



# **Disorder in the Classroom: Or a Firsthand Account of Substitute Teaching in the Chicago Public Schools System**

*Janice M. Hypolite*

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## **Read About Your Education Tax Dollars at Work**

Undeniably, the experiences I had as a substitute teacher in the Chicago Public School (CPS) system are unbelievable but true. They occurred from October 2007 to February 2009 and offer a glimpse of what student behavior is like inside the classroom.

I don't think most people have any idea what goes on inside the public schools. You think that your children are safe, but maybe not. I recently heard of the 10 year old student in Evanston, IL who was found hanged inside of the school bathroom. It has been ruled suicide. The question has been brought up just how this young boy was able to do this during school hours. He was missing from class for about 40 minutes. His mother is now suing the school. Well, I have seen children walk out of class and have had it reported to me that one of my students was in the hallway when he should have been in class. Yes, children do sneak out of class, in elementary school.

Being new to substitute teaching, I had no preconceived ideas about what to expect, but rather through a process of interaction and assessment drew some very disturbing conclusions. In sum, the conduct of the students is not good and it seems that no one in a responsible position is willing to acknowledge or do something about it.

To make matters worse, the whole school system seems to be in a state of flux. CPS is going through a dramatic change. The certification process for teachers, including substitute teachers, has become more difficult for those coming into the profession. Schools are being closed and some tenured teachers find this to be a threat to their livelihood, which must affect what happens in the classroom. At least for the schools where I taught, student behavior is a serious problem.

I'd like to give you a brief overview of the book. The range of bad student behavior is broad. I became aware of problems with student behavior from the first day I began substitute teaching. Read about the little girl in first grade who had not lost her baby fat, but had lots of attitude. There was the 2nd grade class that was super hyper. Find out what the effect of this activity had on me. Find out what edible food grain was used by students in the classroom. Find out my coping mechanism for the use of this food grain. Find out what types

of notes students write to each other nowadays. Find out the punishment for the events that transpired after the note was written to the note writer and the note recipient. Find out the other antics I observed in the classroom.

I decided that I can no longer work as a substitute teacher at CPS. My reason is stated in the book. I came into teaching thinking I had something positive to give to the students. Having attended public school myself, I wanted to give back to the community. But from what I've seen, the learning process for children today is tougher than when I was in school.

When you consider that tax dollars are spent to educate children, you must wonder if the public is getting its money's worth with the services that are provided.

But the bottom line is the children. Are they being educated well?

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