

Attendance Turbulence

Throughout the TIAN Institutes and activities between sessions, group work was modeled and encouraged. Sometimes activities that participants, and then students engaged in, took longer than one class period. Everyone seems to agree that group work and longer activities are more effective when students consistently attend, but they present a challenge when student attendance is erratic.

In all the TIAN Institutes, we asked the question: what makes teaching in a “TIAN-like” way challenging? Often, we heard that “erratic attendance” or “open enrollment” or “drop-in labs” were challenges. While there was important discussion about the challenges and reasons for those, the most valuable discussion occurred when teacher-participants offered solutions to the attendance challenges. We have included those suggestions which we encourage you to share with participants once they have done their own brainstorming.

Attendance Turbulence Activity:

1. In small groups, pose the following questions:

How do you deal with erratic attendance in your class?

If you have a lab situation, how might you modify it in order to allow more group work and TIAN-like activities?

2. Ask each group to share their ideas.
3. Distribute the handout: *Suggested Solutions for Dealing with “Attendance Turbulence” in TIAN Classrooms*. Give participants time to read over the list generated by participants from the four TIAN field test states.
4. Discuss how their brainstormed list compares to that of the field test sites. Ask:
Which strategies do you think would be most workable for you in your situation?
If you asked your students, what solutions would they come up with?

Suggested Solutions for Dealing with “Attendance Turbulence” in TIAN Classrooms

(This list was generated by participants from the four TIAN field test states.)

- Have a student volunteer to briefly recap the previous lesson for those who were absent
- Have packets of previous hand-outs available for absent students
- Each lesson should be able to stand alone as an engaging activity (not bookwork)
- Explore moving students to other classrooms or tutors or other hours of the day based on geography, personal issues, etc.
- Think individually and plan strategies with individual students
- Save the lessons for the days that have best attendance
- Promote involvement in an activity that has national implications
- Build relationships with teachers, other students (bonding)
- Opportunity/incentive to show them success... accountability
- Self-contained lessons to one period
- Have a “suggested” daily schedule for students to follow so as to keep them attending all day rather than an hour
- Have a calendar/folder for work missed
- Rewards for attendance
- Post weekly/monthly schedule of small group activities
- Create reviews to act as a bridge to next lesson
- Reward system—brownies, certificates, coupons
- Charge for classes
- Recruit (mail) math challenged (passed all GED but math) students
- Require tuition/refunded upon completion or attainment of gains
- Schedule regular standard lessons
- Mandate lesson time and immediate assessment of lesson content
- Attendance contracts
- Positive reinforcement

- Upfront expectations
- Goal setting individually with follow-up
- Phone calls

Lab/Individualized

- Ask to be a “guest teacher” with a regular classroom/class to be able to teach EMPOWER lessons
- “Team teach” with a teacher who has a traditional class/classroom setting
- Ask students who are there if anyone wants to get together as a small group and “do a fun math activity” together (2-5 students) (right then and there)
- Advertise these activities—set up time and date and invite students