75% Attendance

Taking Attendance

Good attendance can be difficult to achieve, especially at the beginning of your programme. Attendance is a vital part of the model and the expectations need to be made clear and implemented from the very beginning. Learners are divided into various categories based on their attendance %.

- **Green: 75%-80%**
- **Silver: 81%-90%**
- **Gold: 90%-99%**
- **Platinum: 100%**

This data can be used to incentivise. For instance if you have a small number of places available on an excursion you can select from the gold or platinum groups first. The first step is to consistently take attendance and to build up the learners understanding of the system.

Watch this video of Zukile Keswa, our attendance expert explain what, why and how.

There are various methods to encourage learners to attend 75% of the time. This section looks at ways of engaging, motivating and incentivising as well as actually enforcing the 75% attendance requirement and kick-outs.

Templates: Attendance Register; Monthly Attendance Report Template, Quarterly Report Template

Engage the Learner

To get learners' buy-in, it helps to co-create an 'Expectation Contract' or 'code of conduct' that encourages the learner to think about their expectations of the programme and for you to present your expectations of the learner (see pages 30-37).

Establishing a sense of trust is one of the first steps to engage learners. The co-creation of an expectation contract begins this process as it asks what expectations they have and what they need from you. You are saying, I trust you and your judgement and want your input. The learners will naturally be more engaged in a programme that they feel they have a role and responsibility in shaping.

Trust is a long-term goal. Each community and programme will be different and there really isn't a one size fits all answer to how to build a culture of trust, as each community may have a slightly different perception of what a safe space actually looks like. It is important to identify the underlying causes of the lack of trust for your specific group and begin to undo these by putting in place new norms of behaviour.

There are some suggestions of how to do this, and as always it comes back to the staff, tutors and other learners modelling the behaviour and culture that they want to be a part of. Being consistently transparent and fair through your actions at the branch is essential. If you arrive late for any reason, apologise to volunteers and learners and explain why you were late. Learners will begin to feel the equality among themselves, the volunteers and the staff. No one is deemed more important than any other person. Level the playing field, then play!

The next step is to involve the learners in the decision-making processes at a branch level. This has a profound impact on their learner and their connection to the branch, one that usually lasts beyond grade 12.

See more detail on the Strategic Planning Weekend and Branch Committee on pages 65 to 68.

Motivate the Learner

Recruiting learners is the easy part, keeping them motivated and committed to the programme is less so. You will battle with learner attendance initially but as the programme progresses and you are able to start monitoring a learner's improvement it will improve very quickly.

Tip

It helps to make the tutoring sessions as fun as possible. Having come from school the learner's energy may be very low, especially as they often arrive hungry. In this state it is not effective to dive straight into more academic work. It is recommended to do a quick ice-breaker game or physical activity for 10 minutes before tutoring especially for the lower grades

Resource: Games Pack

It is important to continually remind the learner what it is they signed up for and why they did so. Remember that learners join the programme for the primary reason to improve their academic grades and to pass matric. It makes sense to appeal to this motivation by monitoring and recognising effort and most importantly, academic improvement.

Firstly, try to draw them a map of their choices. How does A lead to B and ultimately to where they want to go. Reiterating the long-term objective of tutoring and the intended impact of the service, and showing this to the learner through real-life examples is the first step.

Resource: Presentation for Learner Motivation, _Alumni Videos._
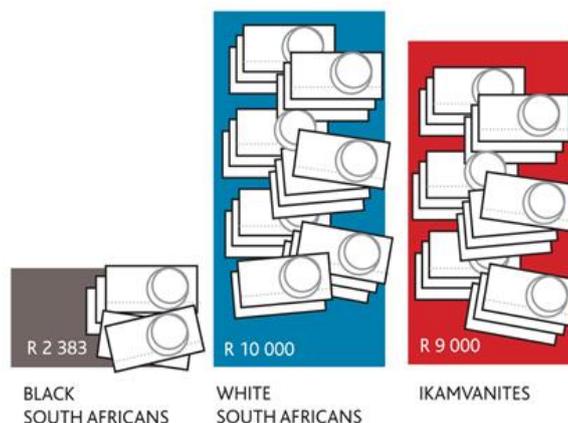
The above graph shows the median income for black South Africans, white South Africans and IkamvaYouth alumni.

Spell out their options and link the now to the future. Waking up early on a Saturday morning leads to earning significantly more per month by using national earning potential statistics:

"Research has shown that with a matric, 25-year-old South African youths are less likely to be unemployed and that the higher their post-matric qualification, the better their average monthly income. 25-year-old South Africans with incomplete schooling who are employed earn an average of R1 100. With a matric they earn R1 600, but with a tertiary certificate or diploma this jumps up to R3 200. Armed with a degree, young South Africans earn an average of R5 500 per month; five times the average township household monthly income."

See full DGMT Community article here.

It is also important to remember that learners' motivations are varied and multiple. Every learner may have a different motivation and it is important to locate these, either from the application forms, interviews, or informal talks with the learner so that you can best appeal to their own personal motivation.

Motivating from the learner's perspective will automatically increase the learner's buy-in to the programme. He or she will start to really understand the purpose of tutoring as related to them.

Tip

Help the learner to see how participation in the programme has impacted their own personal development; both academically and personally. For instance if a learner feels more confident in Mathematics or is now able to ask questions in class without fear of judgement it is hugely valuable. Helping the learner to see these 'small' changes in their attitudes, study skills, academic performance, social skills, etc. will help them to assign a value to the tutoring that they will then be more willing to 'pay' for with their time and commitment.
It is recommended to do a quick ice-breaker game or physical activity for 10 minutes before tutoring especially for the lower grades.

Another way of motivating is to provide incentives and acknowledgement. You could hold termly prize-giving events or give out certificates that acknowledge those who have attended well, performed well academically etc. These events could involve parents, which can help to increase parental involvement. If any outings and excursions take place you could explain that you will only select the top attending learners.

Templates/Resources; Prize-giving How-To; Certificate Example

Take Attendance

Ensure you have a complete and finalised class list of all your learners within the first month

At each tutoring session take your class list around to each table and mark learners who are present. This is important as it gives you an opportunity to have quick feedback with any learner who did not attend the previous session and to troubleshoot this before they are in trouble of being kicked out

Implement point system. If a learner is on time they receive 1 point. If they are less than 20 minutes late they receive 0.5 points. If they have a valid excuse i.e. extra classes or valid medical or family reason and you have been notified in advance, you can award 0.5 points. If they do not excuse themselves or are more than 20 minutes late they receive 0 points.

All the learners need to know that it is **their responsibility** to ensure that they have been marked as present

Remind the Learner

If you have followed IkamvaYouth's recommended recruitment process, your learners will have self-selected on to the programme. The fact that they are motivated to sign up would suggest a certain level of commitment, however keeping learners motivated and committed is a constant job.

The 75% attendance requirement needs to be regularly reiterated throughout the year in order to achieve high levels of commitment and responsibility. It takes a lot for a 16 year old to give up their Saturday, so acknowledging that and reminding them that they will lose their place if they don't attend is important.

Tip

Put up the contact number in very big numbers on the wall so they know who to call if they are going to be absent.

Warn the Learner

The 75% attendance requirement needs to be reiterated all the time and warnings should be given mid-term to show the learner that you are serious about kick-outs.

Midway through each term print out a copy of the attendance with: Name; Surname; Grade; Date of tutoring sessions; and a calculated percentage of sessions that they have attended.

Highlight in bold colour the ones who are below 75% (don't be scared if it's nearly everyone!).

Hold a meeting at the end of the tutoring session to explain the consequences of poor attendance to the learners.

Paste up the list in a prominent place and tell them to look at their %.

Monitor Attendance

You need to go round to every single student to speak about their attendance. If they are below 75%, ask them where they have been, why they haven't been coming, ask them if they are serious about tutoring and improving their results, and if they want to stay?

At the following tutoring sessions repeat step 1 again

Call the parents of those learners whose attendance is still low, ask where the learners are, explain they haven't been coming and are in danger of losing their place.

At this point there should be only a handful of learners that need following up on regularly by repeating the above process.

Tip

Once the learner has missed more than 2 sessions they are often afraid to come back so you must follow up immediately and make sure they know that it is OK and they can redeem their attendance.

Note

It is necessary to explain fully to the parent and give them the number to call if their child is going to be absent. Calling parents is a really important part of improving attendance - it gets them much more involved too and makes them hold their kids accountable.

Kick-out

If you have followed the above step-by-step guide you are now in a position to enact kick-outs. It is important to determine the reason for non-attendance or late-coming by involving the parents before kicking a student out.

Kick-outs are FUNDAMENTAL to the programme being effective and not doing this will undermine all the work you have put in. To keep a child on the programme who has not adhered to the 75% attendance requirement does the child and the programme a disservice. It can:

- Cause friction and conflict between those learners who have been attending
- De-value those learners who are attending regularly and on time
- Increase poor attendance as normalises tardiness and absenteeism amongst peers
- Jeopardise personal development of the individual learner
- Reduce the overall impact of your programme as learners attending less are likely to perform worse
- Anger and de-motivate volunteer tutors who have dedicated their time when no one shows up.

A responsible mind-set is impossible to achieve if you are not enforcing rules that you have set, explained and have good reasons for. If you establish the rules and boundaries early and reiterate these regularly the learners will begin to understand and attendance will not be a problem again. You will then have a group of committed learners who can truly flourish on the programme.