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SAT GUIDEBOOK



HOW TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE STUDENT TEACHER

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# Introduction and Research

## Introduction

The intention of this project, was to create a handbook to help student teachers such as myself, other pupils, and peers who aspire to be involved in the SAT program at Science Leadership Academy, thrive to become an effective student teacher in lower grade classrooms. The main goal of this was also to aid in the process of getting to know how to act in a classroom environment in order to prepare myself for the future.

Ever since the beginning of my senior year, I've wanted to become an English teacher. Through this Capstone, I was able to emulate the attitude and position of a teacher on a small scale. There were many tribulations I have faced during the course of the year. Some of these have been getting the students to acknowledge my presence in the room, gaining their respect, and learning when to draw the line when there is discipline involved. At the end of the year, I can genuinely say that through this process, it has made me the person I am today, and it has helped to guide me through the process of what I want to do with my life in the coming years ahead.

This guidebook has been in the works for a very long time. I could not have completed it without all of the support that I have gotten this year. The class that I have been with, I hold so close to my heart. It is the first class that has taught me something when I wasn't even a student. For that I will be forever, grateful. And with this handbook, I hope that feeling could spread to others, and make them see the difference that not only they can make, but the ones that can make them a better person.

## Research

My research consisted of being involved in the SAT program at Science Leadership Academy, and interning at Shawmont Elementary School. The SAT program, however, contains many seniors, including myself who wanted to be a part of something greater, whereas Shawmont was an elementary school that gave me a different environment to learn and interact, in that was drastically incomparable to an upper grade setting.

During my time in this program, I was placed in Ms. Dunn's Orange stream English 9 class. I spent the entire year in class aiding and acting as a second hand in the room. Oftentimes, I was incorporated in class discussions, vocabulary, basic English reviews, editing and giving constructive criticism, and behind the scenes lesson planning with Ms. Dunn. Once in a while, I was left with the class alone, and had to watch over them and handle the lesson for that day. Ms. Dunn and I have collaborated many times throughout the year and became very close because of that. As the year is coming to a halt, the relationships that I have forged with the students have become not only a teacher-student relationship, but they see me as someone to come and talk to, or someone to just be their friend, and I really appreciate that they can view me as such.

Like I previously mentioned, I started an internship at Shawmont Elementary School. At Shawmont, I was paired with Mrs. McCoy, who is a first grade teacher. I visited once a week and was there for the last two hours of the school day, where the class studied math and science. Being in an elementary class was very different than dealing with high schoolers and it was nice to have something much more upbeat and hands on. Plus, little children have a lot more spunk and imagination, so working with them was very interesting.

All in all, this concluded my research for my Capstone. These events have impacted my project greatly and have made it a great learning experience not only for me but for my fellow SAT peers as well. My research highly reflects all of the information in my guidebook, so hopefully, it is as enticing as the entire process was.

## Welcome!

Congratulations! You've made it into the SAT program here at SLA! Student teaching is a very rewarding and gratifying experience to be involved in. The pupils you will be aiding will learn so much from someone who has been through all the tough stuff before. Not only that, but being an SAT and another satellite figure in a classroom setting can be overwhelming, enjoyable and frustrating all at the same time. This guidebook will lead you through all of the most common and maybe uncommon things that an SAT may go through over the year. Hopefully, this guidebook will be a key object in your adventure to becoming an effective student teacher.

# Tips and Helpful Hints

## A New Year

Meeting your class for the first time is not easy. For me it was extremely nerve wracking, and it was very scary to meet the students whose minds I had to shape, yet allow to grow. However before you do *anything* at all, be sure to meet with your mentor teacher.

- Go over any classroom rules. It's good to have the same idea on rules as to not confuse the students when maybe you might say yes, and your mentor teacher says no.
- Ask about what they expect of you and what they are looking for in a student teacher.
- Find out what the year is going to look like so you can prepare yourself ahead of time.
- Conversely, talk about what you are looking to get out of the program, and how you think it will help shape and evolve you as a student at SLA. This will help build a strong basis for a relationship with your mentor teacher.

Since you will be spending all year with them, it's best to get to know them sooner rather than later. Forging an active partnership with your mentor teacher will benefit both of you greatly. It's good to have a strong repartee so that you can build on your skills in the classroom together as a unit.

## Meeting Your Children

As mentioned above, meeting the students whose learning will be left partly in your hands, is very frightening. What if they don't like you? What if they think you're weird, and they don't want you as their student teacher? What if they don't respect you at all? After all, first impressions are lasting impressions. All of these fears are very rational. But, don't fret, these issues are minor and easily solved. Here are some tips to have a warm and cozy welcome with your students.

- Be original and yourself. Your students will respect that you have your own techniques and styles of teaching in due time.
- Don't be nervous. You've been at SLA for a while, and you know the ropes. They're probably much more nervous than you are.
- Introduce yourself confidently and project your voice. You don't want to come off as sheepish and quiet. Your kids will need to see you as a leader in the room.
- Get to know them. Play a little introduction game to get them to loosen up and learn their names. In addition to that go over the roster sheet, to let their names sink in even more. (You are spending an entire year with them, so unfortunately you can't say, "hey, girl!" or "hey, boy!" They won't know who you're talking to.)

### **Getting Involved and Getting In Front**

After a while, you start to get used to being in front of the classroom. But are you ready to be thrown into a lesson led by yourself right away? You might be thinking that you're totally not ready enough for this type of activity, or maybe you might think that there is no way that you'd ever be able to do it at all. Well, the good news is everyone feels that way once in a while. The bad news, however, is you still have to get up there and do it at some point. These next tidbits of information could prove useful.

- Talk to your mentor teacher. Tell them that you don't know if you're ready for something of that stature. An alternative could be to do board work. (Board work could be anything ranging from writing notes on the board from a lesson, or copying down key points from whole class discussions.)
- Ask your mentor to help you! That's what they're there for anyway... (Well, that and they want your help for a year.) They can give you a lot of constructive comments that can help you push away your anxiety in teaching a lesson in front of your students.
- Start out small. Instead of teaching something to the whole class, try taking half of the class to another room and going over what you had prepared, there.
- Keep practicing. As they say, practice makes perfect. I mean, the only reasons teachers are so good at teaching is because they've been doing it everyday for a very long time.
- Ask for constructive criticism from either your mentor teacher, a student, or another peer in the SAT program. Each of these people will have something beneficial to add in order to make your lesson what you want it to be.

### **“Sorry, I Can’t Be in Class Today. Could You Take Over?”**

This is an email, you *will* receive. One of these days, it *will* happen. They’re not perfect; your mentor teacher *will* get sick, or their children will, or something else *will* happen where they won’t be in school, and they’ll notify you that you’re completely in charge of class today. Of course, you can handle it, because it won’t be a problem at all. Right? (That’s what I liked to think.) Many times, students such as yourself can feel afflicted when left alone with thirty students who still might not see you as a person with a commanding role in the room. Therefore, these are some hints on how to handle a teacher-less class.

- Contact your mentor teacher and ask if there’s something that your kids should be doing. Most likely, there is a plan. Stick to the plan and things should run smoothly.
- Ask your mentor teacher or go down to the office to see if there is a substitute in the class. If there is, then introduce yourself as soon as humanly possible! He or she is your new best friend for the entire period.
- If there is a substitute in the setting, make sure you let them know what’s going on. You at this point, should know the personalities of each of your students.... So if one of them is acting up, urge him or her to support you in rectifying the situation.
- If there is no sub or another teacher in the classroom at all, be calm. Chances are, there is a neighboring teacher somewhere down the hall, or right next to you. If things are going haywire, physically lead them into class to have them resolve the craziness. (In the past, I’ve called the guidance counselor. That worked very well.)
- When all else fails, bring out the notepad. Take down the rambunctious students’ names and show it to your mentor teacher when they return. They will take care of the problem.
- Stranger things have happened, but if things are actually going well, keep it up and continue the lesson.

Hopefully, none of the extremes above have to be pulled out, but now you know how to handle these types of situations. Plans are good, but when they go awry it’s good to know what to do instead.

### **Class Management**

When in class, it’s important to be aware of what’s going on. It would behoove you to keep a keen eye on all the activity happening in and around the class. For example, you want to diminish the side chatter and possibly silly antics, to bring back the focus on what’s being taught in a smooth way. Being conscious and wary of your surroundings will help you manage the classroom and sustain the environment as a place for learning and not for playing. These ideas and steps will add insight into your class management abilities as an SAT.

- Take charge of the class. Make sure everyone is in their seats, and silent before the beginning of the lessons. Maybe you can open the class with a few “attention-getting comments” and continue until everyone is with you.
- Focus on disruptive students. However, you don’t want to embarrass your students, so try and use nonverbal signs of disapproval. Show them that you don’t like what you’re doing in a way that won’t call them out.
- If they’re talking, pause what you’re saying or doing to look at the rowdy student. Another thing to do would be to walk over to them, while still carrying out your thought. Having a person of authority near them will shut off the unwanted activity, and direct the other students attention to the misbehaving ones.
- Direct a question to a student who isn’t paying attention. It gets them into the lesson, and it’s much less mortifying than yelling, “pay attention, Catherine!”
- If non-verbal cues are being disregarded by the student, obviously putting into effect consequences will be necessary.
- Make a seating chart. Seating charts have proven to be very effective because some students thrive off of other ones, while some prefer to work alone. If it allows them to complete their assignments in a timely fashion and causes no disturbances, keep instituting seating charts whenever possible.
- Confer with your mentor teacher to talk about incentives. Assigning or giving bonus or extra credit work may detract them from causing an uproar in class.

### **Friend, Foe, or Nobody?**

Oftentimes, the lines get blurred between teacher and friend. You don’t want to put yourself in a position where your students begin to lose respect for you, and start viewing you as more of a pal. Despite that, you also don’t want the opposite happening. You wouldn’t want your students to look at you as a harsh teacher, who doesn’t want to get along with you at all. There *is* a medium, and it *can* be reached and achieved. These following tips will help.

- Don’t engage in gossip with your students. If anything, try to derail the conversation off of gossip and rumors. These could be ruinous to one’s reputation.
- Say hi to them in the halls. Be friendly and cool. Try to avoid disassociating yourself with your kids just because you’re with walking your friends.
- Have casual conversations with them *outside* of class.

- Don't bring causal conversations *into* class. It's okay to mention something you may have talked about with your students, but don't let it take over the entire period.
- It's okay to joke with your kids, but try not to hurt their feelings.
- When outside of class, remind them of simple assignments they have to do. This shows that you're looking out for them in class.
- When grading their work, don't let some people slide or get away with some things, plainly because you get along with them better than other students.
- We don't like it when teachers tend to show favoritism in our peer group, so don't show favoritism towards certain students - especially when grading assignments.
- Let them know that you are always there if they need to talk. However, don't let them have you as their only friend and confidant. Though it's touching that they've reached out to you, if it's something potentially serious and threatening, notify the proper administrators, i.e., their advisors, your mentor teacher or the guidance counselor.
- Don't be cruel and harsh to your students in class. It's uncool to be the "rude SAT" in school. So don't try too hard to maintain the "tough teacher" card.

The key here is to have a simple balance. When being friendly, you need to know the proper way to counterbalance the authoritative position that your students know you to be, and vice versa. It's very important that you don't favor one side of this balance than the other. It could result in responses that you didn't think you would be getting. If you're struggling with this concept, try talking with your mentor teacher.

### **Taking Action**

Nothing is exciting forever. Sadly, sometimes classes can hit a lull, where no one is participating. Contrarily, there are times when everything is very overwhelming and things are running too fast paced. Let's be honest, your mentor teacher only has a certain amount of patience, and he or she can only focus on so many things at one time. This is where you come in. Frequently, there are times in class when the students will have questions due to work on a benchmark, or a mini-project. Though your mentor teacher is occasionally preferred to the students, your presence and audience will do. Here's what you can do.

- When students are working and are constantly calling your mentor teacher, walk up to them and ask if you are able to help them with anything. If you can, then give them your attention.
- Make it known to the class that you are openly available for any type of one-on-one work. This way they're more inclined to call for you, than the main teacher in the room.



- If you're with a student individually, try not to distance yourself away from them. Get close to them and look at their work with them, so that you know what they're working on.
- On the occasion that a group of kids have called you over, and all have the same question, speak to them as you normally would, but keep your voice hushed, because, this is probably a work period, and we don't want to disturb the other students.
- In the case that a group of students has called you over, and all have varying questions, prioritize by making a list or an order. Follow through how you regularly would approach them.
- If they have a question that another peer of theirs could answer, encourage them nicely to ask someone at their table, or to ask a neighbor to fill them in on what they've missed.
- Something else that gets overlooked very easily is bathroom privileges and asking to leave the room. The students *will* come to you. I'll warn you now. They'll ask you, as an SAT, someone who's been a student in their position before, if they can leave the room for any reason. It's up to your good judgement whether to let them go out or stay in the room. Although, when there is a short amount of time left in class, you will most likely deny these requests.

Make sure to get to everyone, and not leave anyone out. Don't spread yourself too thin, and show someone more attention than another. It's important for your students to get the most out of the resources they have available. And as of now, you are one of those very helpful, insightful, and extremely reliable resources.

### **Keeping Up Appearances**

In this day and age, people say more inappropriate things than appropriate things. We always want to be nice and gracious and kind to one another, yes. But, we also don't want to insult anyone, or hurt anyone else's feelings in trying to do so. And, with an entire class who has their eyes on you at all times, you need to set the example. This is where you come in to show them how to act appropriately. This information could be useful, so lend a listening ear.

- Don't blatantly insult someone. Just, don't be *that* person. Don't be rude.
- Avoid calling people names, and using names that are frowned upon in SLA.
- Try not to tell your students to shut up.
- Hold your cool. (I know... It's difficult sometimes when things rile you up.) Nevertheless, if you find yourself becoming agitated, count to ten and return to the situation with a different outlook or approach.

- Dress appropriately. Don't show up to class wearing tight, revealing clothes. Reciprocally, don't show up in baggy, careless clothes. Don't let your attire represent you as unprofessional.
- Compliment people on the work that they've done. Don't call them out on the work that they haven't done. That is a conversation to be held in private.
- Applaud when your kids when necessary. Make sure to give your students the praise they deserve, but don't over glorify them.
- Avoid cursing, swearing, or using any type of foul language. Do not only instill this in your practices, but let your students know that that type of language will not be tolerated.
- Speak eloquently, and clearly. Project your voice and speak to the class, not at them. You're a student teacher, so you want to speak as a teacher would.

### **Having Fun**

Being a student teacher isn't something that should make you go home at night and cry. You joined this program for a reason. You wanted to enrich your knowledge and expand your horizons. In doing this, you're going to have a lot of fun. (I promise you!) There are a lot of aspects of this job or elective that can come off as very intimidating. Be that as it may, you are going to encounter so many enjoyable and pleasant activities with your students and your mentor teacher, all of the tough stuff seems to fade away. In doing this you must know that the most crucial ingredient in becoming an effective student teacher is being confident and knowing when to let loose.

- Be genuinely confident and hold your esteem high in all of your abilities. (I think that students can sometimes smell fear...) At any rate, you should avoid becoming overconfident and refrain from acting like you know everything.
- It's okay to embarrass yourself. Tell your students a funny story that happened to you, engage in their laughter, and live up to your quirks.
- Own up to your mistakes. It may be tough, but looking back on them could be rewarding and could serve as a life lesson. Don't get down on yourself about them. Everybody makes mistakes and laughing about them is a good way to personify yourself as an animated figure in class.
- Have FUN! Being a teacher isn't about all the glory that you get. It's about making a difference in other people's lives and that right there is the single most gratifying thing anyone could feel.

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

To conclude this guidebook, I would like to commend you on your admirable decision in becoming an SAT. This step in your high school career will show you what it's like to act selflessly. Being a teacher is something I've always wanted to do, so in making this guidebook, it was very easy and completely compelling, considering, this is what I have a true passion for. I can only hope that the future Science Leadership Academy's Senior Assistant Teacher Program will thrive and prosper in the coming years. When I graduate this is something that I'm leaving behind. It is not to prove my academic achievements, but to act as a tool in order to benefit the community and the new students. All in all, this project has helped me see what I truly want to be, and how to be a catalyst for change in learning environments.