EDUCATION

Improving Academic Performance of Grade 2 Pupils Across Learning Areas Through Classroom Incentives

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Abstract

Academic performance was among the most essential concerns in elementary education, particularly in the early grades, where pupils began to develop their learning habits and attitudes toward school. Many Grade 2 pupils experienced difficulties in maintaining focus, participating actively, and sustaining interest across different learning areas. These challenges often resulted in low engagement and unsatisfactory academic performance. Despite the implementation of various teaching strategies and classroom management techniques, some pupils still exhibited limited motivation, suggesting that instructional approaches alone might not have fully addressed learners' needs. Academic performance across learning areas played a vital role in the holistic development of pupils. Mastery of basic skills in subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science was essential, as these served as the foundation for more complex learning in higher grade levels. For this reason, it was important that pupils not only understood the lessons but also developed positive learning behaviors such as participation, persistence, and interest. When pupils were motivated, they were more likely to engage actively in tasks, complete their work, and achieve better academic outcomes (Ellikkal & Rajamohan, 2025).

Keywords: Academic performance; action research; classroom incentives; Grade 2 pupils; motivation; positive reinforcement

1 Introduction

Academic performance was among the most essential concerns in elementary education, particularly in the early grades, where pupils began to develop their learning habits and attitudes toward school. Many Grade 2 pupils experienced difficulties in maintaining focus, participating actively, and sustaining interest across different learning areas. These challenges often resulted in low engagement and unsatisfactory academic performance. Despite the implementation of various teaching strategies and classroom management techniques, some pupils still exhibited limited motivation, suggesting that instructional approaches alone might not have fully addressed learners' needs. Academic performance across learning areas played a vital role in the holistic development of pupils. Mastery of basic skills in subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science was essential, as these served as the foundation for more complex learning in higher grade levels. For this reason, it was important that pupils not only understood the lessons but also developed positive learning behaviors such as participation, persistence, and interest. When pupils were motivated, they were more likely to engage actively in tasks, complete their work, and achieve better academic outcomes (Ellikkal & Rajamohan, 2025).

Research further highlighted that engaging and interactive learning environments significantly improved students' academic performance. Strategies such as gamification, collaborative learning, and the integration of rewards and feedback were shown to enhance learners' participation and understanding. For instance, studies revealed that when learning included rewards, feedback, and interactive elements, students became more motivated and involved in the learning process (Latorre & Baltezarević, 2025). These approaches helped create a more dynamic classroom where pupils were encouraged to participate actively in their learning.

In addition to instructional strategies, learner motivation played a crucial role in determining academic success. Motivation influenced pupils' willingness to participate, exert effort, and persist in completing tasks. Studies indicated that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly affected students' engagement and achievement. In particular, the use of rewards such as praise, recognition, and tangible incentives was found to increase students' interest and participation in classroom activities (Ali et al., 2025). When learners felt recognized and rewarded, they developed a stronger desire to perform well and remain engaged in learning tasks.

However, even with engaging strategies and improved teaching methods, pupils' academic performance did not always improve consistently. This suggested that while instructional techniques were important, they might not have been fully effective if learners lacked sustained motivation and effort. Research showed that student motivation was a key factor influencing learning outcomes, and without proper motivational support, pupils might not have fully benefited from well-designed instruction (Ward & Rožman, 2025). This highlighted the need for practical classroom-based interventions that directly addressed pupils' motivation.

One effective approach to increasing motivation and improving performance was the use of classroom incentives. Studies on educational incentives showed that rewarding students' effort and participation could significantly enhance their engagement and academic achievement. Incentives encouraged pupils to stay focused, complete tasks, and actively participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, research suggested that effort-based incentives were particularly effective in improving learning outcomes, as they promoted consistent participation and persistence among learners (Hirshleifer & Santibanez, 2024). Despite the reported benefits of incentives, their application across different learning areas in the primary grades remained limited.

To address this gap, this action research introduced a classroom incentive system to improve the motivation and academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas. The intervention focused on providing simple and consistent incentives to reward pupils' effort, participation, and task completion across various subjects. By combining effective teaching strategies with motivational reinforcement, the study aimed to create a more engaging and supportive learning environment. Through this approach, the teacher sought to enhance pupils' motivation, increase their active participation, and ultimately improve their academic performance across learning areas.

1.1 Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the classroom incentive system in improving the performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas at Ozamiz City during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas before the implementation of the classroom incentive system?

2. What is the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas after the implementation of the classroom incentive system?
3. Is there a significant difference in the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils before and after the implementation of the classroom incentive system?

1.2 Null hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the level of academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas before and after the implementation of the classroom incentives system.

2 Research methodology

2.1 Research design

This study employed a classroom-based action research approach using a single-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effectiveness of a classroom incentive system in improving the motivation and academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas (Hassan et al., 2025). This design was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to measure pupils' motivation and academic performance before and after the intervention. A researcher-developed pretest was administered to assess pupils' initial motivation and academic performance. After the implementation of the classroom incentive system, a posttest identical to the pretest was administered. The effectiveness of the intervention was determined by comparing the pretest and posttest results using appropriate statistical analyses.

2.2 Research setting

This study was conducted in one of the public elementary schools located in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines, during the School Year 2025–2026. The school employed a departmentalized instructional approach, which facilitated specialized instruction across various subject areas. It also offered Special Science Classes, one Special Needs Education (SNED) class, and heterogeneous classes. The respondents of the study were drawn from a Grade 2 class composed of thirty-two (33) pupils.

2.3 Respondents of the study

The study included thirty-two (32) Grade 2 pupils enrolled in one public elementary school in Ozamiz City during the School Year 2025–2026. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) they were currently enrolled in Grade 2 during the specified school year, and (2) they were willing to participate in the study with informed consent. Pupils who were not enrolled in Grade 2 and those who did not provide consent were excluded from the study.

2.4 Research instruments

The study used the following data-gathering instruments.

Academic performance questionnaire. A researcher-made academic performance questionnaire was utilized to measure the level of academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across different learning areas. The questionnaire consisted of statements describing pupils' interest, participation, effort, and engagement during classroom activities. The respondents answered each item based on their

classroom experiences. The instrument was administered before and after the implementation of the classroom incentive system to determine any changes in the pupils' academic performance. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in education for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. A pilot test was conducted to refine the items. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated that the questionnaire was consistent and reliable.

Academic performance levels were interpreted as follows: 27–30, Outstanding; 22–26, Very Satisfactory; 17–21, Satisfactory; 12–16, Fairly Satisfactory; and 1–11, Did Not Meet Expectations.

Lesson plan. In this study, classroom incentives were integrated into the Grade 2 Lesson Plan, covering different topics across all learning areas. Each 40-minute session began with a short review, followed by teacher-led instruction using concrete manipulatives and guided practice. To ensure validity, education experts reviewed the plan for clarity, relevance, and alignment with Grade 2 competencies.

2.5 Data collection

Prior to the conduct of the study, approval was sought from the college dean, the DepEd superintendent, the school principal, program head and resource teacher. The data collection procedure followed three phases:

2.5.1 Pre-intervention phase (1 week)

During the pre-intervention phase, an Academic Performance Test was administered to determine the pupils' baseline level of academic performance across the different learning areas. Regular classroom instruction was conducted without the use of the classroom incentive system. The pupils' scores were recorded and served as the baseline data for comparison with their performance after the intervention.

2.5.2 Intervention phase (6 weeks)

During the six-week intervention phase, the classroom incentive system was implemented across different learning areas, including English, Mathematics, Filipino, Makabansa, and GMRC. An incentive chart was prepared and updated daily to monitor and track the pupils' participation, task completion, and positive classroom behaviors. Pupils who actively participated in classroom activities, completed assigned tasks, and demonstrated positive learning behaviors were consistently recognized and rewarded through the incentive system. The rewards were provided based on clearly established criteria to ensure consistency and fairness among the pupils. The intervention was integrated into regular classroom instruction without disrupting the scheduled lessons and activities.

2.5.3 Post-intervention phase (1 week)

During the post-intervention phase, the same Academic Performance Test was administered to determine the pupils' academic performance after the six-week implementation of the classroom incentive system. No classroom incentives were provided during the administration of the post-test to minimize the immediate influence of rewards on pupils' test performance. The pupils' post-test scores were recorded and compared with their pre-test scores to determine changes in their academic performance following the intervention.

2.6 Ethical considerations

The ethical standards in conducting the study were upheld by adhering to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Approval was sought from the Misamis University Research Ethics Committee (MUREC) to ensure compliance with institutional and ethical research standards. Due to the small number of participants, consent forms were provided to the parents or guardians, while the pupils provided assent forms signifying their voluntary participation. Both parents and pupils were informed about the purpose of the study. All personal data were kept strictly confidential, and participants were given the freedom to decide whether to provide their personal information. The right to withdraw was explicitly stated in the consent form; therefore, participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure data safety, all information gathered was stored in password-protected computer files and secure physical storage. The data were presented using unique identifiers rather than names to ensure anonymity. All electronic data were encrypted, and access was restricted to authorized personnel. After the study was completed, the data were stored securely for a specified period and were then permanently erased to prevent unauthorized use.

2.7 Data analysis

The study used the following tools in analyzing the data gathered with the use of Jamovi Software:

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of Grade 2 pupils' performance across learning areas before and after the use of classroom incentive system.

The Paired-T Test was utilized to determine whether there was a significant difference between the Grade 2 pupils' performance before and after the implementation of the classroom incentive system.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Level of Grade 2 pupils' performance across learning areas before and after the classroom incentives system

Table 1 presents the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas before the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System. This revealed that the pupils' overall academic performance was interpreted as Did Not Meet Expectations with an overall mean of (M = 9.76, SD = 1.56). In terms of distribution, the majority of the pupils were classified under Did Not Meet Expectations (n = 28, 84.8%, M = 9.32, SD = 1.25), while only a few pupils achieved a Fairly Satisfactory level (n = 5, 15.2%, M = 12.20, SD = 0.45). No pupils reached the Satisfactory, Very Satisfactory, or Outstanding levels of performance before the implementation of the intervention.

Most Grade 2 pupils experienced difficulty in meeting the expected academic standards across learning areas. The high percentage of pupils under the Did Not Meet Expectations category suggests that learners may have had low motivation, limited participation, and difficulty sustaining effort in classroom activities. This is supported by Rožman et al. (2025), who emphasized that student participation is a significant factor in enhancing academic success. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) found that motivation plays an important role in increasing students' willingness to participate in learning activities and that reward strategies such as praise, recognition, and tangible incentives can improve student engagement and achievement. Thus, the low pre-assessment result may indicate the need for motivational support before pupils can fully engage in learning tasks.

Moreover, the limited number of pupils who obtained a Fairly Satisfactory rating shows that only a small portion of the class demonstrated the minimum expected level of academic performance. This suggests that the pupils needed more structured, engaging, and supportive learning experiences. Hirshleifer (2025) found that incentives focused on students' effort in learning activities can improve student performance more effectively than incentives based only on test results. In addition, Latorre-Cosculluela et al. (2025) reported that gamified and collaborative learning approaches improved students' academic performance. These studies support the idea that incentives, feedback, and engaging activities may help learners become more active and interested in classroom tasks.

The results imply that teachers, school administrators, and parents should work together to address the low academic performance of Grade 2 pupils. Teachers may implement a balanced Classroom Incentives System using verbal praise, recognition, stars, tokens, simple rewards, and positive feedback to encourage participation and task completion. This is supported by Baltezarević and Baltezarević (2025), who noted that learning activities with rewards, feedback, and competition may increase motivation and improve learning outcomes. School administrators may also support teachers by providing training on participation strategies and classroom management. Parents may help by encouraging study habits at home and monitoring pupils' learning progress. Overall, this suggests the need for consistent participation, engaging classroom activities, and positive reinforcement to help pupils improve their academic performance.

Table 1. Level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas before the implementation of the classroom incentives system.

Performance	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Fairly Satisfactory	5	15.2	12.20	0.45
Did Not Meet Expectations	28	84.8	9.32	1.25
Overall performance	33	100.0	9.76	1.56

Note: 27–30 (Outstanding); 22–26 (Very Satisfactory); 17–21 (Satisfactory); 12–16 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1–11 (Did Not Meet Expectations).

Table 2 presents the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System. The findings revealed that the pupils' overall academic performance was interpreted as Very Satisfactory with an overall mean of (M = 26.39, SD = 1.78). In terms of distribution, the highest number of pupils obtained a Very Satisfactory performance level (n = 18, 54.5%, M = 25.1, SD = 0.873), followed by pupils who achieved an Outstanding level (n = 15, 45.5%, M = 28.0, SD = 1.134). Notably, no pupils were classified under the Satisfactory, Fairly Satisfactory, or Did Not Meet Expectations categories after the implementation of the intervention. The implementation of the Classroom Incentives System positively influenced the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils. The increase in pupils achieving Very Satisfactory and Outstanding performance levels suggests that the intervention enhanced pupils' engagement, and participation in classroom activities. This supports the study of Ali et al. (2025), which emphasized that reward strategies such as praise, recognition, and tangible incentives significantly improve student participation and academic achievement. Likewise, Hirshleifer (2025) found that incentives focused on students' effort effectively improve student performance and increase engagement in learning activities. Furthermore, Rožman et al. (2025) highlighted that motivation is a significant psychological factor influencing academic success, suggesting that learners who receive encouragement and positive reinforcement are more likely to perform better academically.

Moreover, the absence of pupils in the lower performance categories implies that the Classroom Incentives System created a more supportive and engaging learning environment. Baltezarević and Baltezarević (2025) explained that rewards, feedback, and engaging educational experiences increase students' participation, and learning outcomes. Similarly, Latorre-Cosculluela et al. (2025) reported that gamified and collaborative learning approaches positively affect students' academic performance and engagement in the classroom. These studies suggest that when learners are provided with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences, they become more active participants in the teaching-learning process. This also aligns with Ward et al. (2025), who noted that supportive and adaptive learning approaches contribute to positive academic outcomes and improved learner engagement.

The results imply that teachers, school administrators, and parents should continue supporting the use of motivational strategies and positive reinforcement to sustain pupils' academic achievement. Teachers may strengthen the implementation of classroom incentives through praise systems, reward charts, certificates, tokens, and engaging classroom activities that recognize pupils' effort and participation. School administrators may also provide professional development programs and workshops focused on classroom participation, positive reinforcement, and learner-centered teaching strategies. Parents may reinforce these efforts at home by encouraging positive study habits and monitoring pupils' learning progress. Through continuous collaboration among teachers, parents, and school leaders, pupils may maintain high academic performance and develop greater confidence, responsibility, and engagement in learning activities.

Table 2. Level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas after the implementation of the classroom incentives system.

Performance	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Outstanding	15	45.5	28.00	1.13
Very Satisfactory	18	54.5	25.10	0.87
Overall performance	33	100.0	26.39	1.78

Note: 27–30 (Outstanding); 22–26 (Very Satisfactory); 17–21 (Satisfactory); 12–16 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1–11 (Did Not Meet Expectations).

Table 3 presents the significant difference in the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils before and after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System. The findings revealed a very highly significant difference in the academic performance of the pupils before and after the implementation of the intervention ($t = 56.5$, $p < 0.001$). The mean performance score before the implementation was ($M = 9.76$, $SD = 1.56$), while the mean performance score after the implementation increased to ($M = 26.39$, $SD = 1.78$). Since the computed p-value was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the Classroom Incentives System significantly improved the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas.

This suggests that the Classroom Incentives System had a strong positive influence on pupils' academic performance. The remarkable increase in the mean scores after the implementation of the intervention implies that the use of rewards and positive reinforcement enhanced pupils' engagement, and participation in classroom activities. This finding supports the study of Almufarreh (2026), which emphasized that gamification and motivating learning approaches significantly improve student engagement, reduce anxiety, and enhance academic performance. Similarly, Ali et al. (2025) highlighted that reward strategies such as praise, recognition, and tangible incentives positively affect student motivation and achievement. Hirshleifer (2025) also found that incentive-based interven-

tions effectively increase students' effort and academic performance. These studies suggest that learners are more likely to perform better academically when they are motivated and actively engaged in classroom learning activities.

Moreover, the improvement in pupils' academic performance may indicate that the Classroom Incentives System created a more learner-centered and supportive classroom environment. Saro et al. (2026) explained that innovative and learner-centered teaching strategies positively influence students' academic success and participation in learning activities. Likewise, Baltezarević and Baltezarević (2025) emphasized that educational environments that incorporate rewards, feedback, and engaging activities increase students' learning participation. In the same way, Chen (2026) found that positive emotional regulation and supportive learning experiences significantly contribute to improved academic performance and self-motivation among learners. These imply that the intervention may have encouraged pupils to become more confident, active, and responsible in completing classroom tasks and participating in academic activities.

Because the computed p-value ($p < 0.001$) was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the findings indicated a statistically significant improvement in the pupils' academic performance after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System. However, Brady et al. (2026) noted that some technology-supported interventions may not always produce significant differences in engagement and academic performance, suggesting that the effectiveness of interventions may depend on how strategies are implemented and how learners respond to them. This further emphasizes the importance of carefully designing motivational and classroom-based interventions appropriate to the learners' needs.

This implies that teachers, school administrators, and parents should continue supporting the implementation of motivational and reinforcement-based strategies to sustain pupils' academic achievement. Teachers may integrate reward systems such as praise, stars, certificates, and engaging classroom games to maintain pupils' interest and participation in learning activities. School administrators may provide professional development seminars and workshops focused on learner-centered teaching strategies, gamification, and positive classroom management. Parents may also reinforce positive study habits and encourage pupils' efforts at home through recognition and support. Through collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and school leaders, pupils may continue to improve academically and develop positive attitudes toward learning and classroom participation.

Table 3. Significant difference in the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils before and after the implementation of the classroom incentives system.

Performance	M	SD	t	p	Decision
Before the implementation of the classroom incentives system	9.76	1.56	56.5***	< 0.001	Reject H_{01}
After the implementation of the classroom incentives system	26.39	1.78			

Note: Paired-samples t-test; ***p < 0.001 (very highly significant); **p < 0.01 (highly significant); *p < 0.05 (significant).

Chapter 4

4 Summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Summary

This study examined the effectiveness of the Classroom Incentives System in improving the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas during the School Year 2025–2026 in a public elementary school in Ozamiz City. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions: (1) What was the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas before the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System? (2) What was the level of Grade 2 pupils' academic performance across learning areas after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System? (3) Was there a significant difference in the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils before and after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System?

The study utilized a one-group pretest-posttest action research design involving Grade 2 pupils from a public elementary school. The pupils' academic performance across learning areas was measured before and after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System. The research instrument used was a researcher-made Academic Performance Questionnaire. The data gathered were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and a paired-samples t-test to determine the significant difference between the pretest and posttest results.

4.2 Findings

The following are the salient findings of this study:

1. The study found that before the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System, most of the Grade 2 pupils were classified under the Did Not Meet Expectations level in academic performance across learning areas, indicating low participation, motivation, and engagement in classroom activities.
2. The study found that after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System, most of the Grade 2 pupils achieved Very Satisfactory and Outstanding levels of academic performance, showing improved participation, motivation, and classroom engagement.
3. The study found that there was a very highly significant difference in the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils before and after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System, indicating that the intervention effectively improved pupils' academic performance across learning areas.

4.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The study concluded that Grade 2 pupils demonstrated low academic performance across learning areas before the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System, suggesting limited motivation and classroom engagement.
2. The study concluded that Grade 2 pupils demonstrated improved academic performance across learning areas after the implementation of the Classroom Incentives System, indicating increased motivation, participation, and engagement in learning activities.
3. The study concluded that the Classroom Incentives System was effective in significantly improving the academic performance of Grade 2 pupils across learning areas.

4.4 Recommendations

1. Teachers were encouraged to continuously integrate Classroom Incentives Systems such as praise, reward charts, stars, tokens, certificates, and simple classroom rewards to increase pupils' motivation, participation, and academic performance across learning areas.
2. School administrators may provide seminars, training, and workshops on positive reinforcement, learner-centered strategies, and motivational classroom management techniques to help teachers improve pupils' engagement and learning outcomes.
3. Parents may support the implementation of classroom incentives by encouraging positive study habits, monitoring pupils' academic progress, and recognizing their efforts and achievements at home.
4. Future researchers may conduct similar studies using larger groups of respondents, longer intervention periods, and different motivational strategies to further validate and strengthen the findings of this study.

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