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

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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.

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.

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

**Method**
- **Setting**
  - Urban K-6 elementary school
  - 646 students
  - 80% Caucasian
  - 25% low SES
  - 18% mobility
  - 6% Asian
  - 5% Other
- **Participants**
  - Each teacher selected a student exhibiting moderate to severe tardiness
- **Demographics**
  - **Academic Concerns**
    - Gary 189.00 3.29 97.44
    - Ron 142.95 14.87 89.74
    - Ellie 108.65 17.19 84.19
  - **Behavior Concerns**
    - Gary 189.00 3.29 97.44
    - Ron 142.95 14.87 89.74
    - Ellie 108.65 17.19 84.19

- **Design**
  - Multiple baseline across students

**Results**

** Severely Tardy Students**

**Moderately Tardy Students**

**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.

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