



## EDUCATION

# College Students Fill Need for Substitute Teachers

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Samantha Wood is studying to be a teacher at Northern State University in Aberdeen, South Dakota. This year, the third-year student and other teacher candidates learn by working as **substitute** teachers themselves.

“I’m learning by experience, which is really **awesome** for me,” she told the *Aberdeen American News*.

Wood said she was nervous about her first time being placed in the classroom. But she could not wait to see what the teacher had planned for the day. Wood added it was easy for her to keep the class activities moving using her imagination.

After two weeks in different classrooms, Wood has nearly met her required hours of field experience in teaching. However, she planned to continue working as a substitute teacher.

Andria Moon is a **dean** at the university’s School of Education. She said teacher candidates from the university have worked as substitute teachers in the past. Yet they did not get credit for field experience in the classrooms.

This year, as older substitute teachers do not want to fill in during the COVID-19 health crisis, the university received approval to give teacher candidates credit for field experience.

“We’re calling it an **alternative** field experience,” Moon said. She added that public schools do so much for the community. And the university is pleased to have a chance to help as partner. More than a third of Northern’s teacher candidates have joined the program.

Wood said her experience in the classroom got other students interested in the program. “After I shared my experience, they were asking me questions and more willing to try,” she said.

Becky Guffin, head of the Aberdeen’s public schools, agreed the need for substitute teachers is high this year. She said because of COVID-19, teachers could be out of work for more than one day.

The South Dakota Department of Health suggests a two-week **quarantine** for someone who comes in contact with an infected person. It also takes several days to get results of a COVID-19 test.

Guffin said the school system has been able to fill the need for substitute teachers so far, but sometimes it takes more than one substitute. In some cases, one substitute comes in the morning and another works in the afternoon.

Sometimes, Guffin said, teachers used their open planning period to cover another classroom. During planning periods, she said, teachers do not usually have students in their classroom because they are planning future classes or finishing other work.

Guffin said the Aberdeen public school system is now seeing some COVID-19 cases. Since the high school has the largest group of students, she expected that there will be more cases there. And teachers are ready to meet the needs of students who miss 10 to 14 days of school and have tests and work to make up.

Guffin said the goal is to keep the buildings open and filled with students and teachers. “We’re holding our own,” she said. “It’s a very different year.”

I’m Gregory Stachel.

*Elisa Sand reported this story for the Aberdeen American News. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.*

## Words in This Story

**substitute** – *n.* a person or thing that takes the place of someone or something else

**awesome** – *adj.* extremely good

**dean** – *n.* a person who is in charge of one of the parts of a university

**alternative** – *adj.* offering or expressing a choice

**quarantine** – *n.* the period of time during which a person or animal that has a disease or that might have a disease is kept away from others to prevent the disease from spreading

*What do you think of this program? We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments Section.*

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