

How To Become A Substitute Teacher

Substitute teachers are critical for providing continuity of instruction when teachers are absent in our schools. The substitute teacher helps maintain the many ongoing programs for students in spite of emergencies and illnesses that occur among faculty.

Who can be a substitute teacher?

Not just anyone can be a substitute teacher. You must be licensed by the State of Illinois. To be eligible for a substitute teaching license, you must hold a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution of higher education. The bachelor's degree does not have to be in an education-related field.

A substitute teaching license is valid for substitute teaching in all grades of the public schools, prekindergarten through grade 12. The license is valid for 5 years and may be renewed if the individual passes an approved Illinois Test of Basic Skills. An individual who has passed an Illinois Test of Basic Skills will not be required to retake the test for subsequent renewals.

If a person already holds a valid professional educator license (or an educator license with stipulations), that person is already qualified to be a substitute teacher and does not need to apply for a substitute teaching license.

How do I get a substitute teaching license?

To apply for a substitute teaching license, a candidate must submit an application online in the Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS). During this process, a \$100 fee (plus a \$1.75 processing fee) is assessed electronically when the application is submitted, so a credit/debit card must be readily available.

An official transcript must be sent to ISBE showing an awarded bachelor's degree. (*The address is at the end of the article*). It should be noted that to be official, transcripts must be submitted in the sealed envelope from the college or university or be sent directly by the institution. If ISBE receives a transcript that is not in a sealed envelope from the university or is not sent directly from the university, it will be considered unofficial and cannot be used for evaluation purposes.

Official transcripts can also be taken to any of the Regional Office of Education #3 (ROE #3) offices and the staff will be happy to scan and submit them to ISBE on behalf of the applicants. The Illinois State Board of Education recommends this method and assures applicants that the process is faster if it is done this way. ROE #3 has offices in Greenville, Taylorville, Effingham, Vandalia and Hillsboro. The addresses and phone numbers are shown on the ROE #3 web site that appears at the end of the article.

Once the transcript is received and reviewed, the substitute teaching license will most likely be issued. When the license is issued, the substitute teaching candidate will need to register it through ELIS. The cost is \$50 (\$10 per year) plus a \$1.75 processing fee and is payable by debit/credit card.

OK...I acquired and registered my Substitute Teaching License through ELIS. Now what?

After receiving the license via ELIS, the next step toward substitute teaching in the ROE #3 (Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette and Montgomery Counties) region is to stop by one of the five County offices and apply for an ROE #3 Substitute Authorization Certificate. The cost is \$25.

Illinois statute law requires a physical examination by a board-certified and licensed physician. The cost of the physical examination is the responsibility of the Substitute Teaching License holder.

The ROE #3 staff will also arrange a fingerprint criminal background check for the candidate through Bushue Human Resources, an independent agency that will also perform a search on the Illinois Statewide Sex Offender Database and the Illinois Statewide Child Murderer and Violent Crimes Against Children Database as required by law. Additionally, the license holder will be required to fill out fingerprinting disclosure and authorization forms. The cost for the background check and associated searches is \$52.

If all background checks are satisfactory and the physical examination shows no evidence of communicable disease, a Substitute Authorization Certificate will be issued by the Regional Office of Education. This certificate allows the Substitute Teaching License holder to substitute teach at any school in the five counties comprising the ROE #3 region without additional background checks and associated costs. The Substitute Authorization Certificate is only valid in the school districts within Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette and Montgomery Counties. If a substitute teacher wishes to teach in other education service regions, she or he must apply for a Substitute Authorization Certificate in each region. Regional Office of Education #3 maintains all records for the Substitute Teaching License holder indefinitely.

The total cost to acquire and register a Substitute Teaching License through the Illinois State Board of Education, and then become authorized to substitute teach in an education service region such as ROE #3 is \$230.50.

What's next?

The next step is to let the twenty public school districts and fourteen non-public schools in the ROE #3 region know that the Substitute Teaching License holder is available to substitute teach.

The Regional Office of Education #3 maintains an online database of substitute teachers, which is made available to all of the school districts in the region. This does not, however, guarantee that they use it as a means to find substitute teachers for their classrooms.

As with any other job, the best way to find employment is to use a personal touch. Figure out if you prefer spending time in a classroom with teenagers in middle and high school or with younger students. Keep in mind that kids in pre-K through 2nd grade require more custodial caregiving. Students in grades 3-5 can challenge authority a bit more, but they are also ready for meatier academic subjects. And be sure you have a thick skin before working with older kids. Some of them like to give substitutes a hard time.

After deciding which grades you'd like to teach, it's a good idea to visit schools to introduce yourself and get on their substitute registry. Take along a copy of your substitute authorization certificate and a resumé highlighting the skills that might be helpful in the classroom. Alternatively, call the districts you'd like to sub for and ask how to apply to be a substitute teacher. Some districts may require an application process and interview. Some may not.

When you are hired as a substitute teacher, each district will have its own set of procedures that will require quite a bit of information from you, primarily so that you can be paid. Most will provide you with a handbook that outlines the rules, regulations, schedules, calendars and myriad other details that go along with the day-to-day routines of schools. Don't be surprised if everything is not written down in black and white, so don't be afraid to ask questions. Many of the procedures that take place in school classrooms are based on traditions and custom.

One of the larger school districts in the region has the following information on its web site (paraphrased for this article):

When you receive the Substitute Teacher Authorization in the mail from ROE #3, bring it to the District Board Office. In addition, please bring your Driver's License and Social Security card. We require copies of all three documents for our files. We will give you a payroll packet to be completed in our office. Once the packet has been completed, you will be entered into the District's system and may begin substitute teaching.

We recommend you go to all District school buildings and introduce yourself to the secretaries so they can put a face to the name. Also, take a few minutes to introduce yourself to our secretary who works with substitute teachers. She calls the last minute subs every morning for all the schools.

Teachers and staff members have high expectations of others who come into their classroom and work with their students. They appreciate having a person who is caring and capable. By being prepared, poised, and professional, a substitute teacher will help ensure that daily objectives are being met. By being positive, enthusiastic and respectful, a substitute teacher can reap the rewards of working with young people.

Web sites mentioned in this article:

ISBE - Substitute Teaching License:

<http://www.isbe.net/licensure/html/substitute.htm>

ISBE - Illinois Licensure Testing System:

<http://www.isbe.net/licensure/html/testing.htm>

ISBE - Illinois Educator Licensure Information System:

<http://www.isbe.net/ELIS/default.htm>

ISBE - Illinois Educator Licensure Information System FAQ:

<http://www.isbe.net/licensure/pdf/ELIS-faq.pdf>

Regional Office of Education #3:

<http://www.roe3.org>

Illinois State Board of Education:

<http://www.isbe.net>

Mailing addresses:

Illinois State Board of Education
Educator Licensure
100 N. 1st Street
Springfield, IL 62777

Regional Office of Education #3
300 S 7th St
Vandalia, IL 62471