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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, it appears little has been done at the elementary school level to develop and investigate interventions targeted at increasing on-time behavior.

Purpose

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

Results

Severely Tardy Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Tardiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moderately Tardy Students

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Mobility</th>
<th>Tardiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wade</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants

Each teacher selected a student exhibiting moderate to severe tardiness.

Demographics

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

Design

- Multiple baseline across students

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 suggest 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