

## Test Driving a Teaching Career

Deciding to become a full time teacher is a big step. You may be able to remember teachers from your youth that seemed to make it look easy and fun to be a teacher. So if you think you might have the temperament for teaching and that it would be a rewarding career, the best way to find out more about it is to test drive being a teacher in various limited settings to get an idea for how it feels to be a teacher before you launch into the career full time.

The first thing you want to get exposure to is how it will feel to stand in front of a room full of children or young people to present a lesson to them. If you have never done it, it can be a terrifying moment. It is similar to public speaking with the added twist that young people can be fidgety, might be prone to shout things out without notice and can misbehave right in the middle of your presentation which is not something you see that often when doing a presentation to adults.

There are lots of volunteer situations where you can test drive speaking to groups of youngsters to see if it is something you want to do every day. You can volunteer to read to children at the local library or teach Sunday School at your church and have that responsibility for an hour and then it is over. Now, don't be too concerned if you are terrified the first time you look out at that sea of little faces. That is so common it would be surprising if you didn't. Lots of full time teachers with years of experience still get that terror when they open their class each morning.

But if you get through the session and have an exhilaration and that feeling that even though it was scary, you want to get in front of them again, you may have the stuff of a teacher inside you trying to get out. And you can get a long term assignment in a volunteer role to "scratch that itch" to teach young people until you finally make the jump to a full time career in teaching.

But there is more to teaching than just talking in front of a class. To really understand how a day of a teacher goes, look for an opportunity to volunteer to be a teacher's aid from time to time. If you can sit in on a class for a day and help out every so often, you can see how a day in the life of a real teacher works. You can witness how the lesson plan is put together and how the preparation of the teacher makes it possible for her to move from lesson to lesson smoothly without losing the attention of the students.

Being in an actual working classroom is the best possible situation for either getting hooked on becoming a teacher yourself or find yourself running in terror for the door. Either way, you will know for sure if you have the "stuff" for

the job of teaching. During a classroom day, there will be disruptions that naturally occur. You can learn from a seasoned professional how to smoothly handle them so they do not disrupt the teaching environment. You can see how that teacher handles discipline issues, group projects and moves the children from small group sessions, to individual study times and then back to general class participation with ease and skill. These are all skills for you to conquer and seeing them in action is the best way to learn them.

The next step from there is to become a full fledged substitute teacher. Now work with your local school districts because you may have to have some training and certification to be able to substitute teach. But by being available and ready to step in for a teacher who is ill or called away, you will suddenly have an entire classroom of children for you to teach and you can test drive running a full day of activities in the classroom.

Naturally it won't go perfectly at first. But you can stay at each of these phases until you feel comfortable to move on. And when you conquer that stage of orientation to teaching, you can take that final step and become a full time teacher yourself.

PPPPP

Word Count 746