

ATTENDANCE

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

- +Attendance is sometimes used for calculating Financial Aid disbursements to institutions
- +Attendance may engage students much more than not attending/participating with the instructor... but not always....
- +Attendance can be used to gauge interest in the course and/or the instructor.
- +Attendance usually equates to more retention of students.
- +Attendance will not necessarily encourage participation (but, it doesn't hurt...).
- +Attendance will not necessarily encourage "learning" (but, it doesn't hurt...)
- +Life is full of problems which make people unable to attend or reluctant to attend.
- +You might miss a day or two or three yourself...
- +In institutions of higher education, most students "pay to be there...."
- +Taking attendance may waste class time/learning time/activity time (but, it helps the university's accounting practices).
- +An instructor cannot make a person attend (although fear of failure, including possible loss of financial aid, is enough to persuade most people to attend).

WHAT IS REASONABLE/FAIR/ETHICAL?

- +Give the students some "breathing room" or "vacation days" and/or "sick days" (as found in a professional environment). Again, model the "real world."
- +A week's worth of classes seems to be the norm, although some instructors give two week's worth of classes. Some instructors give less days off....

DO I HAVE TO TAKE ATTENDANCE?

- +Most institutions require it, although some do not.
- +Most institutions have some sort of accounting practices involving enrollment and attendance

WHY DO STUDENTS NOT ATTEND?

- Student has common (individual) problems (temporary illness, personal, auto, etc.)
- Student has a family problem (sick family member, birthing complications of children, sick children, etc.)
- Student has work
- Student has a change in work situation or schedule
- Student is using his/her energy or time towards completing work for another class
- Student has "given up" or quit
- Student is sick
- Student is an athlete (and has practice or a game or a public relations function)
- Student has a mental or physical condition which limits attendance.
- Student is having a temporary yet complicated crisis (divorce, legal troubles, etc.)
- Student has jury duty
- Student has court
- Student has been jailed
- Student is enrolled simultaneous in another class (rare)
- Other (student was abducted by Aliens...).

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM REASONS WHY STUDENTS DO NOT ATTEND?

- +Everyone has problems.
- +Some problems are more important than school.
- +Some problems are worse than others.
- +Some problems last from a single day to several months
- +Problems affect work
- +Problems affect work ethic
- +Problems may lead to apathy
- +Problems may lead to institutional withdrawal)

REAL WORLD COMPARISONS

- +People are given leave for family, child birth, funerals (and bereavement/grieving), etc.
- +People are given vacation leave
- +People need time to recuperate
- +Others may “pick up the slack.”

IF A STUDENT HAS MISSED AN EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF DAYS, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

1. Consider how many days...
2. Consider: What is your threshold/tolerance for missed days...?
3. Consider if it is realistic for them to complete the class work.
4. Consider “in-progress” grades for students who can only complete the course at a later time due to extreme distress or other difficulty. Or, don’t!

WAYS TO TAKE ATTENDANCE (DAILY)

- +The sign-up sheet (pass around a sheet of paper and ask them to put their names on it)
- +Roll call
- +Daily writing assignments (picked up daily by the teacher)
- +Surprise Roll Call (use the roll call method every other day... use the average to determine if the student is attending or not). Note: Do not use if attendance is mandatory.
- +Surprise Sign-Up Sheet (use the sign-up sheet method every other day... use the average to determine if the student is attending or not). Note: Do not use if attendance is mandatory.
- +Have one student take attendance for extra credit (if you find that you are too busy).

WAYS TO TAKE ATTENDANCE (OVER THE COURSE OF THE TERM)

- +Dated/Numbered Journal entries (count at the end of the term)
- +Daily Exercises... collect and enter a grade. The grade will show attendance if they are there to complete the assignment.

WAY TO ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE

- +Assign points for attendance/participation
- +Explain that attendance is mandatory/Make attendance mandatory
- +Assign extra credit or merit points for good attendance
- +Give students a set number of days off...
- +Give students verbal reinforcement for good attendance (regularly)
- +Track attendance/participation with a response sheet (keep track of the number of times a student talks/discusses things in your class...)

WAYS TO PUNISH POOR ATTENDANCE

- +Deduct a set number of points (or a percentage) from their grade (i.e., if you miss more than 10 days, you will lose 10% of the total grade).
- +Deduct a letter grade for an excess number of days (beyond a certain number).
- +Deduct participation points/attendance points
- +Do not allow extra credit.

BEST PRACTICES WITH ATTENDANCE

- +Encourage students to “swap phone numbers/email addresses” in case of absences
- +Follow institutional codes/rules/policies regarding attendance
- +Have a way to encourage attendance, even if it is not required at your institution.