

Anchorage School District: Structured Learning Classroom
A Guide for Substitute Special Education TAs

Thank you for your interest being a substitute Special Education Teaching Assistant (TA) in one of our Structured Learning classrooms (SLC)! As a substitute TA, you will make a positive contribution and be instrumental in supporting our schools, staff, and students. We believe that all students deserve the opportunity to achieve his or her potential in a safe and effective learning environment. We are well aware that without the services you provide we would not be able to continue with the district's mission of educating all students for success in life!

The purpose of this handout is to provide you with an overview of the SLC program and to increase your knowledge base so that you are best prepared to provide support and assistance. Feel free to contact the Special Education Department at 742-6021 if you have further questions.

Program Overview

The Anchorage School District SLC Program promotes a moderate to highly structured classroom setting designed for students requiring strategies and curricula to facilitate communication and social skills while teaching grade-level expectations. The Structured Learning Classrooms are located in neighborhood schools in regional locations throughout the district. Students are typically on a diploma track and participating in Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) testing.

The purpose of the SLC program is to help students with disabilities develop the necessary communication and social skills, which will enable them to be successful in a less restrictive classroom setting (i.e. general education or resource classes). Although there is a focus on teaching appropriate communication and social skills, students in a Structured Learning Classroom have access to the Common Core curriculum along a continuum of services. Instruction is individualized according to the student's Individual Education Program (IEP).

Student Population

When subbing in an SLC classroom, you will be supporting students with a variety of communication and social delays. For example, you may notice the following elements in the classroom:

- *Individual Student Schedules*

Students in the SLC program may have an individual schedule used regularly by the school team. The

schedule is individualized based on the student's developmental level/skill and provides the student with a meaningful visual system to promote flexibility and independence.

➤ *Grade Level Curriculum Standards*

Students in the SLC Program must have access to grade level curriculum and/or a replacement curriculum as needed based on the student's academic level of performance. The curriculum will follow the Common Core Standards established by the district.

➤ *Visual Supports*

Students in the SLC program may have a variety of visual supports/materials in place to support learning and communication, such as individualized work systems/schedules, labeled classroom and school locations/objects, visual cue cards, first/then, "to do" list, or routines/sequences.

➤ *Levels of Support (Prompting)*

Students in the SLC Program may need support to become as independent as they possibly can. A prompting hierarchy should be utilized in a systematic way to fade how much help students are receiving. The hierarchy would include full physical prompt as the most support needed to natural cues as the least support needed.

➤ *Communication Systems & Instruction*

Students in the SLC program may use individualized communication systems throughout the day, allowing them to effectively express and understand communication. This might include systems such as a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or a Speech-Generating Device. The program incorporates specific curriculum content that targets teaching effective communication skills in various environments throughout the school day.

➤ *Teaching Pro-Social Skills & Navigating Peer Relationships*

Students in the SLC Program often exhibit deficits in social, communication and/or behavioral areas. Most instruction must be explicit and direct in order for students to make significant progress in this area. Instruction of pro-social skills occurs can occur in a natural setting or a separate class or setting where social skills instruction is the focus.

Typical Duties of a Substitute Special Education TA

- Provide services or support for students individually or in small groups (e.g., planning and implementing accommodations & modifications or behavioral interventions) as directed by special education teachers.
- Assist students to and from the bus.
- Prepare instructional materials including assistive technology devices for student use.
- Collect data and information on a student's functioning for IEP goals and objectives.
- Attend to and provide for student's daily hygiene, personal, and health-related care including dressing, feeding, and/or toileting/diapering.
- Assist in positioning/range of motion tasks for students such as lifting, repositioning, physically assisting, and transferring between apparatus.
- Assume safety responsibilities for students if providing community-based instruction.
- Provide support in special education or regular education classroom environments. You may be asked to provide additional support in other school settings per individual student need, such as assistance/monitoring during lunch periods, breaks, and recesses.