

3 Strikes--You're Out

The 'three strikes and you're out' policy is one that is often considered as a means of curbing certain behaviors at school events. I have just a few cautions to advise planners of before implementing such a policy.

It is quite known that teens often attain a sort of celebrity status for having certain 'marks' on their record. The rebel is a sort of a hero. Students will object to at least some extent when new policies are introduced. Sometimes just whispers of objection, and sometimes full out verbal assaults expressing their displeasure. When dealing with a 3 strikes-you're out policy, some schools will experience a sort of a mockery from students. By this, I mean there is no consequence for a 'first strike'. It can become a game to get a strike, or even a second. Sometimes it is even a game to see how quickly one can be expelled from the event. As the event nears its end, the consequences become even fewer. Miss out on the last 10 minutes; not often a big threat to a high school teen.

So, are there better options? Perhaps. Not necessarily just one, but a plan for your individual and unique school. First, though 3 strikes is the well known number, perhaps just 2 is a more effective policy. I had a teacher in college who instilled "Once is a mistake, twice is a habit" in his students. How true. These offending behaviors are intentional, and teenagers are fully able to comprehend what their offense is, and make a decision to modify their behavior or not. Second, it is important that parents know students could be ejected from the event due to behavior, and imperative that parents are notified that their child was expelled at the time they are escorted out. Often, it is necessary to have parents pick up the student, so the school can not be held responsible for 'sending him out to participate in other activities'. This is a serious concern. Lastly, the most important factor in the success of these policies comes from awareness. Students need to be aware of what policies are, what consequences are, and that they will be enforced exactly as they are drawn out.

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