

How to increase attendance rates at your school – effortless incentives with remarkable impact

TIPS

Dr Gillian Anstee, Nationally Accredited Mediator and Educational Consultant



These days, our school systems seek data regarding attendance rates of students at school. These measures are indicative of various factors.

However all schools seek to have the highest daily attendance rates possible for the highest number of school days per year.

Some schools choose to entice students to school by offering special events and occasions.

Some of these days are parade days where students might dress as book characters. Some of these days may be the Easter Hat Parade. On days such as these hats are made by senior students for junior students in a buddy system approach. While beneficial, often things like the Easter Hat Parade eat into curriculum teaching time. Think creatively. Think outside the box. Try different problem solving approaches that don't interrupt teaching and class time. Use Chook Lotto instead! What does this involve? How do we play?

This involves the purchase of \$100 worth of two dollar items from the local discount shop. These items might be small toys, boardgames, toys, rubber snakes, fluffy key rings and so on. The distribution of these toys occurs at a weekly assembly. It is a quick process that does not involve taking from teaching time.

All teachers on playground duty carry a raffle ticket booklet. This is small and easy to put in a pocket. While observing the students in the playground any teacher who sees a student doing a good deed, offering a kindness to a smaller student, or in general obeying the school rules, will receive a raffle ticket.

There is no formal writing of names on raffle tickets or formal list of students who received a raffle ticket during lunchtime. It is the student's responsibility to take care of the raffle ticket and be prepared for the drawing of raffle tickets to receive a prize at the weekly assembly. If a ticket is lost it is sad. This enables the process to be easy and the responsibility to be on this student to keep the raffle tickets safe and ready for assembly on the weekly day. Teachers can be generous in giving out raffle tickets. They may give raffle tickets to students who help a lonely child seated on the friendship bench. They may give tickets to a student who picks up rubbish papers voluntarily and puts them in the bin. They may give tickets to students to provide a service like returning a library book. There is no mandatory list of requirements.

On the day of the week that is assembly, the students gather in the school hall and Chook Lotto occurs. This involves one teacher coming to the front

of the assembly, drawing out a random ticket from a box of ticket stubs and allowing that student to come to the front and choose a gift from the big bag of toys from the discount shop. The first time this is done it will probably take half an hour as that student will pick up each item, look at it, and place it on the ground. Once this process has been completed the next time a student comes up to choose a gift it will be swift as all students have already seen what the big bag contains. So do not fear! The next time it will be swift! Children have already spied the toy or game they desire! Over time the impact of this game is subtle yet effective. Children like to come to school because as an additional treat there is the possibility of going home with an extra toy or game. The behaviour in the playground will increase in positive action as students are keen to be observed doing the right thing! Give it a go! See it in action! It is effective and simple and swift and cheap!

Another suggested activity was created at one of my schools by the general assistant. We had noticed an increase in attendance on Fridays. We decided that it was because this was the day that Mr. Greg, our general assistant, harnessed himself to the building roof and collected



any tennis balls that had landed there or in the gutters during the week. If the balls did not have initials or names on them, they were thrown out to the watching crowd of students. This was so exciting for the kids. Friday was Mr Greg's day.

We do not know for sure that this was the cause of the increased attendance on Fridays but we do suspect that this was so. There are many creative little ideas that you can use to make sure that students are even more keen to come to school. Student engagement in classes is a given. But what extras can you offer the kids at your school? Have a brainstorm in the staff room. You'll be surprised at the great ideas that will appear! Good luck with those attendance rates!

And while we are looking at increasing student attendance rates, let's also

share a very effective strategy for ensuring teachers arrive at staff meetings on time. Often it is difficult for classroom teachers to arrive at meetings on time because they are on bus duty or because they are meeting with parents or giving additional help to some student groups. However, in order for the school organisation to proceed successfully, regular meetings between staff members are essential.

A simple strategy is to use those raffle ticket booklets and give a raffle ticket to each teacher who arrives early. The earlier you arrive, the more raffle tickets you get. I remember giving raffle tickets at five minute intervals to any teachers who were present and ready early to start the meeting. At the end of the meeting I would draw a winning raffle ticket and that lucky

teacher would win a small prize such as a box of chocolates.

It was definitely impactful in terms of having the largest cohort possible ready to start our meeting at an agreed time and also resulted in all teachers remaining until the conclusion of the meeting to see who was going to win the prize. It was fun!

Schools are learning places and we must remember that having fun is such an effective tool in any organisational environment! Introduce this clever strategy at your school and perhaps use it with your team meetings. It will definitely invigorate the team and be a cause for positive discussion.

Contact Gillian Anstee on gilliananstee@gmail.com

Strategies to boost attendance

◆ Chook Lotto involves one teacher coming to the front of the assembly, drawing out a random ticket from a box of ticket stubs and allowing that student to come to the front and choose a gift from the big bag of toys from the discount shop

◆ In order for the school organisation to proceed successfully, regular meetings between staff members are essential.
A simple strategy is to use raffle ticket booklets and give a raffle ticket to each teacher who arrives early

◆ Request a volunteer to check the building roof to collect any tennis balls that had landed there or in the gutters during the week. If the balls do not have initials or names on them, they are thrown out to the watching crowd of students