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English 310

How do I teach if I am not there?

Today I was unaware the teacher I was observing was going to be at a conference and not come in today, and as I was already on campus I just went to the classroom. I did not find anyone. There was just a sign on the door that told students to go to another classroom in the O building. There was no designated substitute. It was a Spanish teacher who didn’t have a class during that period that took in the students. I wasn’t sure why I really stayed I knew the substitute was not going to teach, she just circulated a sign in sheet. I looked around and the students were definitely taking Mr. Tacapan’s absence as a free day. It was loud. Students were just talking to each other, on their phones, and there was a small group that was playing a card game. All I could think about was just leaving because I doubted any of them were going to talk to me, they didn’t, and it didn’t look like anything was going to change. I ended up just sitting back and observing, there were two students who were using writing in their binders, an assignment from another class. This made me wonder “Do I let students have a free day when I am not there?”

“Hell no” was my first thought. There is always too much material that needs to be covered, and there isn’t a lot of class time to begin with, the students already have the weekend to use as a break. Even if I am not there they should still be getting some kind of education, not just sitting around they can do that at home. The first teacher I remembered that would give us work was my A.P. history teacher, and he was meticulous about it as well. He would e-mail us the assignment the day of, and if it was something we needed materials like construction paper or markers he would get the class to be open for us. The assignment was never busy work. It was an assignment we knew would be graded precisely and we were not to waste time, we always immediately got to work hoping to finish early.

I most definitely want to do something like that, but I would probably just tell students in advance instead of e-mailing so everyone is aware of what is planned. I think I should have a project given to the students they could take the complete class period on. To make them take it serious possibly make it part of their grade, because I know some teachers give handouts on days they are absent and the handouts are forgotten by both student and teacher. Maybe a group project in case students need help then they can rely on each other and hopefully have a discussion on what is a possible answer. This would also let me see if they are capable of doing group work in a short period for a project rather than the long papers they need to continuously meet for.

I know there are some that think maybe the students should get a free day if the teacher isn’t there. I think not, if anything I need to be thinking about what kind of assignments should I give them that they can accomplish in a short period of time. Also I need to consider the possibility the students are not in my classroom as today the students were moved somewhere else. This gets the students to still learn and not be given busy work. Also I like to think if they can complete the assignment then maybe I did a good job, where my students take their studies seriously and that would always be awesome.