Improving Attendance through Math

A Simple, Effective, Low-Cost Activity to Use in Your Classroom

Author

Aaron Scholl, YouthBuild Charter Schools of California – South Los Angeles

The activity

This is an interactive activity that encourages students to monitor their attendance goals using percentages. Learners will set and monitor attendance goals in percentage form. They will calculate the exact number of days that they will need to be present in order to reach that goal, and continuously monitor their progress.

Students will learn

- How to understand program attendance expectations.
- How to read and calculate percentages, as well as other basic mathematical concepts.
- How to set goals frequently
- How to self-monitor their goal, while practicing calculating percentages.

Here’s what you do

Resources needed:
- Knowledge of percentages
- Incentives/rewards for high attendance
- Monthly calendars

Approximate time:
10-15 minutes, or a full hour depending on how in-depth you want to go

Watch a brief video about how to implement this activity in your YouthBuild Classroom!

http://tinyurl.com/p8yr67k
Success tips:

- For some students with skill deficiencies, it may be helpful to allow them to use their calculators/phones.
- Identify students who demonstrate high skill, and engage them in helping others.
- Ask students to calculate all types of classroom statistics! How many students submitted their assignments on time? How many students received their construction certification? Or, ask students to come up with their own questions!

Instructions:

1. Goal Setting:
   A. Ask students to set attendance goal in percentage form (i.e. I want to have 85% attendance).
   B. Provide students with the exact number of days in their school year.
   C. Show at least two example calculations of how to find the number of days that they can miss to meet their goal. I would generally begin with an easy and intuitive calculation (i.e. Goal of 50% of 190 days is 95 days present, 95 days absent).

   Extension: Show students how to calculate the number of days that they can miss per month and per week by dividing 95 by the number of months in the school/program year. Then divide that by 4 to determine the approximate number of days that the student can miss per week to obtain their goal.
   D. After doing at least two sample calculations, ask students to calculate their own attendance percentage goals.

2. Reinforce this lesson on a weekly or monthly basis:
   A. Give each student a monthly calendar. Each week/month, set aside time to allow students to mark on their calendar if they were present or absent.
   B. If the student was absent, ask them to write a one or two word reason for absence (i.e. sick, day-care, etc.).
   C. Now ask students to calculate their current attendance percentage by dividing their total number of absent days, by the total number of days in school so far.

Other extensions:

A. Tardies: Tally up the number of students who come to class on time.
   B. Then, for every person who comes in tardy, ask them to calculate the percentage of tardy students. For example: 9 students arrive on time, and one arrives tardy. Then, 10% (1/10) arrived tardy.
   C. Monitor the class’ percentage each day and provide a reward as the class makes improvements.