

Title: Investigating the Effects of Issuing Late Slips

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Abstract:

Issuing late slips to students over a period of fifteen weeks resulted in a 40% reduction in frequency of arriving late for Period One classes.

Question Posed:

How will encouraging students to reflect on their reasons for being late affect the frequency of arriving late for class?

Method of Investigation:

Baseline: Attendance records were examined for the researcher's Period One classes for semesters 2, 3, and 4 (October, 2009 – January, 2010). The records were used to determine the number of times students arrived more than five minutes late during their first period class, an estimate of the number of hours of class time missed due to lateness, and the number of students who were late at least once for class during the fifteen weeks. This information formed the baseline for the study.

Intervention: During the same period of time exactly one year later (October 2010 – January 2011), late slips were issued to students who arrived late, but before the first break. Due to barriers of time and focus, slips were issued only 50% of the time (36 of 74 occasions). The blank slip used appears as follows:

Name: _____
Date: _____
I was late because _____

Next time I can try _____

The purpose of the slip, which was carefully explained to students, was simply to help them become more aware of the frequency of being late, to reflect on their reasons for being late, and to help them

think of ways to prevent future incidents of lateness. Slips were completed by the student upon entering the class and immediately turned in to the instructor, who reviewed the information and stored the slips. Students knew that the slips were not shared with the administrators of the program.

Most of the slips contained typical reasons for being late: alarm clock problems, traffic delays, weather issues, late rides, delays due to children and so forth. Some of these were chronic problems, with the same student handing in consecutive slips with the same reasons, while other reasons were unique.

Almost always, students completed the form with reasonable information. On rare occasions a student completed the form with humorous information in what appeared to be an attempt to conceal the truth or avoid confronting the problem.

The same attendance data was collected during the current year (2010-11) as was collected in the baseline year (2009-10) and comparisons made.

Summary of Findings:

Over the fifteen weeks when late slips were issued, a total of 18 hours of class time was missed by the students collectively. (This includes only the time for *partial* first period absences. It does not include days when the *entire* first period was missed but students arrived for period two.) The 18 hours indicates an average of 14 minutes late per occasion.

During the baseline interval, students were late on 11% (90/802) of the possible occasions. This fell to 7% (74/1090) during the period when late slips were issued. ***This indicates a reduction of 40% in lateness.*** ("Possible occasions" is calculated by multiplying the number of students by the number of first periods during the fifteen weeks of the study. The number is substantially greater in the current academic year due to larger class sizes than during the baseline year.)

The number of students who were late at least once during the two intervals fell from 85% during the baseline period to only 38% during the intervention period. This indicates a reduction by 55% of students incurring at least one incident of being late.

Reflection On or Implications for Practice:

The study should be repeated next year with a higher priority given to handing out the late slips. The current data was collected based on issuing the slips 50% of the time. The number could be closer to 100% if a routine was established where students picked up the late slip themselves rather than relying on the instructor to remember and/or interrupt his teaching to issue the slip. Alternatively, the slips could be placed at the empty desk of absent student during attendance taking in the event that they arrive late.

The slips may be effectively used in conjunction with counsellor intervention in future semesters.