

Sub-to-Teacher Empathy Interview Guide

We are doing these conversations to help us better understand the experience of people who begin as substitute teachers and then move into being full-time classroom teachers. We are also on the hunt for dynamic folks who might help with mentoring aspiring teachers, providing testimonials for recruitment, or developing resources for current subs.

In particular, we are interested in understanding:

- What motivates these folks?
- How do we find more of them?
- How can we intentionally support the development of subs who are aspiring teachers?
- From their perspective, what are some of the benefits of subbing as part of the journey to become teachers? How can we articulate these benefits for other aspiring teachers?
- What ideas do they have about how schools and teachers can set up subs for success?

Mindset

Like all user experience interviews, the purpose of these conversations is to understand (and cultivate our empathy for....) what the world looks like from their point of view. We aren't asking for their advice or trying to problem solve in the moment, we are inviting them to share their story. It should feel luxurious to them that someone is authentically interested in their experience and willing to listen to them.

Conversation Starters

A few questions to get the ball rolling.

- Tell me about your journey. How did you decide to become a teacher? How did substitute service fit into your journey?
- My neighbor's son recently graduated college and is thinking about becoming a teacher. Would you recommend that he tries subbing? What advice would you give him?
- Was there a particular day or experience that made you realize that you wanted to (or were ready to...) become a full-time teacher?
- In retrospect, what skills did you learn in substitute teaching that have been particularly helpful in your classroom?
- Have you had to "unlearn" any things in your transition from sub to full-time teacher?
- What things were surprisingly different about being a regular classroom teacher?
- What was it like to be hired as a substitute teacher? How did it feel?
- What schools did you most like to work at? Why?
- Were there any people who were especially important on your journey? What did they do? Tell me a story about them.

Ending the Conversation

Thank them for sharing their insights! Tell them you will be sharing what you learned with your design team. If they said something that you think could put them or their school in a bad light, you might want to ask if they are comfortable with you sharing that part. Ask if they want to stay engaged in the project, for example, could you share prototypes with them?