

# COVERING OF CLASSES

## *Highsmith Memos*

The Highsmith Memos are a result of the *Teaf Arbitration*, an arbitration dispute between the Federation and the District. Charles A. Highsmith was the Associate Superintendent for Field Operations for the district. Charles Highsmith distributed guidance to school administrators about the decision. That is why we call this document the *Highsmith Memos*.

**This decision is over 40 years old. It is very important that Building Committees include this on the agenda for their first Joint Meeting each year with the administration. Splitting of classes should not be done unless all other means below have been exhausted.**

The present Agreement with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers provides that “all non-teaching duties and emergency assignments within a school are to be shared among all teachers, except kindergarten teachers, on an equitable basis.” In accordance with this provision, the following guidelines are to be observed in covering classes during emergencies when substitute service is not available.

1. Every teacher in the school, as defined in the CBA, with the exception of kindergarten teachers, is to be used to cover classes, on a rotation basis, during his or her preparation periods.
2. Specific preparation periods must be designated for all teachers, including school based teacher leaders, deans, counselors, etc., and publicly noted on the master schedule.
3. Whenever a teacher is required to cover an assignment during a preparation period, the teacher shall receive in writing the reason, therefore before the request or not later than the next school day.
4. Accurate records of all class coverages must be maintained by the principal and made available to teachers upon request.
5. Since the greatest need for emergency coverage occurs at the beginning of the day, to the greatest extent possible, different teachers are to be scheduled for preparation time at that hour on each day of the week.
6. Specialist teachers with no classroom assignments at the beginning of the day are to be utilized for coverage during that time (ex. School day begins at 8:30 a.m. but prep schedule doesn't begin until 8:45 a.m., Specialist teachers are to cover during that time.)
7. If a specialist teacher is absent and no substitute is available for that assignment, with the result that a teacher loses his/her scheduled preparation time, the teacher is to be credited with coverage.
8. In the event the entire pool of teachers available for coverage during a period is used, and additional needs exist, the following personnel are to be used, on a rotation basis, in the following order
  - a. Administrative Assistant (*this is a teacher position, not the secretary*)
  - b. Counselor
  - c. Librarian
  - d. School Based Teacher Leader
  - e. Reading Teacher
  - f. Other fully released teachers (Dean, etc.)
9. These guidelines supersede all previous communications regarding to the covering of classes.

### Elementary Preparation Time

In response to questions that have arisen regarding preparation time in elementary schools, please note the following;

1. Form SEH-30 is to be used to record the date, time, and number of minutes of preparation time lost by a teacher to cover another class; a similar entry is to be made when the time is repaid.
2. When possible, lost preparation time is to be repaid by the per diem substitute on the same day; when this is not possible, the lost time is to be banked and, preferably, repaid in periods of not less than 1/2 hour.
3. When the repayment is made in periods of less than 1/2 hour, time must be attached to an existing preparation period.
4. A teacher who participated voluntarily in an activity such as a class trip or professional meeting is not repaid for any lost preparation time.
5. A teacher who loses recess equivalent time because of class coverage is repaid for the lost time.
6. Records are to be maintained for lost and repaid preparation time as of September 5, 1974.
7. A teacher may not select the time when his lost preparation time is repaid.
8. A teacher who is late for school may not relinquish an equal amount of his or her preparation time to repay the teacher who covered the class.
9. Per diem substitutes must be used at all available times to repay lost preparation time; of course, long term substitutes are to be granted preparation time.
10. All teachers of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in elementary schools must be given recess equivalent time in addition to their 225 minutes of preparation time; however, recess equivalent time may be used for duties that are equitably distributed among all teachers.
11. Teachers with an excess of 225 minutes of preparation time (plus recess or recess equivalent) must be used to provide equivalent time for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.
12. If additional, time exists after recess equivalent time is provided (as in item #11) it must be used to cover classes, repay lost preparation time, provide small group instruction, or perform other special assignments; when needed, covering classes and repaying lost preparation time take precedence over small group instruction and other special assignments.
13. When the need for coverage arises, the pool of teachers with time allocated for special assignments, as noted in item #12 must be exhausted before teachers with preparation periods utilized; teachers who use their time allocated for special assignments for coverage are not repaid. Please refer to memoranda of September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10, 1974. "COVERING OF CLASSES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL".