

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

EDUCATION'S ULTIMATE
MAKE-IT-HAPPEN PEOPLE



SubClub ToolKit

Getting Started with a SubClub

SubClubs for ALL

Welcome! SubClubs are vibrant communities created for anyone passionate about substitute teaching, including parents, college students, AmeriCorps alumni, military spouses, retirees, or those exploring subbing as a stepping stone to teaching. Our goal is to provide the necessary support, resources, and community for individuals to build capacity and confidence in their work as substitute teachers.

How does a SubClub work?

It's a bit like a book club. You bring together a group of people who have a shared interest in substitute teaching, and a desire to learn more about it, in community with each other. Your club will get access to SubSchool, an online professional development (PD) platform designed just for subs, which will be your shared text (like the book you pick for a book club). As the facilitator, you'll connect with a SubSchool coach who will give you some tips about facilitating, and a guide with activities aligned with SubSchool courses (like the book club questions in the back of a book). Talking about themes from SubSchool will be a jumping-off point for finding community, making meaning of your experiences in the classroom, and growing together. In your facilitator training, you'll learn more about the available resources and how to structure your SubClub.

SubClub Toolkit Table of Contents

This toolkit is designed to help you set up and facilitate a SubClub in your community. It's broken down into four sections, each of which offers ideas to spark your creativity as well as tangible details to help get you started:

1. Organizing & Leading a SubClub

- Recruiting SubClub Members
- SubClub Meeting Frequency & Location
- Managing Seed Fund
- Other Tips and Considerations

2. The SubClub Experience

- Peer Support and Accountability: Shared Experiences
- Reflection: Making Meaning and Personal Growth

3. Resources for SubClubs

- SubSchool
- Discussion Guide
- Sample Agendas

4. For People New to Subbing

- Support all members to find substitute teaching jobs and obtain sub permits, if they don't already have them.



Recruiting SubClub Members

The first task you have is to recruit your SubClub group of about 3-5 people. We suggest you find at least one person who is already a working sub and at least one person of a different generation. This will bring the diversity and experience to the group that you need to maximize learning from different perspectives. In Appendix I, you'll find examples of announcements to share. In general, when recruiting, focus on the opportunity to come together to validate and support your work, with good food and good company.

Where do I find people to join?

School District To build your SubClub, consider reaching out to other substitute teachers in your district, or even ask for assistance from the district office or a school leader to post an announcement (see Appendix I). School principals, understanding the acute challenges of substitute shortages, are likely to support initiatives like SubClubs that help build a reliable substitute pool that alleviates the strain of finding last-minute solutions for teacher absences.

Community Another place we recommend starting with is communities you already belong to - as a college student, a military spouse, a churchgoer, a parent, a retiree, or AmeriCorps alum. Next, think about communities you can connect to through family or friends - especially ones that will help you bring a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

SubClub Meeting Frequency & Location

SubClubs can meet anywhere! Find a coffee shop, library, community center, or someone's living room. If you work for a district already, you may be able to convene at a school. For this pilot project, SubClubs should meet in person, at least four times, in the beginning. These meetings should be about 90 minutes - enough time to share food, establish your meeting routines, and build rapport with one another. After that, how you structure your club is really up to you and the club members and what works best for your situation. That means that things like where you meet and how frequently may shift over time.



As your club gets established, create opportunities for additional peer-to-peer activities outside the regular club meetings. Having a buddy who calls to see how your day of subbing went or who is holding you accountable for dealing with onerous paperwork can make all the difference.

Managing Seed Fund

Starting a SubClub takes time and resources. You'll get a stipend as the facilitator, and your SubClub will receive a seed fund to offset costs, such as meals, sub licensing fees, and materials. Here is a breakdown of the funds along with guidelines for how to spend it.

Amount	Budget Item	Spending Guidelines
\$400	SubClub facilitator stipend	Compensation for attending facilitator training, recruiting the intergenerational group & organizing SubClub meetings. If the group has co-leaders, they will split this stipend.
\$700	SubClub funds	This portion of the fund is meant to be used among the participants to cover costs such as: SubClub refreshments and transport to the meeting spot, sub-licensing costs (application, fingerprinting, etc.), time to complete SubSchool courses, and time to provide feedback on the experience.

Other Tips and Considerations

- **Club name.** It may seem a bit silly, but coming together as a group to name your club can provide a good opportunity to align on your shared mission and convey your club's spirit and intentions (e.g. inclusion, maintaining a sense of humor, or focusing on a specific school or community).
- **Communications.** Work with the group to establish the communications channels you're going to use from the outset, be it email, text, or other social media channels.
- **Share the Responsibility.** Share the work, encouraging club members to take on leadership roles, including recruitment of new members, communications, organizing events, and bringing refreshments.
- **Feedback.** Humans are notoriously bad at soliciting feedback, and even worse at putting it to work to make needed improvements. If you build it in from the start, regularly seeking feedback from members to assess club effectiveness will feel like a normal part of how you operate.
- **Invite guest speakers** Consider inviting guest speakers with expertise in areas that are of interest to the group - special education, teaching English Language Learners, mindfulness as a tool for managing stress, you name it!



The SubClub Experience

Building Skills and Knowledge



SubClubs are an opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge needed to thrive as a sub. Substitute teachers need to know how to manage classroom culture and routines, facilitate instruction, and how subs fit into the larger school ecosystems. In SubClubs, you'll have the opportunity to learn from SubSchool as well as your peers. As you build your skills and knowledge, you'll feel more confident and be better prepared for the challenges of substitute teaching.

Peer Support and Accountability: Shared Experiences

Peer support is hugely important when it comes to substitute teaching—a traditionally isolating job. In our early experiments, peer support was the most impactful element of a cohort experience. SubClub members need to be able to share challenges, lessons learned, tips, and encouragement - from the permitting process to the classroom. Consider how you can structure your club to leverage peer-to-peer interactions. This can range from club-member-led discussion sections to informal meet-ups to a buddy system - whatever allows participants to connect regularly, share their experiences, and build community.

Reflection - Making Meaning and Personal Growth

Reflection is also crucial for improving as a substitute teacher. Substitute teaching offers a unique chance for rapid growth due to varying student interactions each day. True progress, however, hinges on thoroughly analyzing each experience, understanding the reasons behind successes and failures, and adjusting actions and behaviors to positively influence student outcomes. Fostering a culture of reflection within your club, where members are expected to reflect, given the space to do so, and can share their insights, greatly enriches their experience and development.

In addition to reflecting on substitute teaching, participants should reflect on the SubClub experience itself. Participation in a SubClub can be transformative. It is empowering to be a part of something bigger than oneself, and collaboratively build a new organization - especially one aimed at making a change in one's community. If you create space for participants to reflect on what they're experiencing, they can turn these feelings into action.



We want SubClubs members to have all the tools and support they need to be successful substitute teachers. That includes professional learning materials created specifically for subs. In addition to the seed funding, described earlier, SubClub members will get access to the SubSchool learning platform, and the facilitator will receive a companion SubSchool discussion guide and sample SubClub meeting agendas.

SubSchool: Self-paced courses for new and working subs

SubSchool will be the “meat and potatoes” of your learning, and content for collaboration. SubClub members will receive full access to SubSchool. SubSchool is a competency-based learning platform, for subs to build meaning, mastery, and community in their work. You can preview the platform by signing up for our free course, [Welcome to Substitute Teaching](#).

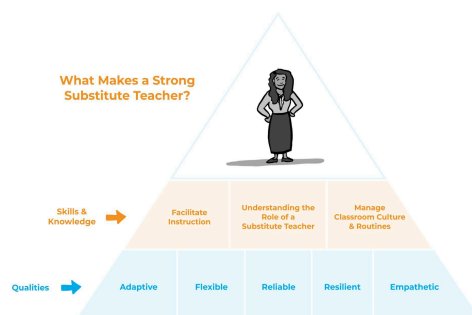
SUBSCHOOL MEMBERS GET ACCESS TO:

16+ hours of interactive and engaging [Self-Paced Courses](#).

A **Core Knowledge Assessment** with immediate feedback and opportunities to review and relearn.

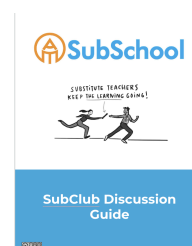
Live Events to join facilitated discussions applying theory to practice and connect with other subs. Take a look at our [23/24 calendar of live events](#).

Resources like a foundational courses workbook, a [competency framework](#), and guides for sub-wellness, technology, and pursuing teaching credentials.



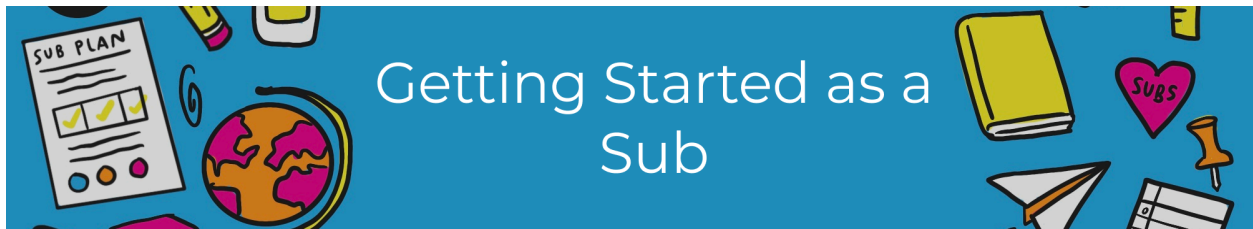
SubSchool Discussion Guide

The most powerful component of SubClubs is the support group members can provide to one another. SubClubs are designed to help subs process their learning from SubSchool and their work as a sub. This guide will provide reflective questions for SubClub members to answer as they complete the courses and then to discuss during gatherings.



Sample SubClub Agenda

In the facilitator workshop, we'll talk about how to organize your SubClubs for success. We'll start with meeting agendas. Appendix II includes an example of how to structure your first SubClub meeting. Regardless of the exact agenda, be sure to make time to get to know one another, share your experiences, and review new learning from SubSchool courses.



As a SubClub facilitator, you - or the people you meet as you build your SubClub - may have a lot of questions about substitute teaching! Below is information about getting started that you can review and share.

Information for people new to subbing

If you are just starting your journey into substitute teaching, welcome! It's rewarding and engaging work. Here are some tips for how to get your permit and find jobs at a school or in a district near you.

You'll need to start by getting a permit or license. The process to obtain a substitute teaching permit varies by state, and some US states leave the decision up to the local school district, in which case there may be variation from district to district.

The process to get hired, though generally similar everywhere—apply, interview, onboard—has its unique quirks based on context. Whatever the state process, you can be assured that it will be bureaucratic and a little tricky to navigate. It's likely going to feel new and foreign if you've never applied for a professional permit or public position before, and the rules for doing this are just different.

As you research your district and state requirements, here is what to look for:

- **Substitute Teacher Permit Tiers:** Every state has a few types of sub permits, with differing pay rates and education criteria. Find the tier that fits your background.
- **Education & Training:** Requirements may include a certain level of education (like some college or a bachelor's degree), specific coursework, or teacher training.
- **Background Check & Fingerprinting:** Most states require a criminal background check and fingerprinting to ensure the safety of students. This process may involve going to a designated location for fingerprinting and submitting personal information for the background check.
- **Exams:** Some states have testing requirements, but most states are waiving them or letting candidates use college entrance exams they've already completed as an equivalent. Find out what the requirement is where you are applying.

- **The Application:** After fulfilling the above requirements, you can apply for a substitute teaching permit or license through the state's education department. This often involves submitting an application, along with proof of education, background check clearance, and any certifications from completed training or exams.

Practical Factors to Keep In Mind

None of these are barriers to you getting started, but we've come across a few things that are important to share:

- **Cost.** In almost every state, substitute teaching comes with costs: permits, fingerprinting, ordering transcripts, and mandatory training programs. This is what your SubClub funds are for!
- **Hiring Process.** School districts do have a hiring process and screen sub applicants, but they aren't super strict about it. Relevant experience can range from babysitting, to being a summer camp counselor, to being a TA in a course, or even experiences from high school like peer tutoring or running extracurricular clubs. When you apply, showcase your passion and anything relevant to succeeding in the classroom.
- **Be Proactive.** Almost everywhere, substitute applicants drive the speed and completion of the process. That's not to say that getting hired as a sub is particularly difficult. But, you do need to check the boxes, and be proactive about doing it.
- **Timing.** Most districts hire year-round for subs, but it's still important to consider timing. It's good to check in with schools, districts, or the sub staffing agency about how long the process will take and when you'll be able to start subbing.

Conclusion

It's true that we're in desperate need of more substitute teachers in the US. It's also true that those who are already subbing don't get enough opportunities for real learning and growth. The magic of SubClubs goes well beyond just providing professional development and more subs for our schools. SubClubs create opportunities for people to connect with others while developing new skills and contributing meaningfully to their community while subbing - getting paid for flexible, purposeful work. Together, SubClub members support each other as they improve their skills and knowledge on the job. Substitute teaching is an adventure, and SubClubs provide a space to make meaning of your experiences, laugh together, and get ready to do it all again.

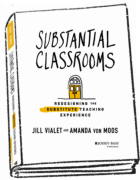
Our goal is to make it easier for people - parents, artists, college students, AmeriCorps alumni, military spouses, retired people, aspiring teachers - basically anyone with an interest in continuing or starting to sub - to create the conditions that afford them the support they need to succeed. By inspiring and supporting others to create solutions for their own

communities, we hope to collectively increase the number of people having meaningful experiences as substitute teachers while also increasing the number of well-prepared subs available to K-12 schools.

Substantial Classrooms

ABOUT SUBSTANTIAL CLASSROOMS

Substantial Classrooms is the nonprofit behind SubClubs. [Substantial](#) is a national nonprofit on a mission to unlock the potential of substitute teaching. Substantial runs [SubSchool](#), which partners with districts, regional offices, and state offices of education to provide PD and ongoing support for substitute teachers.



Substantial's co-founders Jill Vialet and Amanda von Moos are the co-authors of **Substantial Classrooms: Reimagining the Substitute Teaching Experience** (Jossey-Bass, 2021) and frequent speakers on both human-centered design and substitute teaching.

Appendix I

Example Announcements for Recruiting

Here are some examples of communications for a community newsletter, district announcement, or flier to recruit SubClub members:

Blurbs

Join a SubClub!

Community, Conversation, and Learning

Want to get to know other subs while building your skills and knowledge? Join our SubClub! Here's what's happening:

- **Connect & Share:** Meet other substitute teachers, share meals together, exchange stories and tips, and make new friends.
- **Skill-Building Courses:** Learn teaching strategies and classroom management techniques from a curriculum built just for subs.
- **Group Discussions:** Engage in meaningful conversations about our experiences and challenges as subs.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to be part of a community that understands and appreciates your role in education!

Call , text, or email for more information!

[Contact Name & Info](#)

Become a Substitute Teacher - With Support!

Join a SubClub!

Have you considered substitute teaching? Here's an opportunity to get started, with a cohort and training to support you. Here's what you'll do with a SubClub:

- **Connect & Share:** Meet other substitute teachers, share meals together, exchange stories and tips, and make new friends.
- **Skill-Building Courses:** Learn teaching strategies and classroom management techniques from a curriculum built just for subs.
- **Group Discussions:** Engage in meaningful conversations about our experiences and challenges as subs.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to be part of a community that understands and appreciates your role in education!

Already a substitute teacher, but looking for more skills and support? You can join, too!

Call , text, or email for more information!

[Contact Name & Info](#)

Personal Outreach

Hi NAME,

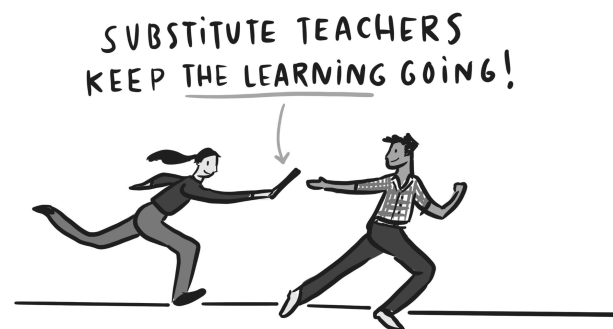
Have you ever thought about substitute teaching? I think you'd be amazing. [INSERT A PERSONAL DETAIL ABOUT WHY].

I'm forming a SubClub - a group of people who are considering, or getting started, with substitute teaching. I'm really excited about this. It will be kind of like a book club - we'll gather a few times over the next couple of months to learn, share resources, and reflect on our experiences as subs.

I have access to free training for substitute teachers (via [SubSchool](#)) for everyone in the group, and some funding to help cover sub application costs, transportation and food for our gatherings, etc. I just need a few people to sign on to participate!

Any interest? If so, let's find a time to chat so that I can share more.

Talk to you soon,
YOUR NAME



Appendix II

Sample First Meeting Agenda

Activity	What?	Why?	What's Needed
Share a Meal 30 minutes	Use the SubClub seed funds to buy dinner for the group, and start by eating together.	Sharing food is a great way to connect and build community.	Food!
Introductions and Icebreaker 10 minutes	Give everyone a chance to introduce themselves, ideally through a fun game.	SubClub members need time to get to know one another and feel comfortable sharing their stories, challenges, and accomplishments.	Icebreaker ideas
Make a name for your club! 10 minutes	Discuss and establish a name for your SubClub.	This activity is a good opportunity to align on your shared mission and convey your club's spirit and intentions.	Paper and materials to make a club sign.
Review of course or series 20 minutes	Use the SubClub discussion guide to review learning from the Welcome to Substitute Teaching Course .	In your SubClub meetings, you'll discuss big ideas from the courses and how to implement them on the job - giving everyone the skills and confidence that they need to be successful.	SubClub discussion guide Make sure everyone has an active SubSchool account!
Question & Answer 15 minutes	Provide open time & space for people to ask each other questions.	Subs will be in different stages in their journey and will encounter different challenges that they will want to discuss with the group.	Have generative questions in your back pocket - just in case the group is quiet.*
Closure 5 minutes	Wrap up the discussion, clean the meeting area, and plan the time and place for your next meeting.	You want to leave time for the basic logistics!	None

*Generative Question Examples:

- *What is something about subbing that makes you smile?*
- *What is your “why” for subbing?*
- *What has been an “aha” for you so far, either from your subbing experiences, SubSchool courses, or our SubClub conversation?*
- *What is a challenge you’re having we can discuss today?*
- *For people new to subbing: How is the application for certification going? Do you have any lingering questions, or need any ideas to overcome barriers?*
- *What do you need from this group?*