

With TPRS, participation couldn't be more important. Here's what I do (and remember I'm no guru. . .this is just what I've come up with):

I have seating charts in plastic covers so I can write on them with a vis-a-vis marker every day. As we go through class, I give points for volunteering to answer questions, for doing skits (we do that a lot), for coming up with clever comments in the target language (it really encourages them to think and use real-situation language), volunteering for games or contests, etc. We also have a German lunch table (Stammtisch) once a week and they receive points for attendance. Mostly it's for oral or kinesthetic participation, although I also have a 10-minute "discovery reading" time once a week, where students choose from a bunch of comics or youth literature in German and write down several words they discover.

Students can get negative points as well for refusing to participate with something the entire class should be doing, disruptive talking, writing out-of-turn (such as doing math homework in my class), not being prepared with paper or pencil or saying a derogatory comment about a student. Each time a negative point is given, it is actually -3 points. They sting, but I RARELY have to give negatives.

There is regular, expected participation as well. That is, for example, when I have the entire class practicing new words with signs (from TPRS), or write down vocab words, or repeat a mini story, etc. This is expected and no extra participation points are given for this. . .only negatives if they refuse (again, very rare).

At the end of each day I tally up the points and record them in my daily attendance book, so the attendance book is filled with numbers or slashes for absences. This only takes 5 min. per day. At the end of the week I tally up each student's points for the whole week and record the totals on a scrap piece of paper. I don't write the student's names down. . .I just go in order of the attendance roster. This only takes 10 min.

Now here's my rubric. I have set a base of 75% for participation. That's for a student who does everything he/she is supposed to, but doesn't volunteer to do anything extra. In other words, that student will have earned no positive or negative points that week. Then I glance at the class totals for the week, and see who has the most points. Let's say 14 points. That person is set at 100% and everyone else is pro-rated between 100 and 75% according to their points. That means each week at least one person will have 100% in participation (and often more than one if, for example, three students are tied with the most points).

Now this pro-rating stuff sounds complicated, I know. But years ago I made a simple chart for participation point distribution and laminated it. The pro-rating of all my classes at the end of the week takes maybe 15 minutes, if that. This chart has on the top row, the setting for the highest participation points for the week, and on the side the setting for the amount of points other students could earn. The middle has the pro-rate. It looks like this:

If this chart doesn't align, try using a different font, I forget what it's called, but something like an unjustified font so that each character and space gets an even amount of space. Then it should align.

Using the chart, let's say a student in a class earns 14 points and that is the highest. I look at 14 at the top of the chart and set a piece of paper just to the right of that row. So let's say another student earned only 1 point, so I look at the 1) at the left, trace it all the way to my paper set at the #14 row and that student gets 77%. Another student earned 5 points so he/she gets 84%. Another student earned 10 points so he/she gets 93%. Of course, the student with 14 points gets 100%. If there was a student with negative points and absolutely no positive points (again, very rare), I would start at 75% and deduct 3 for each negative point.

Again, regarding absences, I tell students they have to make up participation just like they make up a missed test or quiz. They come in after school within 5 days, I look up what we did that day, and have them do a few things (repeat a story, make up a story, go through signs, act out a skit, etc.) from that lesson in front of me. It takes less than 5 min. For doing this, I give the student the same amount of points that the highest scoring student earned FOR THAT DAY only. Does this sound like tons of after school hours? In reality, most students don't make up participation. . .they just try to volunteer more during the rest of the week. I would say I get one student in every two weeks to make up participation. 5 minutes. The student does some good practice. The student gets a fair share of points. And most importantly, my butt is covered if anyone complains that an excused absence lowers his/her grade.

Once again, I know this sounds like a lot of bookkeeping, but it turns out to be 5 min. per day, to record the daily points. and less than 1/2 hour at the end of the week to add up the totals and pro-rate the grades. In my class participation counts as 25% of the total grade.

I hope you can take some of these ideas.

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