**SURVIVAL GUIDE** for

***OCCASIONAL TEACHERS***

*by Ben Andrews*

*(OTBU Grievance Officer)*

**Occasional Teachers face different problems than regular teachers. We do not get the same respect from students, we also often do not know the names of the students and therefore discipline in the class room is much more of a problem for us. The following are hopefully some helpful hints on how to deal with an increasingly frustrating job:**

* **Come early so you have time to find the absent teacher’s instructions. Some are on the teacher’s desk, some in his/her mailbox, some in the department’s office or with the Department-Chair; some are in the front office. It pays to make a copy of the attendance lists as well since, after you send the list to the office, you don’t know who the students in the class are. Some of you might want to keep them until the end of the period. Don’t forget to put your name on the blackboard. Do not allow students in the class who are not on the attendance list unless they have a note. No “guests allowed” should be your policy.**
* **When arriving early in the classroom, make a rough sketch of the desks. Do the attendance by roll-call, take your time, make sure they put their hand up and write the student‘s first name and last initial, in the appropriate spot. This is of great help if you need to identify a student later for disciplinary reasons. Students often rely on the fact that you do not know their names and they will be surprised if you can identify them by name. If the teacher left a seating plan, warn the students that you will do the attendance from the seating plan and if they are not in the correct seat they will be reported absent. If you do not trust the seating plan, do a roll-call and correct the plan. Late students, coming in after the bell goes or after the attendance is completed if that is your criteria, must report to you. If they sneak in and do not let you know, they will be reported absent, as well as students who show up near the end of the class without a note. Do not get into an argument with a student. If they don’t like your decision tell them to complain to the office after school.**
* **When the students arrive pay attention to the rowdy ones, especially the ones who seem delighted that there is a supply teacher and who announce that to the rest of the students coming in. They are usually the ones trying to disturb the class later on. Do not let the students rearrange the desks and form “groups” this usually ends up in difficulties later in the period.**
* **How often have you heard “our teacher lets us do that”? Tell them that today you are their teacher and they must go by your rules. Let only one student out to the washroom at the time, write the name down and the time he/she left. Other students have to wait until he/she comes back. A common heard refrain is “this student never comes back” Ignore it, however if a student has not returned after 10-15 minutes you can let the next one go, but, and you must do this, report the student, who takes too long or disappeared, to the regular teacher with a request to follow up. Next time you are in the school ask the teacher if he/she did a follow up and what the consequences were. After all you might get that class again or some of the same students in another class. This will establish your authority in the school. Kids talk!**
* **Don’t leave anyone else in charge of your classroom at any time (EA’s, Peer Tutors etc.). Remember, they have eyes, so be in control at all times!**
* **When taking a class to the Library or Computer rooms take a second attendance check and in the case of the Library, inform the Librarian who you are covering for. With regards to surfing the net, we suggest you don’t do it.**
* **When sending a student to the office, phone the office that a certain student is coming down because of a discipline problem. If you did not get the student’s name for some reason and you do not get any co-operation from the other students, do an attendance check at the end of the period if necessary for identification. If a student refuses to leave for the office call down immediately for assistance. A VP will come to the class to help you out. Do not touch the student or his/her clothes or back-pack, under any circumstances. Follow the school procedure by filling out the necessary form(s). Don’t forget to follow up with the VP in charge of that student and asked what the consequences were for the student. Do not be afraid to involve the office for fear that you will get a reputation of not being in charge of the class. In fact the opposite is true, and you will get a reputation that you are in charge, not only by the school administration but by the students as well. This reputation will spread through the student body, believe me, and greatly increase the respect you need to do your job efficiently.**
* **At the end of the period tell the students to stay at their desks until the bell goes. Remind them that this is your rule! If you don’t they will line up at the door often up to 10 minutes before the bell goes. At that point you can get in a situation that you must physically block the door and students start to push each other, play with the light switches, and/or the telephone! You will hear “our teacher lets us go”, you can’t hear the bell in this class” or “the bell is out of order”. Ignore them, in the past some school administrators have blamed OTs for the number of students in the hall before the bell goes.**
* **Follow the teacher’s instructions faithfully, circulate throughout the class room. Do not read a book or newspaper, or doze off behind the desk. Students who claim they are finished must show their work and if true, tell them to do any other school related work or read a book and not disturb other students.**
* **If you want to complain about the instructions of the absent teacher or have any other complaint about any teacher you must do so in writing with a copy going to that teacher within 72 hours of delivering that complaint to any other person. This is a must! The same procedure is required by everyone complaining about you. If you are confronted by the administration about your work, do not meet with anyone without the presence of an OSSTF representative. In each school there is a branch president if you must meet in a hurry, otherwise phone the OSSTF office at 705-726-1722 and ask for Jeff Parton, OT President or Ben Andrews, OT Grievance Officer. The secretary will know where we are and how to reach us.**
* **I hope that this “Survival Guide” is useful to you. If you follow these guide lines regularly, even if some of them seem a bit onerous, you will find that you will get more respect from the students. Eventually, when the word spreads throughout the school (believe me students will talk or text) that you are no “push-over” and that there are consequences to bad behavior in your class room, you will have an easier time as an Occasional Teacher in the future.**

**Don’t swear whatsoever and curtail your vernacular.**

*Ben Andrews – OTBU Grievance Officer*