Tardy Hall
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Introduction

During the beginning of the school year, we had forty or more students coming to school late. Some of the teachers complained that students entering class after the class has started is disruptive to the flow of their lesson. The tardy hall was established to motivate students to make a conscious effort to get to school on time. The intent of tardy hall is to encourage students to report to school on time because what students are practicing in school, they tend to duplicate in the working environment. This past summer, of the four students who were employed by Xerox, three were fired because they refused to dress properly and could not get to work on time. When the students enter tardy hall they are not allowed to just sit and talk. Each student is required to prepare for his remaining class. They must have their books open, completing their homework, studying in order that they are doing more than the required minimum for their class.

They are also aware that missing the first period class is not acceptable, and are still responsible for those teachers’ assignments. If it is the students first time in tardy hall they are given a warning and told the rules they must follow. The second time a student returns to tardy hall we contact their parent by phone, and request their assistance in making sure that their child gets to school on time. When that student returns a third time they are given after school detention. The fourth visit to tardy hall will earn the student suspension and they must return to school with their parent or guardian for a conference with the cluster administrator.

Research Design

The research question of this action research study is: Will preventing students from attending their first period class improve the time they arrive to school on a daily bases? Will informing parents about their child’s tardiness and asking for their assistance in urging a prompt arrival time to school have an impact on the student’s behavior? When students experience an extrinsic motivating force such as tardy hall during the first period of his or her day, will this exercise be recognized as a challenge? Can Saturday detention induce an internal force that creates the desire to be punctual in coming to school?

Description for the Study

Each student at Bell Multicultural High School (BMHS) is assigned to a cluster according to his or her career interest. All ninth grade students are in the Prep Cluster because they haven't make their career choice at this level. If a
student is interested in math, engineering, science, or health careers, he or she will be placed in the Mesh Cluster. MCA stands for Multilingual Communications, and Arts Cluster. BUS stands for the Business cluster. This cluster concept is also used in the tardy hall setting.

Tardy Hall is normally held in the multipurpose room, which used to serve as the cafeteria for our students. The room is about 4000 sq feet of space. In the room there are eight vending machines containing sodas and snack food. There are also three large sofas in the room that the students are not allowed to sit on, because we didn't want them to be comfortable while in the tardy hall setting. We had eight or nine large round tables, of which we would use four. Each table was assigned to a cluster.

During the conference with the administrator and parent, a plan is developed that will aid the student in reaching the goal of arriving to school on time for the first period class. We have applied the principle of motivation, The Five "C" (Cf. Alpha Consulting).

- Content
- Choice
- Challenge
- Control
- Collaboration

Contextualization takes place when each student is made aware of the conditions linked to the continuation of coming to tardy hall. (1) Parental contact and involvement during the second visit to tardy hall. (2) After school detention for the third visit. (3) Suspension until the student returns to school with his or her parent for a meeting with the students cluster administrator. (Hopefully an agreement between the three—parent, student, and administrator—could be established that would aid the student in solving his or her tardiness problem.) (4) Saturday detention given for any student that visits tardy hall after suspension. Hopefully each student develops the understanding that we are presenting her or him with a formidable task or challenge that can be accomplished with just a little adjustment in her/his behavior. Tardy hall is a controlled environment, which limits the student's command of his surroundings. We are not trying to make students comfortable; they are only allowed to study. They can't go to their first period class.

The ledger for tardy hall is entered into the school database called Alpha 4. This database gives us the ability to sort each student by date, student number, first name or last name. After loading our data into Alpha 4, sorting and indexing it, as we want, this data is then transferred to Dbase3, which makes it possible to do the necessary calculations to identify the percentages of students attending tardy hall in the school year. We then change the data to a file and transfer it to Q-filer in the Report directory. The file name in the Report directory is A4 List. The reason for transforming the data file to Q-filer is to prepare it for printout in Word Perfect.
Analysis of Results

The total population of students attending BMHS was 627. Three-hundred and seventy-five of the 627 at some point during the school year had to come to tardy hall. Therefore, 60% of the student body entered tardy hall one or more times. From September to December of 1998, 236 students came to tardy hall. This number of students is equal to 38% of the student population. From December to June, 139 students came to tardy hall. Therefore 22% of the student population attended tardy hall during the second semester, which is a 16% difference, or 97 fewer students. The language proficiency of the 373 students that visit tardy hall, at least once, was divided into several parts. Two-hundred and ninety-seven students were ESL (English is a Second Language). This group is 63% of the 375 tardy hall student body. 78 students, or 21% of the student body, were native English-speaking.

When you observe the tardy hall records you will find that at the beginning of the second semester, the number of students coming to tardy hall dropped to an average of eight to ten students a day. The count stayed in that range for most of the third advisory. Near the end of the third advisory the number of students started to increase. Students started to tell me that their cluster administrator will not do anything to them. I talked to one of the administrators who told me that after talking to the parent once, they did not contact them again. The reason for this change in policy was because many parents who felt that being tardy to school was not a big enough issue to require the students to miss their first period class.

Implication for Teaching

I hope the attendance committee at BMHS resists backing down to the wishes of the parents and organizes some workshops for the PTA that will inform the parent as well as the students of the importance of time in this eurocentric society in which we live. As a teacher preparing students for the world of work, time constraints will always be part of my curriculum.

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