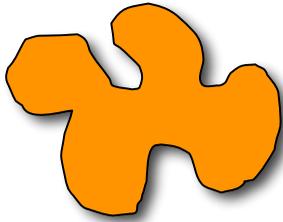
I can tell you from my own personal experience that the core to my success with marketing was taking calculated risks, being creative and unique, and having it relate to my overall “sub theme.” Earlier in [The Teal idea #4](#), I shared a story of how I spray painted the envelopes gold, gave them to the teacher and handed out pencils with my sub “brand” engraved with my motto. That’s one example in my marketing campaign that brought me massive results. Another example is that I designed some

playful, and colorful brochures with my Magic Sub logo and the motto. They became such a hit, that a teacher asked, “Who is this Magic Sub?” Word spread so fast that I guess I was the only sub in that particular school that had ever given out brochures!

To further help you in your marketing campaign, ask yourself this question: “What can you do to have something *exclusive* that other subs don’t provide?” Be **BOLD**. Maybe if you choose “Wizard Sub” you hand out mini wands that has your sub website URL. Or maybe if you are Dr. Sub, instead of calling it sub teacher reports, you leave “doctor recommendation notes” with “a prescription” for success next time. Maybe you take yourself more serious and professional as a substitute and you create an online calendar where teachers can schedule “an appointment” with you- that way you can CUT the phone conversation all together! There are infinite possibilities! With

some imagination, playfulness, and some guts, you can practically have fun with your marketing and blow the competition out of the water.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Before you can tell your “sub story” with effective marketing you must first decide what YOUR sub story is! How can you stand out? What unique attributes do you offer that other subs don’t have? Once you answer those questions with a clear, genuine sub story: have fun, get creative, and be bold with an intelligent and effective marketing campaign.



## THE TANGERINE IDEA #18

GET THE #\*&! OUT OF YOUR  
COMFORT ZONE

As you move forward in your marketing and self-promoting to become extraordinary, you'll have to confront some uncomfortable situations. Whenever you are about to do something new, different, and out of your comfort zone, there is usually discomfort. Unfortunately, many ordinary substitute teachers let this feeling stop them from taking the necessary steps to achieve success in their sub track. *Extra*-ordinary substitute teachers, on the other hand, feel this discomfort but don't let it keep them from doing anything they want to do. They understand this feeling is something to be acknowledged and experienced along the journey and are willing to do what's uncomfortable in order to grow themselves and achieve success.

Some people will do anything to avoid these uncomfortable feelings. If you are one of those people, you run an even bigger risk of never getting what you want out of your sub career on the business side of things. Extraordinary subs acknowledge this discomfort exists but don't let it keep them from doing important tasks.

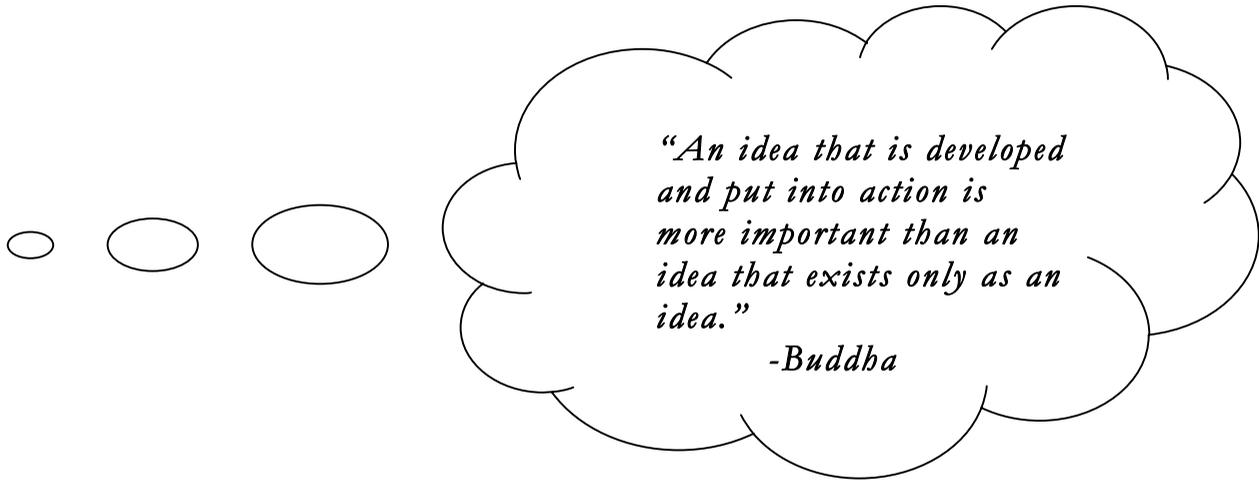
When I confronted the roadblock with my subbing because I was depending on the sub finder, I decided it was time to take my “sub business” to the next level. I created my “package” and I went to the schools I hadn't been to yet and simply walked in to their front office, introduced myself, gave my quick 30 second “Magic Sub” pitch, did my best to build immediate rapport, and left my “product” materials for them. Now, was I terrified to walk into the schools to drop off my brochures and give my “Magic Sub” pitch? Of course! There were times I sat there in my truck, rehearsing what I was going to do and say, and asking myself, “What the heck am I

doing? Are subs supposed to do this? But I experienced the discomfort and made it happen anyways. It took some time and effort in numerous schools, but after that experience I acquired a long-term sub assignment that doubled my paycheck!

The most important point to remember in stretching out of your comfort zone is to let go of finding yourself frightened by fantasizing negative outcomes. I know it sounds easy to say intellectually but when you're actually going to do it, it can be terrifying. Avoid imagining the worst outcomes and as cheesy as it this sounds- visualize it going the way you want it.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Make a list of everything you're afraid *to do* with launching your subbing to the next level. Are you afraid of walking into a school you want to sub in and giving your sub sales pitch to the front office staff? Are you afraid of creating a

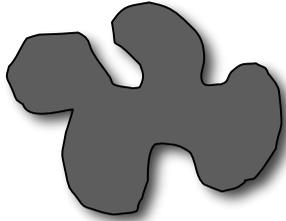
“sub brand” and letting everyone know that’s what you are called? Once you have the list, ask yourself these questions: What are the top ten benefits if I move forward and make this happen? What are the top ten consequences if I don’t move forward and don’t make this happen? What are the roadblocks? Do I think it’s possible for me to find a way to go around or breakthrough the roadblocks to make this happen? If so why? After you answer these questions, see if you can figure out the most intelligent strategy to make it happen!



*“An idea that is developed  
and put into action is  
more important than an  
idea that exists only as an  
idea.”*

*-Buddha*

# THE ART OF ACTION



## THE IRON IDEA #19

### YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO

There is no ideal time to start. Don't keep putting things off waiting for a "perfect" sign. Start now! Like the Ancient Chinese Proverb says, "A journey of 1,000 miles must begin with one step."

Some of the most imperative things can only be learned in the process of doing them. You can do something and notice your outcome-then get you the necessary feedback to change course. If you don't do anything for fear of doing it wrong, you never get this essential feedback, and therefore you never get to improve.

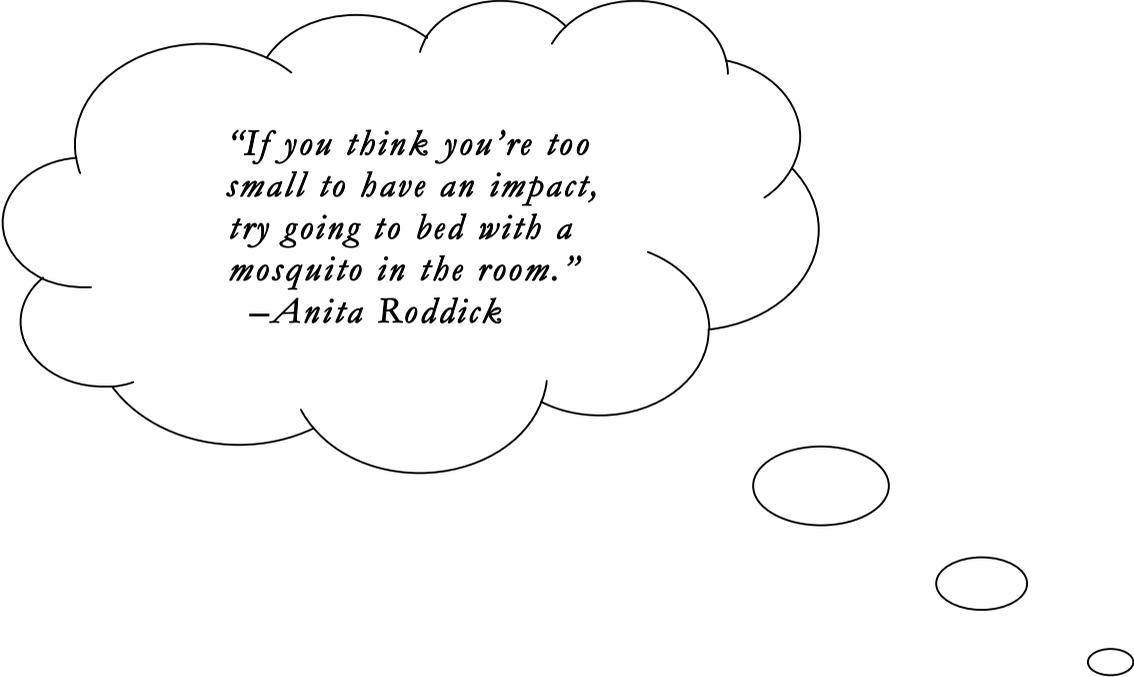
Therefore, the real core to your extraordinariness as a substitute teacher is to take what you have learned and what resonated in this manifesto and put it into action.

Remember there are 20 colorful ideas in this book. You can't do everything at once, but you can begin with a small step. So my largest and most significant I CHALLENGE YOU exercise is...

**Get going!**

**Make it happen!**

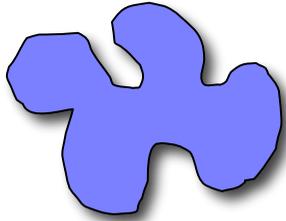
Take whatever time is necessary for you to incorporate the colorful ideas that resonate with you but don't delay too long. It won't be such an easy adventure but it will be fulfilling one where you know you are getting the most of your substitute teaching track by giving your best. If you have any ideas that worked for you and were not included here or any inspiring stories of these ideas giving you some colorful results, feel free to share them along at [chris@babysitlessinspiremore.com](mailto:chris@babysitlessinspiremore.com), as I would love to hear them. Enjoy soaring at a new, EXTRA-ordinary level as a substitute teacher!



*“If you think you’re too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.”*

*–Anita Roddick*

## THE 20<sup>th</sup> IDEA



## THE ORCHID IDEA #20

FIND A WAY TO SERVE OUTSIDE  
OF SUBBING AT THE SCHOOLS

As I grow older, I have realized the greatest levels of fulfillment are experienced by those who have found a way to go out of their way in serving others without expecting anything for it. We have to break that habit of thinking only of ourselves or “what’s in it for me?”

Sure, we can make a difference in the classroom, but don’t limit that influence only inside the classroom as you can offer to be an extra hand at schools that always need volunteer help. If you have read this far into the book, this shows you are the type of person who truly wants to reach a peak level from your subbing experience. This

colorful idea is about going even further than the classroom. This is when you start becoming a member of the community.

I remember the first time I applied this idea when I volunteered to help make sure a dance show ran smoothly on one Thursday evening at a middle school I normally subbed at. Did I get paid for doing this? Nope. So what did I get out of it? Pure fulfillment. I can't express the words I felt when some of my students that I had in my class would see me and yell, "Mr. Spitzer! You came? No way!" It was a great experience and guess what happened? My credibility of course increased, teachers now trusted me more, and that's when they started offering me full-time positions at the school. Not to sound like a grandpa, but there is something so magical when your efforts are focused on giving rather than getting.

**I CHALLENGE YOU:** Go volunteer and support the schools you're subbing at: whether it's helping after school with repainting the hallways or assisting in coaching the after school soccer club. Ask your schools' staff, how you can be of assistance. When you volunteer, you get back a whole lot more than you give.

In closing, I hope you enjoyed this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. Subbing doesn't have to be so difficult. Let's truly take substitute teaching to the NEXT level. If you believe as I strongly as I do in the law of reciprocity or what others call karma, then feel free to share this manifesto with other substitutes (or possibly even regular teachers) having them go to [www.babysitlessinspiremore.com](http://www.babysitlessinspiremore.com) who might benefit from reading this so that we can make an impact in the complicated education system. Thank you for your time and caring about our kids who are *our future*.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**CHRISTOPHER VON SPITZER-** is currently working for *Dramatic English* in Hong Kong. He was born in sunny Anaheim, California and spent his adolescent years mainly in the city of Irvine, California USA with a couple of gap years living in Bogotá, Colombia; Quito, Ecuador; and Florida, USA. He obtained his CELTA certification from the *British Study Centres* in Oxford, UK and has garnered over 4000 hours in the craft of teaching. He has taught students from all over the world including Italy, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, and America. In his spare time he attempts the art of iPhone photography, writes quirky fables, and draws thought-provoking doodles that can be all found at [www.christophervonspitzer.com](http://www.christophervonspitzer.com)