Getting Students to School on Time: Effects of a Praise Note Intervention

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Introduction
- The dilemma on how to resolve student tardiness has been around for as long as schools have been in existence.
- This is especially challenging with elementary children who are often dependent on an adult to get to school on time.
- School district tardiness policies are typically punitive culminating in parents being sent to truancy court if the problem isn’t remedied.
- In the meantime teachers are frustrated that late students disrupt instruction and require the teacher to re-teach what they missed.
- Despite the frustration it causes many educators and the lost academic time, little has been done at the elementary school level to develop and investigate interventions targeted at increasing on-time behavior.

Purpose
To evaluate the effectiveness of teacher written praise notes on elementary school student on-time behavior.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severe Tardy Students</th>
<th>Moderately Tardy Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Minutes Late per Week</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average Number of Notes/Week</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>108.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>139.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elie</td>
<td>67.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>105.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Minutes Late per Week</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average Number of Notes/Week</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Baseline</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faye</td>
<td>16.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>7.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>19.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>14.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure
PBS School Context
- Clear expectations
- Character development program
- Student recognition system
- Teacher written praise notes for respect, responsibility, service, and learning
- Students on time for the whole month received a reinforcer

Independent Variable
- Principal letter to parents
- Teachers wrote praise notes for students arriving on time

Dependent Variable
- Number of minutes late per week

Discussion
- Results suggested a functional relationship between praise notes and on-time behavior.
- Seemed more effective for less severe students who also tended to receive more praise notes.
- A positive, feasible approach for addressing student tardiness.
- Teachers’ inconsistent use of praise notes.
- Limited intervention time.

Future Research
- Improving treatment fidelity.
- Assessing social validity.
- Need for replications.