NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS HANDBOOK

Children First

Division of Human Resources
SubCentral
65 Court Street, 5th Floor, Room 504
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201
(718) 935-4401

http://schools.nyc.gov

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Chief Executive Officer’s Message

Welcome to your exciting assignment as a substitute teacher in the New York City Department of Education. You have chosen a path that will be both challenging and highly rewarding. You are taking on a role that is being increasingly shaped to meet the needs and expectations of the children in our public school system. The "Children First” agenda continues as the guiding principle of our school reform.

The role of a substitute teacher has evolved from being merely a day-to-day coverage person to one who provides quality instruction in every class each day. You are an integral part of student learning and achievement. The same high standards and accountability expected from permanently assigned teachers are also expected from you.

Some important understandings should guide you as you take on assignments:

- Continuation of student learning along a continuum established by the permanent teacher and school leaders is your primary focus.
- Students look to you to establish your authority and to exude self-confidence in your role.
- Effective instruction and classroom management emanates primarily from well-planned lessons.
- Each classroom and school has norms that must be quickly grasped and implemented to achieve effective instruction.

The Division of Human Resources has created this handbook primarily:

- To clarify processes associated with being a substitute teacher.
- To describe instructional expectations for substitute teachers.
- To introduce best practices that will enable you to succeed in our schools.

Ultimately, our goal is to provide you with support so that you can help our schools to achieve the goal of improving learning and achievement for our students.

On behalf of the City of New York, the Department of Education, the parents and students, we commend you and thank you for your commitment to excellence as a substitute teacher in the New York City public schools.

Lawrence Becker
Chief Executive Officer
Division of Human Resources
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Getting Started

Organization of the New York City Department of Education

The New York City Public School system is the nation’s largest. There are over 1.1 million children; more than 1,700 schools with new schools opening every year; 80,000 teacher and teacher-related positions; and 22,000 paraprofessionals.

WE ARE REQUIRED TO COVER EVERY CLASSROOM TEACHER ABSENCE WITH AN APPROPRIATE SUBSTITUTE TEACHER.

The school system is organized with the support of Children First Networks (CFN). This is an initiative designed to integrate operational and instructional support for schools. The goal is to expand the philosophy of devolving as much decision – making power as possible to the people who know schools best: principals, teachers and school staff. There are forty Community School District, High School and Special Education Superintendents whose responsibilities include evaluation of principals. Each school has chosen one of the CFNs for support. Academic standard-setting, student placement, school funding and teacher recruitment will be among the vital system-wide services that are provided by the Central Department of Education.
Qualifications

Minimum Education Requirements

A substitute teacher must possess a Baccalaureate Degree from an Accredited College or University

The New York City Department of Education accepts new substitute applications from individuals who receive a nomination via a principal’s on-line nomination. When a principal’s on-line nomination is received, a substitute nominee receives emailed information on how to access and complete an online application.

If the nominee is New York State certified, he/she may work only in the nominating school. In order to be eligible to work in other schools, and be called by the Office of SubCentral, the certified candidate must complete a written and oral assessment as well as a short training program. Information regarding this will be provided when the candidate appears for initial processing.

If a nominee is not New York State certified, he/she must successfully complete the Assessment and Training components to be eligible to begin working in the nominating school and any other. Uncertified candidates who do not successfully complete assessment and training sessions may not work as a substitute, even in the nominating school. Those candidates successfully completing the assessment and training components will be eligible to work in all schools.

For both New York State certified and uncertified teacher nominees, invitations are emailed to be processed for an Occasional Per Diem Certificate (OPDC). The OPDC must be obtained before the nominee may work. All details are emailed to potential nominees and candidates at various times during the processing.
Registration for SubCentral

First Time Registrants
- When you become credentialed to serve as a substitute teacher, you will receive a file number that can be found on your Per Diem Certificate. You will need this number to register with the SubCentral System and create a Personal Identification Number (PIN).
- Please memorize these numbers. You will use them regularly throughout your career with the Department of Education.
- For those who are registering for the first time, your file number is your Access ID and PIN number.
- The System will then prompt you to create a new PIN as part of the registration process.

All Registrants
- You must register with the SubCentral System to be called for substitute assignments.
- Your Access ID and PIN are used for all interactions with the system and should never be shared with or used by anyone else.
- You can register and change your PIN number by calling (718) 935-6740.
- If you are not registered, you WILL NOT BE CALLED and offered any job assignments.

SubCentral/SmartFindExpress System
SubCentral is the central operations or “home base” for substitutes. The purpose of the system is to:
- Ensure the continuity of classroom instruction by assigning qualified substitute teachers to fill absences.
- Remove the responsibility currently placed on principals and school staff to locate suitable substitutes when teachers are absent.
- Track and maintain information on absences and substitute usage.

System Overview
The SubCentral/SmartFindExpress System is a fully automated computerized means for reporting absences and arranging for substitutes to fill vacancies created by absent classroom teachers. The Substitute module of the SubCentral/SmartFindExpress System allows quick and easy access to the information you need to review your profile, search for jobs and review or cancel assignments. This guide provides instructions for performing these tasks using an internet browser or telephone.
SubCentral/SmartFindExpress automates the absence entry procedure, your search for day to day assignments and the job selection offer process. Telephone Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and computer Internet browser software (such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.) both communicate with SubCentral/SmartFindExpress to update information in the database. You are strongly encouraged to use Internet access whenever possible, as it is much easier to access job assignments visually rather than waiting for IVR messages.

SubCentral/SmartFindExpress automates, prioritizes and assigns available substitutes for job assignments. You have the ability to decline jobs. If you do, you will still be offered other jobs. If you decline three (3) job offers you will not receive any more job offers during that call out session. The system repeats the process for the next selected substitute in sequence after every decline. SubCentral/SmartFindExpress records the assignment and tracks the status of calls made through completion, for record keeping and management reports.

SubCentral/SmartFindExpress selects you to fill absences and places calls to you during the specified call-out times. You can also call the system or go on line to search for available jobs. SubCentral/SmartFindExpress can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can access SubCentral directly: www.SubCentral.nycenet.edu or (718) 935-6740. You may contact the SubCentral Help Desk by phone during normal business hours (6:00 AM to 5:00 PM) at (718) 935-4401.

**Substitute Teacher Identification Cards (ID/Smartcard)**
All newly hired substitute teachers will be issued an identification card by the HR Connect ID Card Unit. Substitutes currently using a Smartcard will continue to do so.

- You may use your ID Card/Smartcard to log attendance and gain access to participating Smartcard-based schools.
- To obtain an ID Card follow the photo ID card procedures.

Should there be a question about your eligibility to work, call the SubCentral help desk at (718) 935-4401 starting at 6:00 AM.
General Responsibilities of a Substitute

**Accepting a Job**
- Whenever possible, you should use the SubCentral/SmartFindExpress system to accept jobs you are offered.
- Once you have done so, please make a personal note of the date, time, location, job number, special instructions and other information pertinent to the assignment.

**Punctuality**
- You must report to duty before the official start of the school day.
- Many experienced substitutes recommend arriving at school at least one hour before the start of school in order to prepare their plan for the day.
- **Schools have different starting times**, so be sure to listen to the time given in your assignment information to know when to report.

**Parking**
- Throughout our city finding an appropriate parking space, especially around a school, is often very difficult.
- You are strongly encouraged to use public transportation whenever possible to avoid difficulties in finding parking spaces.
- If you prefer to drive, give yourself plenty of extra time to find an appropriate parking space.
- You may not park in designated school parking areas.

**Work Hours**
The beginning and ending times for substitute teachers will vary from school to school.
- Be certain to listen carefully to the start times as indicated by the SubCentral/SmartFindExpress system.
- When in doubt, call the school the day before to verify the start time and obtain the directions to the school if needed, or check on the website for the school’s starting time and location.
- A map of each school is available on the Department of Education’s main website at http://schools.nyc.gov. The cover page has a map that gives you the specific location of the school along with the nearest subway stops.
- You may also call the Transit Authority at (718) 330-1234 or www.MTA.info or secure directions through www.mapquest.com or through other online resources.
Canceling a Job

- If after accepting a job, you find the need to cancel that job, **you must do so at least 1½ hours before the start of the job.**
- Cancellation can be done using the SubCentral/SmartFindExpress IVR system and following the prompts to cancel a job.
- If you attempt to cancel the job after the 1 1/2 hour deadline (approximately 6:00 a.m. the morning of the assignment), you will not be allowed to do so in the system and you must call the school administrator to cancel the job.
- Once you have accepted a job, it is critical that you either fulfill the commitment or cancel the job in a timely manner.
- Failure to do so may result in a principal excluding you from working at his/her school in the future. Repeated failure to do so will result in your being restricted from working anywhere in the school system.

Photo ID

- All substitute teachers are required to have proper photo ID with them at all times and to present it upon request.
- Photo ID cards may be obtained at 65 Court Street-Room 102, Brooklyn, NY.
- Please be advised that you will not be issued your employee ID card until fingerprinting requirements have been met and a valid photo ID has been presented.

Orientation/ SubCentral Training

- All newly appointed substitute teachers are required to attend a one hour SubCentral/SmartFindExpress System orientation that will answer many of your basic questions.
- Orientation will take place during the on-boarding process and will be conducted by the Human Resources Division staff.
- All substitute teachers have the ability to review the prerecorded orientation on line via the SubCentral/SmartFindExpress System home page or use the link below:
  http://learningtimes.mmalliance.acrobat.com/teachers/
Overview of the School Day

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination.”  
Stephen R. Covey

Preparing to Substitute Teach

The following are suggested best practices used by effective instructors to prepare to substitute teach:

- Ensure that you arrive well before the school day begins.
- Review the teacher’s lesson plan and seating chart to familiarize yourself with students’ names.
- Anticipate classroom challenges and plan strategies to meet them.
- Walk around and familiarize yourself with the physical layout of the school including classrooms, entrances and exits, department offices, cafeteria, gymnasium, library, auditorium and staff lounges.
- Obtain information regarding fire drill regulations and correct line of march for your classroom(s).
- If time permits before class, introduce yourself to the teachers in the surrounding classrooms.

Planning Your Lesson

Instructional Expectations of the Substitute Teacher

Your primary goal is to continue student learning along a continuum established by the permanent teacher. Teachers are expected to leave emergency lesson plans in the event of their absence. In the event that no lesson plan is available, you must be prepared with an adaptable lesson plan that is appropriate and beneficial to the population which you are working with. Notify the administrator at the end of the day if no lesson plan was available. Some classes that you teach may include students whose learning and instruction is supported by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or for whom their first language is not English. You will need to diversify your instructional strategies to meet their needs. A list of resources for lesson planning and what you should expect the absent teacher to provide are found in the Appendices to this handbook.
Classroom Management

“Effective classroom management is essentially invisible.”  

Rick Smith

Though classroom management is often discussed separately from exemplary instruction, studies have shown that they are directly related. Therefore, the primary contributor to a well managed classroom is a well planned lesson. If disruptive behavior occurs, you should be prepared to act appropriately. In order to be prepared, you should familiarize yourself with the rules of the school. Most schools will provide this information to you when you are assigned to a classroom. Remember that despite the fact that disruptions may occur, the students are counting on you to create a positive atmosphere for learning to take place. You can be firm with students while still being respectful.

- Remember that YOU are the adult in the room. Physically restraining or confronting students, shouting at students or calling them names, denying access to the bathroom or nurse’s office, sarcasm or confiscation of personal items is not permitted.

Strategies for Promoting Positive Behavior

- Focus on instruction immediately.
- Familiarize yourself with the lesson plan for the day.
- Clearly and simply state your expectations.
- Introduce, in as precise a manner as you can, the goal of the lesson and what you want students to do and understand.
- Use your strengths/skills to motivate students – be positive and encouraging.
- Walk around the classroom to assess students’ understanding and provide support – make sure they know you can see and hear everything that goes on in the room.
- Acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior with positive verbal reinforcement.
- Use time limits to maintain the structure of the lesson.
- Encourage students to participate fully with assigned responsibilities, such as keeping time, or other engaging behaviors.
- Use the names of students whenever possible.
- Assess continually to ensure understanding – ask students to reinterpret instructions or key ideas.
- Please use positive feedback: verbal praise, a nod, a smile, a ‘thumbs up’, etc.
Suggestions and Exemplary Practices

- **Learn the names of students quickly.**
- **Issuing Classroom Pass:** Before you begin, ask in the office what the school rules are for issuing an official hall pass, and document each occurrence.
- **Promoting Constructive Discussion:** Establish and remind class of protocol that will guide discussion among students. Rewards and incentives should prove effective since many schools incorporate class participation as part of a student’s overall grade.
- **Differentiate Instruction:** Students have different learning styles and levels. Each lesson should accommodate the needs of all students.
- **’Be friendly but remain professional:** Some students get confused about the fine line between a teacher/mentor and a buddy. You can be professional and friendly at the same time. Students are less likely to act out if they think you genuinely like the role you are playing for the day.
- **Remain flexible:** A day in a typical school may have interruptions.
- **Assess your personal style:** Determine if there are distracting aspects to your delivery of instruction such as the manner in which you dress, how you choose to interact with your students, the rate at which you speak and/or present instruction, etc.
- **Accept responsibilities:** You occupy the most effective level in the chain of command. You are expected to meet the challenges that come your way without overreacting.

Important Questions for Substitute Teachers to Ask Upon Arrival

- Are there unique classroom or school wide practices to be followed such as “Stop and Read, homeroom protocol, or Special Announcements?”
- Who are the best staff members to consult if I encounter challenges during instruction?
- What are the procedures for issuing passes, admitting latecomers and granting permission to leave class?
- How can I best learn and retain names of students for accountability?
- What are the procedures for school dismissal and fire drills?
- What are the procedures for school attendance?
- Do I have students with medical and/or special education-Individualized Education Programs (IEP)?
- Do I have additional duties such as cafeteria, attendance, homeroom, and playground?
- Are there special events scheduled for the day or week, such as school performance, dress for success, fire drills, etc.
- Will any students be picked up for additional service (guidance, speech, ESL, etc.)
Completing Administrative Tasks

“In an effective classroom, students should not only know what they are doing, they should also know why and how”.  

Harry Wong

You will be required to maintain and at times share student information. As a result, you are expected to maintain proper documentation such as student absences, lateness or other information asked of you in the plans of the absent teacher. You may want to use a copy of the attendance sheet to record student performance and student anecdotes. Be mindful that your records, in general, should have at least a name with an ID number, a time and a location.

The maintenance of records is necessary, however it should not overshadow the instruction process. For example, teachers will use brief periods between classes to complete attendance records such as:

- Daily Attendance Forms
- Subject Attendance Scan Sheets
- Delaney Cards

Issuing Passes, Admitting Latecomers, and Granting Permission to Leave Class

- Always ask for documentation if students are being admitted to or pulled out of class
- If you are issuing permission to allow students to leave class, be mindful that your records, in general, should have at least a first and last name, ID number, time, and a location.
End of Day Reflections

- Return materials.
- Verify and maintain your attendance records.
- Thank colleagues/administrators and obtain feedback.
- Verify if you are needed for future dates.

- Reflect on your day - assess to determine what worked and determine what challenges remain.
- Use and build upon successful strategies.
- Begin a journal to chart your development.

- Leave an account of the day for returning teacher.
- Share student related feedback. Discuss actual strategies mastered and performance observed. Include name, ID number, time, and location in your reports.
- Include your contact information.
**DO NOT USE Policy**

If you exhibit unsatisfactory performance at a school while working as a substitute, the school has the option of submitting a request to the SubCentral Office to not use your services in the future by submitting a DO NOT USE form. The form allows the school to describe whether the nature of the unsatisfactory performance warrants removal from returning to an individual school or returning to any school within the Department of Education. The SubCentral Office will notify you in writing of the DO NOT USE requests received. Once the SubCentral Office receives a DO NOT USE request from a school, a progressive discipline process is initiated which includes one or more of the following in ascending order: a warning letter(s); disciplinary conference(s); placement on the ineligible list; termination of service. Documentation will be kept on file in the SubCentral Office, in the substitute’s file, in the Office of Personnel Investigation, in the application processing unit and in the substitute’s record.

A mechanism is in place to assist substitutes who have received DO NOT USE requests to help them improve their performance. This mechanism is an online training program which provides a base of support for substitutes by presenting them with strategies and techniques that are most useful in the classroom. It offers suggestions and insights into student learning along with best practices for creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. Completion of the online training program will not only result in greater knowledge and understanding of the principles of learning but it will also strengthen the foundation upon which effective instruction is built.

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**Employee Information**

**Payroll**

Substitute Teachers are paid semi-monthly based upon the payroll schedule. The per diem payroll calendar can be accessed via DOE website by entering “per diem payroll calendar” in the search box. The per diem payroll calendar can also be viewed on the payroll portal at [https://payrollportal.nycboe.net/payrollportalweb/main.aspx](https://payrollportal.nycboe.net/payrollportalweb/main.aspx)

**Employee Self Service (ESS)** allows the substitute teachers to view their paycheck information online via the payroll portal. The paystubs can also be printed from this portal. Substitute Teachers can generate payroll inquiries and receive responses from the payroll staff. A NYC Department of Education email address is required to access the portal along with a password and either the substitute’s file number (EIS ID), social security number, or reference number (EMPL ID) which is displayed on their check stub. Please contact the Help Desk/Support Center at (718) 935-5100 to obtain an email address and password.
Additional Support

- Substitute Teacher Payroll Office – (718) 935-2236
- If you are already progressing towards certification or are already a certified teacher, in another state, you may be eligible for long term substitute teaching as defined below.

**Long Term Substitute Teaching**

- Long term substitute teaching is defined as 30 or more consecutive days substituting for the same teacher in the same classrooms, without interruption.
- Long term substitutes are required either to be eligible for New York State certification or to be working towards certification.
- If you are not eligible for New York State Teacher Certification, you are limited to a maximum of 40 working days per year unless you are taking courses yearly to become certified. If you are not a certified teacher and plan to work more than 40 days per school year, you are required to submit additional requirements including: *documentation of completion of at least six (6) professional education credits, due by the end of August of each school year.* This annual submission of transcripts validating professional education credits is required until you complete all required professional education credits for New York State teacher certification.
- Therefore, if you accept more than 40 days of employment during the school year, you must submit transcripts by August 31st validating completion of a minimum of 6 professional education credits per school year. Transcripts are to be submitted to:

  Office of Substitute Application Processing  Attention: Renewal  65 Court Street – Room 504  Brooklyn, New York 11201  (718) 935-2689
**Vacation, Holidays and Sick Leave**

- Substitute teachers are occasional (day-to-day) employees and normally do not earn sick days.
- In order for you to earn or accumulate sick days, you must work 20 consecutive days within the month covering for the same teacher, in the same class, to earn one sick day.
- If you have obtained long-term status, and worked in that status for 60 consecutive days, you will earn 3 sick days. An additional sick day will be added for each 20 consecutive days worked thereafter.
- Once you have achieved long-term status, you must provide medical documentation to the payroll secretary at your school when using sick days.

**Per Diem Teacher Renewal Process**

- ALL Substitute teachers must renew their NYCDOE Per Diem Certificate annually.
- ALL Substitute teachers will be notified through their email address of the steps necessary for renewing your Per Diem Certificate.

**Per Diem Certification for Retired Teachers**
Retired teachers who are interested in working as substitute teachers are now required to apply for a certificate which will allow them to work per diem in schools. Interested applicants will need to meet the following requirements:

- Must be officially retired from the NYC Department of Education.
- Must have a permanent NYS teaching certificate.
- Must be eligible to work for the NYC Department of Education (fingerprints).
- Must be in good standing and not have received an unsatisfactory rating (U) within the past 5 years.

Applications are available by sending an email to RetireeSubTchrJobs@schools.nyc.gov. The sender will receive an automated response with an attachment and instructions. The entire process takes 2 – 3 weeks. Further inquiries can be emailed to PerDiemInquiries@schools.nyc.gov.
**New York State Certification Workshop**

- The Office of Operational Support Services offers “The Road to New York State Certification Workshop”.
- The two hour workshop provides an overview of New York State certification requirements, various pathways to meet those requirements, inter-state reciprocity, foreign credentials evaluation and alternative certification programs.
- In addition, counselors discuss employment procedures, scholarship programs and opportunities available for individuals seeking to become certified teachers. A brief question and answer period follows each presentation.
- Visit: [http://TeachNYC.net](http://TeachNYC.net) Click on: “Getting Certified” at the bottom of the screen under “Resources”. Click on the link “Road to Certification Workshops” for dates, locations and registration information.

**The New York City Teaching Fellows**

Should you wish to become a certified teacher through an alternative certification pathway, you may be eligible for the Teaching Fellows Program which provides:

- A subsidized Master’s Degree program.
- A regular teacher’s salary and benefits.
- Ongoing support at the school level.
- A network of like-minded professionals committed to educational excellence for New York City students.

For application and qualifications visit [http://www.nycteachingfellows.org](http://www.nycteachingfellows.org)

**Grievances and Evaluations**

**Grievances**

- The New York City Department of Education recognizes the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) as the exclusive bargaining representative for all substitute teachers.
- The Department of Education provides you with the opportunity to discuss circumstances which may lead to complaints against you.
- Union representation is recommended if complaints could result in your being permanently excluded from assignment as a day-to-day substitute.
- An employee’s complaint should be presented and handled promptly and should be disposed of at the lowest level of supervision consistent with the authority of the supervisor.

**Evaluations**

- If you are working in the same school for more than 20 days, your performance may be assessed on an ongoing basis to determine your performance level and your continued employment eligibility.
- Substitutes who receive negative performance reviews may be suspended.
- Substitutes who receive consistently negative performance reviews will be terminated.
Appendices

School Year Calendar  For a current calendar: schools.nyc.gov/Calendar

Our School Year Calendar begins in late August for staff and in early September for students and ends in late June for both. The school year calendar incorporates the following understandings:

- The School Year Calendar meets the State Education Department requirement of a minimum of **180** days in all schools in the City School District.
- Schools will not be in session on Labor Day, Yom Kippur, Columbus Day Observed, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving, Winter Recess (December 25 through and including January 1, including Christmas and New Year’s Day), Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Mid-Winter Recess (including Washington’s Birthday), Spring Recess (including Good Friday, Easter and Passover), and Memorial Day.

*Our Calendar is adhered to without exception, unless notifications of subsequent changes are received pursuant to collective bargaining agreements or for other reasons, provided these other reasons are not inconsistent with collective bargaining or legal obligations.*

Resources

www.disciplinehelp.com
The Discipline Help website provides substitutes and parents with access to information and assistance in dealing with a wide range of student misbehaviors in the classroom. This amazing website lists the causes, effects, appropriate actions to take and frequent mistakes made when dealing with 117 different student misbehaviors.

www.subed.usu.edu
This site is created and maintained by the Substitute Teacher Training Institute at Utah University. It contains many articles and resources for substitute teachers and managers. Also, a self-assessment test to assess your readiness and effectiveness as a substitute teacher is included.

www.suite101.com
Numerous articles and links to other resources useful to substitute teachers. Type in “SubstituteTeacher” in the SEARCH bar

www.proteacher.com
Type “Substitute Teacher” in the SEARCH bar. This site serves as a bulletin board for substitute teachers. In addition to many helpful hints and success stories, you will be able to relate to the challenges colleagues face.
Suggested Reading

Important Contacts and Links

- SubCentral Help Desk – (718) 935-4401
- SubCentral E-Mail address: SubCentral@schools.nyc.gov
- SubCentral/SmartFindExpress Dial-In (718)935-6740
- SubCentral Web Page – www.SubCentral.nycenet.edu
- NYC DOE SubCentral –
  http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DHR/Employees/SubstituteTeachersPerDiem/
- UFT – http://www.uft.org
- New York City Department of Education- http://schools.nyc.gov/
- New York State Education Department – www.nysed.gov
- Teachers Exams – http://www.nystce.vesic.com/
- Child Abuse Identification/School Violence Prevention and Intervention Workshops
  http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/ca.htm
  http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/save.htm
- Chancellor’s Regulations -
- Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures (The Discipline Code) http://schools.nyc.gov Type “discipline code” in SEARCH bar
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) –
  https://www.ascd.org
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