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Using Teacher-Written Praise Notes to Decrease Tardiness in Elementary School Students*



Paul Caldarella, Lynnette Christensen, and K. Richard Young
 Brigham Young University Positive Behavior Support Initiative

Introduction

- Principals and teachers consider student tardiness to be a serious issue.
- Especially challenging with elementary children often dependent on an adult to get to school on time.
- Frustration that late students disrupt instruction and require re-teaching.
- Tardiness is widespread and associated with:
 - Lower academic achievement
 - Use of drugs/alcohol in secondary school
 - Employment difficulties later in life
- School policies often punitive, but ineffective.
- School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) interventions may help.
- Teacher praise is a positive strategy shown to be effective for problem behavior.

Method

Setting

- Urban K-6 elementary school
 - 646 students
 - 25% low SES
 - 18% mobility
 - 80% Caucasian
 - 9% Hispanic
 - 6% Asian
 - 5% Other

Participants

- Each teacher selected a student exhibiting moderate to severe tardiness

Demographics

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Academic Concerns	Behavioral Concerns
Faye	F	Caucasian	1	No	No
Bryce	M	Caucasian	1	No	No
Wade	M	Caucasian	1	No	Yes
Gary	M	Caucasian	6	Yes	Yes
Ron	M	Caucasian	6	No	Yes
Ellie	F	Caucasian	2	Yes	No

Design

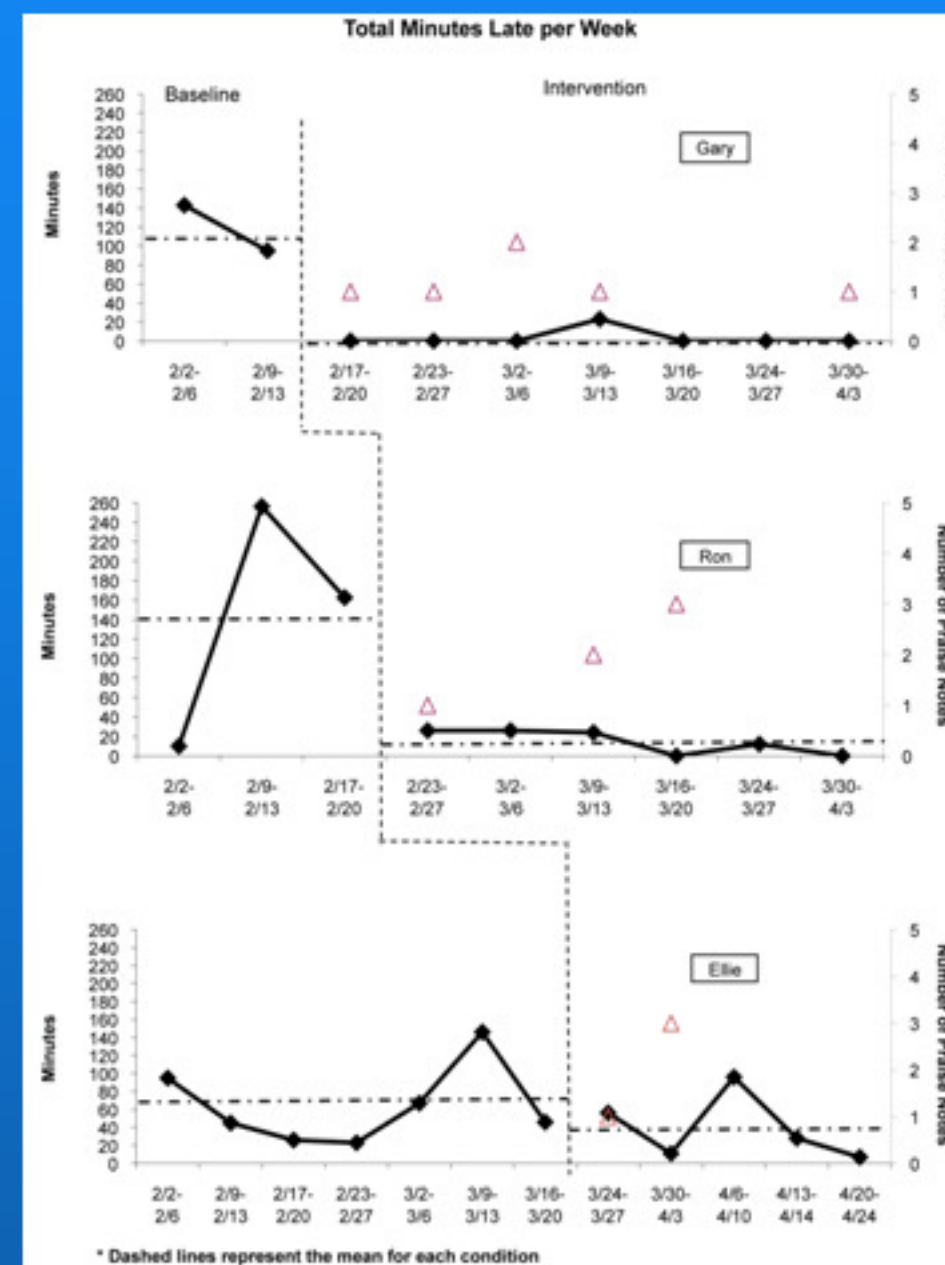
- Multiple baseline across students

Purpose

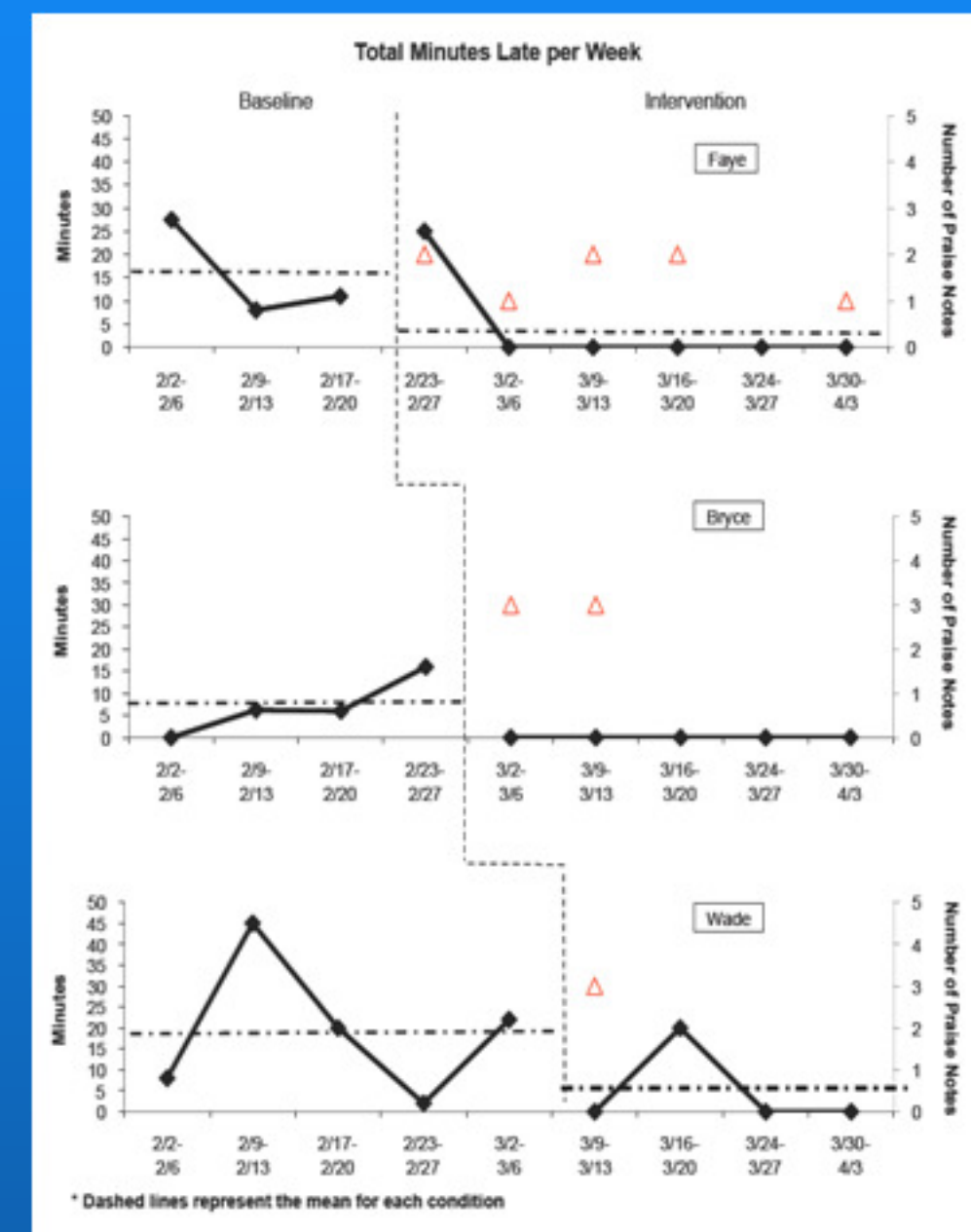
To evaluate the effect of teacher written praise notes on elementary school student on-time behavior.

Results

Severely Tardy Students



Moderately Tardy Students



	Average Minutes Late per Week		Decrease	Average Number of Notes/Week
	Baseline	Intervention		
Gary	119.00	3.29	97.24%	.86
Ron	142.95	14.67	89.74%	1.00
Ellie	63.99	33.62	47.47%	.80
Mean	108.65	17.19	84.18%	.89

	Average Minutes Late per Week		Decrease	Average Number of Notes/Week
	Baseline	Intervention		
Faye	15.49	4.17	73.10%	1.33
Bryce	7.06	0.00	100.00%	1.20
Wade	19.40	5.00	74.23%	.75
Mean	13.98	3.06	78.12%	1.09

*This study will soon be published in the journal *Intervention in School and Clinic*.

Procedures

SWPBS Context

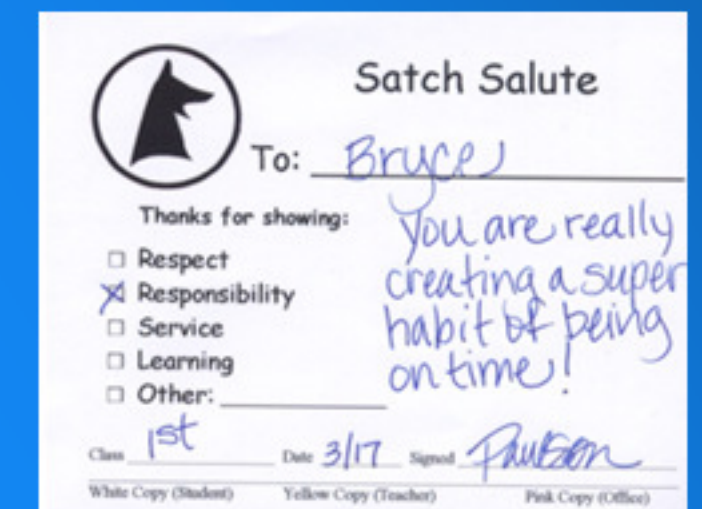
- Clear expectations
- Character development program
- Student recognition system
- Teacher written praise notes for respect, responsibility, service, and learning
- Students on time for the whole month received a reinforcer

Independent Variable

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

Dependent Variable

- Number of minutes late per week



Recommendations

- Important to select students who show a pattern of being late over several recent weeks.
- Reasons for tardiness and whether this would be an appropriate intervention should be discussed.
- To be implemented effectively, praise notes should:
 - Include specific statements about being on time
 - Be written consistently
 - Be used with reminders or reinforcers to help teachers be more consistent
- Other interventions (e.g., punishment) should be removed to decide if notes cause improvement.
- More research is needed in elementary schools.