

THE IMPACT OF POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS ON  
TRUANCY AND TARDINESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by

Carissa R. Nusbaum

A Field Project Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

Master of Science in Education

Special Education

at

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh  
Oshkosh WI 54901-8621

January 2011

COMMITTEE APPROVAL

*Ken Cheng* Advisor

1-18-2011 Date Approved

*Stacy King* Member

1-18-2011 Date Approved

This project is dedicated to my mother who passed away during the course of my graduate studies. Mom, thank you for your unfailing moral support and for teaching me that anything is possible if you're willing to work for it. Mostly, thank you for your faith in me and for lending me your strength when I needed it.

I also must mention the man who helped me make this possible, my husband. You were a constant source of encouragement and inspiration through this entire process. I never would have reached this point if it wasn't for your support and you'll never know how much I appreciate it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I-INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Need for the Study .....	2
Definition of Terms.....	3
Limitations .....	4
Chapter II- LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
Historical Changes in School Discipline .....	7
Behavioral Interventions and Students with Disabilities .....	10
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports .....	11
Truancy and Chronic Tardiness .....	15
Chapter III- METHOD .....	20
Setting .....	20
Participants.....	20
Research Design.....	23
Reliability.....	24
Data Collection .....	24
Chapter IV- RESULTS .....	26
Overall Results.....	26
Group One.....	27
Group Two .....	28
Group Three .....	30
Conclusion .....	31
Chapter V- Discussion .....	32
Underlying Issues.....	32
Difficulties Presented.....	33
Implications for the Future.....	34
References .....	36
Appendices .....	40
Appendix A: Parent Information Letter .....	40
Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter.....	42

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
FIGURES	
Figure 1. Frequency of tardiness and truancy per week for all students.....	27
Figure 2. Frequency of Group One tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment.....	27
Figure 3. Students A, B and C tardiness and truancy per class period .....	28
Figure 4. Frequency of Group Two tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment .....	29
Figure 5. Students D, E and F tardiness and truancy per class period .....	29
Figure 6. Frequency of Group Three tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment .....	30
Figure 7. Students G, H and I tardiness and truancy per class period .....	31

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

In *Ulysses*, James Joyce wrote, “a man's errors are his portals of discovery.” This idea is quite relevant to the opportunity educators have to help adolescents learn about themselves through the choices they make. If students can learn to see their errors in judgment as a jumping off point for change, rather than events that are better forgotten, this will help shape their characters into adulthood. Hopefully, by helping students learn from their mistakes while they are still in high school, educators also can help them avoid making the same mistakes as adults. The idea of looking at mistakes as opportunities is rather new to the field of education, but as work in this area continues we see more advantages to helping students learn about themselves rather than punishing them for their mistakes.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Frequently students repeatedly make the same mistakes, such as poor attendance and tardiness, yet they rarely have the opportunity to reflect on the underlying reasons for these behaviors. By helping students view themselves through a positive lens, educators teach them that they can learn from their mistakes and then begin to change. However this is not the way poor choices are handled in high schools. Punitive actions are most often implemented for poor behavior, and the opportunity to help students learn from their mistakes is continually lost.

Two of the most prevalent problems in high schools are truancy and tardiness (“Student Absenteeism and Tardiness,” 1996; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning, 2009). Often, students have little to no ability to self-monitor or hold themselves accountable for their actions. Therefore, teachers must help students

reflect on these skills so they can learn about themselves. Additionally, truancy and tardiness are red flags for more serious behaviors in the future. In fact, truancy is considered the number one risk factor to predict dropping out and committing criminal and delinquent acts (Stover, 2005; Manual to Combat, 1996; Brandibas, Jeunier, Clanet, & Fouraste, 2004). By intervening with students who show the early signs of these behavior patterns, we are not only doing a service to the student, but to the community as a whole.

### **Need for the Study**

Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) teaches students to change their own behaviors (Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006; Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007). Though much research exists as to the impact of PBIS at the elementary level, information available at the high school level is limited (Bohanon et al., 2006; Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006). The use of PBIS to work specifically with students with disabilities is also limited (Freeman et al., 2006; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007).

Therefore, the need to study the impact of PBIS at the high school level and with students with disabilities is apparent. For these reasons, the purpose of this study is to consider the impact of positive intervention strategies on the truancy and tardiness of students with high incidence disabilities.

The short and long term educational outcomes for students with disabilities are issues that require serious scrutiny. The short term benefits of helping students change truancy patterns are improved academic performance and a greater sense of well-being at school. The long term benefits from changing these behaviors are increased percentage of school completion and a

decrease in involvement with the juvenile justice system. (Stover, 2005; Manual to Combat, 1996; Brandibas, Jeunier, Clanet, & Fouraste, 2004) For these reasons, the need to study ways in which students with disabilities can be taught positive behavioral strategies is apparent.

Students are often punished for poor behavior choices, but for students with disabilities these choices can be out of their immediate control. Legally, a student with a disability should not be punished for a behavioral choice that is related to their disability (*OSEP Technical Assistance*). Also, punishment is shown to have little to no impact in changing negative behavior for students with disabilities (Lashley & Tate, 2009). However, educators still need a way to deal with mistakes that students with disabilities make. For example, a student with a disability might show a pattern of tardiness and truancy due to low impulse control. Lack of self-control could be a major reason why this student receives special education services and is a skill this student must learn. By helping this student learn strategies to increase self-control and accountability, the student will improve his/her attendance. Therefore, there is a need to study the efficacy of positive behavior interventions to help students learn from their mistakes, gain self-control, and acquire accountability to be successful in school and in life.

### **Definition of Terms**

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is a district wide or schoolwide system that strives to improve school culture and student behavior through positive means. The PBIS system offers three levels of support (Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006; Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007). The primary level is aimed at all students and consists of schoolwide behavior expectations that are taught and monitored. Examples of supports at this level are school rules, routines, or physical

changes to the school setting to increase positive behavior. The secondary level of support is aimed at a smaller portion of the school population. At the secondary level you find small groups of students working on similar needs or the implementation of simple individual plans. The most intense level of support is at the tertiary level which focuses on a small number of students with the greatest needs. Tertiary level support is for students who do not respond to primary or secondary interventions. The students in this study have not responded to schoolwide or group interventions at the primary or secondary level. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the most individualized and intense tertiary level of support has been employed.

Truancy is defined as an unexcused absence from class. Tardiness is defined as an arrival to a class after the bell that signals the beginning of class. If a student enters class one minute or forty minutes late, this is considered tardy. Absence from class due to tardiness is considered a truant behavior.

High-incidence disabilities are those disabilities seen in the highest percentage among students with disabilities. Disabilities in this category may include learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral disabilities, and other health impairments such as ADHD.

### **Limitations**

The greatest limitation to this study was the nature of the problem itself. When students have serious problems with truancy and tardiness the underlying reasons are generally very personal and individualized. Since the family and other environmental backgrounds of the students were all unique, the impact of positive behavioral interventions in school was tempered by other uncontrolled factors. This is often true at the tertiary level of intervention. For this

reason along with the relative small sample size, the outcomes from this study are not readily generalizable to other students.

This chapter briefly identified the research problem, the need for this study, its limitations, and definition of terms. In the upcoming chapter a more detailed review of related literature is provided. Described in chapter three is the single-subject, multi-baseline study that examined the question if positive interventions are effective for nine high school students of varying ages, ethnicity and sex with high-incidence disabilities at an urban high school. The outcomes of the nine week study are detailed in chapter four with an explanation and discussion following in chapter five.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

There are many things to consider regarding positive behavior interventions in a school setting, including historical and legal factors. One might begin by thinking about how the notion of discipline within a school setting has evolved over time. This change has been seen as discipline that is delivered from a punitive approach to an evolution of discipline in schools. The laws surrounding disciplinary actions for students with disabilities have also changed. With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), behavior management of students with disabilities has been refocused from punitive to an individual and positive perspective (*OSEP Technical Assistance*; "Q and A: Questions," 2009; Melvin, Korthase, & Marquoit, 2005; Lashley & Tate, 2009).

One method that school districts have begun to employ more frequently when working with students who present behavioral challenges is the use of positive behavioral interventions. Positive behavioral interventions on a schoolwide level are somewhat new and revolutionary in the world of school discipline. These student-focused and strength-based approaches to working with students with maladaptive behavior have turned the idea of punishment on its head. While the idea of schoolwide positive behavioral supports is relatively new, their efficacy has been consistently supported by research. Despite the fact that a great majority of research has been done at the elementary level, there is a growing body of literature related to the unique challenges faced within the high school population (Bohanon et al., 2006; Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006).

The research that is unique to the high school setting is especially helpful when considering intervening with issues that are most prevalent in the high school setting such as truancy and tardiness (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning, 2009). These two problems certainly are not new among high school students; however, there is an alarming discrepancy in these incidences between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Much research points to tardiness and truancy as risk-factors for other maladaptive behavior such as dropping out and criminal activity. Interestingly, the research also points to a link between truancy and punitive discipline, such as out-of-school suspensions, whereby the suspension is seen by the student as confirmation that he need not attend school regularly and is somewhat justified in his poor attendance (Stover, 2005; Manual to Combat, 1996). By examining these relationships one can see the need to change the way discipline is delivered in school in order to improve outcomes for students.

### **Historical Changes in School Discipline**

In the past, many school professionals have used coercion in an attempt to modify student behavior (Melvin, Korthase, & Marquoit, 2005). These interactions generally focused on what students were doing wrong and the areas in which they were lacking. Rewards were offered for appropriate behavior and consequences were delayed if the appropriate behavior could be demonstrated. These interactions continued until the student did not live up to his end of the bargain and consequences were delivered when the poor behavior persisted. Historically, staff was rarely encouraged to delve into what was causing the maladaptive behavior to occur. This would seem in line with treating the symptoms instead of looking for a cure to the problem.

As time went on teachers were encouraged to talk to students in a one-on-one setting when dealing with negative behavior. In many of these exchanges between students and staff, the staff had tried their best to tell students what they needed to do in order to be successful.

However, teachers have historically failed at listening to the students' needs. Teachers and school staff have focused on the observable behavior, while missing the underlying antecedents to the behavior. Melvin, Korthase, & Marquoit (2005) explain that starting around 1999 that began to change. Around that time schools started a more child-centered focus to discipline. Through this evolution staffs were encouraged to view poor behavior as opportunities to effect meaningful changes in student behavior rather incidents which required punishment. By employing these changes, schools transformed from environments of control and confrontation to settings that focused on students' strengths. Melvin, Korthase, & Marquoit (2005) also noted that the relationships among staff and students, staff and staff, and students and students all improved. A noted increase was also shown in the empathy that the students showed for one another in a peer tutoring/mentoring program.

Lashley & Tate (2009) explained that the events at Columbine High school led to implementation of zero-tolerance policies at schools throughout the nation. The understandable fear that came about from events at Columbine led to reactionary policies that were not well reasoned. The idea behind zero-tolerance policies was that all students would be treated fairly and all behavior would be dealt with in an equitable way. However this is not the reality of what has happened. In some cases zero-tolerance policies have been distorted and led to students receiving major penalties, such as out of school suspensions, for minor infractions. For example, tobacco use at schools has been a problem for many years. However, with the enactment of the

Gun and Drug Free School Act (GDFSFA) students can now receive an out of school suspension for an age-old problem. This has not helped curb the problem either. In fact Lashley & Tate argue that zero-tolerance policies have had the most negative effect on the students who need the most help.

Lashley & Tate (2009) advocated for the idea of using education, equity, and empowerment to help students with poor behavior. They found that many times schools used a more positive, student-based approach only after the punitive approach was not successful. Lashley & Tate stated that schools were more effective in dealing with poor student behavior when they used a pro-active approach that balanced all aspects of the students' lives. These ideas seem to be directly related to positive behavior interventions.

Teachers play a critical role in the area of discipline. In the past teachers were seen as a moral model to which students should aspire. Teachers were also considered the parent figure in the absence of the parent at school which made them an automatic authority figure (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). However, this perception of the teacher has shifted as the ways students and parents view teachers has changed. Teachers are no longer automatically able to assume the role of an authority figure, but rather, teachers must build relationships with their students. When examining students' thoughts about teachers, it has been reported that the existence of a positive relationship with a teacher is necessary in order for the teacher to be seen as a legitimate authority figure. Gregory & Ripski (2008) discovered that the teachers who were viewed as "legitimate authority figures" by students had the lowest number of discipline referrals from their classes. These same teachers also were able to reach students with whom other teachers were not successful.

## **Behavioral Interventions and Students with Disabilities**

Within the IDEA law are a number of protections for students with disabilities. For instance, students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting possible which should be determined on an individual basis (OSEP Technical Assistance; "Q and A: Questions," 2009). When students with disabilities violate a school policy, they are subject to the same rules as the general student body; however their behavioral needs must be addressed individually when considering consequences. Specifically, students cannot receive a major consequence for a behavior that is a manifestation of their disability. School personnel also must consider that when a student has been suspended for more than ten school days, this is considered a change in their educational placement and the students individual education plan (IEP) must be reviewed to determine if the student is appropriately placed (OSEP Technical Assistance).

These unique protections for students with disabilities have led many administrators and school personnel to feel that there is a separate system of discipline for students with disabilities (Lashley & Tate, 2009). However, Lashley & Tate argue that this perception can be changed if the major focus of discipline for students with disabilities is placed on the students' strengths in order to change the behavior instead of creating a temporary fix to an isolated incident. This is one of the major themes that aligned the GDFSA and IDEA. Students with disabilities are not able to create major policy violations, such as carrying a weapon or drugs to school, and still allowed to stay in school even if it is a manifestation of their disability. The way this was reconciled was by school districts creating alternative educational placements for students so their education was not interrupted.

Positive behavior interventions relate directly to the idea of focusing on positive manners for dealing with discipline for students with disabilities. Blood & Neel (2007) reviewed the functional behavior assessments (FBA) and behavior intervention plans (BIP) of 46 students in order to determine how these plans related to the tertiary level of support of the PBIS program. Since the tertiary level of support is intended to support students who display the most severe, chronic, and intense behaviors, it was logical to assume that many of the students in need of this support would be students with emotional and behavioral disorders. As part of students' IEP's, FBAs should be completed to ensure that students' unique and individual needs are considered (*OSEP Technical Assistance; "Q and A: Questions,"* 2009). This FBA should then be used to develop a BIP that addresses specific behaviors and details a plan that is usable by staff to address the behavior. However, Blood and Neel found that very few BIPs were actually usable documents. Instead they were written as a list of suggestions that teachers could use rather than a well designed plan of intervention. By using the tertiary level of support and documenting these strategies on a student's BIP, schools are better able to meet the unique needs of students in a positive manner.

### **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports**

#### **What is PBIS?**

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is a systematic plan of intervention to handle student behaviors on a school-wide basis (Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006; Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007; *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*). The theory of PBIS focuses on connecting student's behavior with its root cause. In an attempt to determine the root cause of the

behavior three distinct levels of support are employed based on the severity of the student's needs. Then efforts are made to change the behavior through positive and empowering means. This differs from other theories of behavior intervention which primarily focused on changing observable behavior through punitive means.

Level one of the PBIS system involves school-wide strategies. Some examples of these school-wide interventions might be establishing a positive school culture, teaching behavior expectations to the entire student body, and acknowledging student behavior. Generally, level one interventions do not require extensive training of staff in order to be implemented. These school-wide supports generally impact about 80% of the student population (Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007).

For students who are not responsive to level one supports, group level or secondary supports are implemented. These supports are generally required for about 15% of the school population and require more training of staff. Examples of these interventions might include instructing small groups of students with similar needs in a particular area of concern (i.e. an anger management group) or focusing on a particular grade level or class (Cohen, Kincaid, & Elfner Childs, 2007; Freeman et al., 2006; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007).

A tertiary level of support is required for about 5% of the student body with the most significant behavior needs. The interventions at the tertiary level are intensive and individualized to the student. Interventions done at this level require a thorough functional behavior assessment and therefore also require a highly trained staff member or team in order to be implemented effectively (Freeman et al., 2006; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007).

### **PBIS at the High School Level**

The implementation of PBIS at the high school level presents a number of unique challenges. While the use of PBIS at the high school level is not well documented, more and more studies are being done in high schools to replicate what already took place in elementary schools. The challenges at the high school level can be related to the structure and size of the high school, the focus of the staff in high school and the unique characteristics of adolescent students. Bohanon et al. (2006) showed that the size of a school population has a positive relationship with the number and severity of behavior problems. In larger schools there tend to be more referrals for disobedience and more instances of tardiness and truancy. This directly relates to high schools that are generally much larger than elementary and middle schools.

Bohanon et al. also found that teachers at the high school level are reluctant to directly teach social skills. With increased pressure on teachers to achieve improvement in student test scores, few teachers feel there is time to take away from their content area to teach behavior expectations that they feel the kids should already have. Also, few teachers at the high school level felt adequately trained to directly teach social skills (Bohanon et al., 2006; Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning 2009).

Finally, the challenges of adolescence compounds the difficulties of implementing PBIS at the high school level. Many students begin to stray from large group identity in favor of an identity that goes along with their smaller group of friends. As students strive to create a sense of autonomy, this smaller group of peers can have a tremendous influence on the decisions they make which can be either positive or negative. However, the search for autonomy can work in the favor of students who are receiving secondary and tertiary levels of support. The process of

goal setting with students at the secondary and tertiary level of support has shown improvement in student's self-control and confidence to make positive decisions for themselves (Galotti, Kozberg, & Gustafson, 2009; Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007).

### **PBIS and Behavior Intervention Plans**

As previously stated about 5% of the student population require intensive and individualized support at the tertiary level (Bohanon, Fenning, Eber, & Flannery, 2007). This process of designing an individualized plan lends itself directly to the process by which BIPs are created for students with IEPs. Also, IDEA has encouraged schools to make a diligent effort to approach behavior modification for students with disabilities through the students' strengths rather than their deficits (*OSEP Technical Assistance; "Q and A: Questions," 2009*). This ideal seems to align directly with the theory of PBIS. Clearly, application of PBIS can benefit students with disabilities.

Using a case study approach, Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning (2009) examined the effectiveness of the tertiary level of support for a student with emotional and behavioral difficulties. This student was quite unmotivated at school, but when asked why he attended school he said that he came to school to learn. By providing intense and individual support to this student, the team, including the student and his father, was able to create a plan for his future and reconnect him with family support that had been lacking. This student was able to recuperate some of his lacking credits and enroll in a GED program after some time. Had the school only considered the student's observable behavior, they may have judged him as simply lazy and his outcomes would not have been positive. Bohanon et al., (2006) also found that PBIS provided the consistency and structure that many students with disabilities need in order to survive in a

large group setting. Even though many students with disabilities still required the more intensive secondary and tertiary levels of support, they benefited from the school-wide support offered at the primary level of PBIS.

### **Truancy and Chronic Tardiness**

Consistent school attendance is shown to be the number one indicator of school success (Conley & Enomoto, 2009). This is somewhat intuitive in that if students are not present, they cannot benefit from teacher instruction or exposure to the material being taught. In the era of No Child Left Behind, attendance has assumed an even more prominent role since this particular data is now used to determine annual yearly progress (Stover, 2005; Railsback, 2004). Furthermore, much of school funding is tied to attendance so one can see the importance of having students at school consistently (Railsback, 2004).

#### **Definition and Background of Truancy and Tardiness**

Students are considered truant any time they have an unexcused absence from school, for a class period or an entire school day. If a student enters a class late this is considered a tardy and is also a form of truancy. Students are considered chronically truant or tardy any time they have five or more unexcused absences in a semester (Stover, 2005). While this problem is not new, the rate of truancy has grown more serious over the years with the numbers in 2005 showing 78% of high school students in Milwaukee, Wisconsin considered habitually truant. Studies have also shown that a large percentage of crime that is committed during school hours is done so by students who are truant from school. These studies also pointed out that truancy is considered the number one risk factor in juvenile delinquent behavior and risk of dropping out (Stover, 2005; Manual to Combat, 1996; Brandibas, Jeunier, Clanet, & Fouraste, 2004). A district

attorney in California is quoted in saying, "I've never seen a gang member who wasn't a truant first" (Manual to Combat, 1996).

As the rates of truancy have become more serious so have the consequences. In the state of Minnesota, for example, a student's chronic truancy can prevent him from earning a driver's license. However, Railsback (2004) found that punitive policies for dealing with truancy seemed to have an adverse effect on a student's attendance, making it less likely that the student's attendance would improve. In fact, the attendance policies enforced by some school districts have had such an adverse effect on students that they have been called "the pipeline to prison" because of the eventual outcomes for many students (Manual to Combat, 1996).

While the problem with tardiness does not have as many societal effects as truancy, it too is a major issue in many schools. When students enter a class late, they will mostly likely interfere with the learning of the other students. This happens in a variety of ways including the teacher stopping the class to talk to the student or the student creating a major disruption upon entering that forces the teacher to stop instruction ("Student Absenteeism and Tardiness," 1996). Like the policies employed to combat truancy, the punitive nature of tardiness policies have been shown an adverse effect on student attendance ("Student Absenteeism and Tardiness," 1996). This seems to be a more serious issue in urban school districts and among students of lower socioeconomic status (Railsback, 2004).

### **The Antecedents to Truancy and Tardiness**

The reasons for truancy and tardiness are as diverse as the student population. Many studies have shown that the causes for truancy and tardiness are not simple to identify and often

involve multiple underlying issues (Boles, Biglan, & Smolkowski, 2009; Manual to Combat, 1996; Stover, 2005; DeSocio et al., 2007; Railsback, 2004; Gastic, 2008).

The antecedents to truancy and tardiness can be grouped into two main categories: internal to the student and external to the student. Reasons for truancy and tardiness that have been cited that could be considered internal to the student include substance abuse, depression, emotional problems, health problems, and learning problems. Examples of external factors that contribute to truancy include peer pressure, lack of family support, lack of daycare for dependent children or siblings, or lack of belonging to the school culture. While this list is not all inclusive, these seemed to be the major factors that came up consistently across the literature (Boles, Biglan, & Smolkowski, 2009; Stover, 2005; DeSocio et al., 2007; Railsback, 2004; Gastic, 2008). Boles, Biglan & Smolkowski (2009) and Gastic (2008) found that in most cases of truancy the teacher's perceptions for the reason a student is truant and the reality of why a student is truant are generally not aligned.

### **Truancy and Students with Disabilities**

Truancy has been recognized as a major problem among students with disabilities because of the long term risk of students of dropping out (Stover, 2005; DeSocio et al., 2007). Due to the disproportionate prevalence of truancy, suspension and dropping out among students with disabilities the Department of Public Instruction for the state of Wisconsin has developed a list of twenty one indicators upon which special education programs throughout the state are evaluated, three of which deal directly with student attendance and discipline (*State Performance Plan*, 2008). Indicators one and two deal directly with graduation rates and dropout rates among students with disabilities. The goal for both indicators is to correct the disproportionate number

of students with disabilities who do not graduate with a regular diploma compared to their non-disabled peers. Indicator four monitors the rate of suspension and expulsion in school districts. The goal for indicator four is to decrease the number of school districts that have a disproportionate amount of their suspensions and expulsions occurring among student with disabilities.

### **PBIS, Truancy and Tardiness**

Past studies of the impact of PBIS on truancy have been promising. The targeted interventions at the tertiary level seem to have the most impact since the students with the most severe truancy issues tend to fall into the 5% of students who require tertiary support. The continuum of supports that is offered by PBIS seems to have a positive impact on students (Railsback, 2004). These studies of PBIS, however, have not shown the same positive impact on the rate of tardiness for students. This could be for a variety of reasons. The most important reason might be that the issue of tardiness is generally not considered as serious as truancy and is therefore not treated with the same level of intensity. Tardiness is not directly related to antisocial behavior as truancy is; it is usually seen as more of an annoyance to teachers and at times is disregarded and not viewed as a serious behavior issue (DeSocio et al., 2007; Hartnett, 2007-2008).

The research on the use of PBIS to impact specifically tardiness and truancy are limited. However, much research has been done that offers insight into ways to combat truancy and tardiness. Many of the suggestions offered coincide with the positive nature of PBIS despite the fact that they were not done within the three-level framework of PBIS. Some examples of positive strategies offered to combat truancy include: establishing mentor relationships,

following up with students, creating incentives, getting feedback from students, working with parents, and creating hope for students' futures (DeSocio et al., 2007; Hartnett, 2007-2008).

Through this review of the literature a need to study the efficacy of positive interventions to combat truancy and tardiness for students with disabilities is seen. The Office of Special Education Programs for the United States has established that truancy occurs at disproportionate rates among students with disabilities. However, high schools are not adequately equipped to meet these challenges with the current tools available (Bohanon et al., 2006; Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning 2009). Described in chapter three is a study intended to begin answer the question if positive interventions are effective to decrease truancy for students with high-incidence disabilities at the high school level.

## Chapter Three

### Method

Chapter one examined the impact of positive interventions on tardiness and truancy of students with high incidence disabilities at the high school level. Chapter two reviewed related literature and found a need to decrease truancy and tardiness among high school students. This chapter describes the setting, the research design including independent and dependent variables, reliability and validity, and data collection procedures.

#### Setting

The study was conducted at a large urban high school in a north central state. The enrollment for the 2008-2009 school year was 2,196 students and the school district was comprised of 20,573 students. The student body at the high school was 76% white, 3% African American, 14% Hispanic, 1% Native American and 7% Asian, which is similar to the school district demographics. Thirty percent of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch and 550 students in the school district were homeless by February of the 2008-2009 school year (*Public School Review, 2008-09*)

According to school district statistics, during the 2008-09 school year, the average attendance rate for the school district was 94%. The drop-out rate was 3.86%, and 78% of eligible students graduated with a regular diploma. The percentage of students who were considered habitually truant was 16.2%.

#### Participants

With the attendance office, IEP teachers and classroom teachers, the researcher identified three students during the first three weeks of school who had higher incidence of tardiness or

truancy than other students. A week later three more students were identified, and a week later three more students were identified. For the purposes of this study, the nine participants were placed into three groups of three based on when they were recommended for the intervention by their IEP teacher or classroom teacher. A detailed description of each student is given below.

Student A is a seventeen-year-old, Hispanic female in 11<sup>th</sup> grade with a learning disability. Student A is bilingual and Spanish is her native language. She is in the Special Education environment for 60 percent of her school day. She reads at approximately a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. Student A was initially referred for special education in 1<sup>st</sup> grade due to academic delays in all subject areas.

Student B is a fifteen-year-old, African-American female in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a specific learning disability. Student B participates in the Special Education environment for approximately 60% of her school day. She reads at approximately a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level. Student B was initially referred for special education in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade due to delays in reading and writing.

Student C is a seventeen-year-old, Hispanic male in 11<sup>th</sup> grade with a specific learning disability and speech/language disability. Student C is bilingual, and his native language is Spanish. His reading level is not easily determined as he scored too low on the Scholastic Reading Inventory for a score to be given. He is in the Special Education Environment for 66% of his school day. Student C was initially referred for Special Education in 10<sup>th</sup> grade when he moved to the United States from Mexico.

Student D is a fourteen-year-old, Caucasian male in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with an emotional/behavioral disability. Student D participates in the Special Education environment for

55% of his school day. He reads at approximately a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. Student D was initially referred for Special Education in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade due to uncontrolled behaviors in the classroom.

Student E is a fourteen-year-old, Hispanic male in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a specific learning disability. He is in the Special Education environment for 44% of the day and participates in two co-taught regular education classes in which he also has contact with a special education teacher. He reads at approximately a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. Student E was initially referred for Special Education in 7<sup>th</sup> grade due to delays in math.

Student F is a sixteen-year-old, African-American male in 10<sup>th</sup> grade with a specific learning disability and a speech/language disability. He is in the Special Education environment for 44% of the day and has one co-taught regular education class in which he has contact with a special education teacher. He reads at approximately a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level. Student F was initially referred for Special Education in 6<sup>th</sup> grade due to delays in reading and writing.

Student G is a sixteen-year-old, Caucasian male in 10<sup>th</sup> grade with an emotional/behavioral disability. He is in the Special Education environment for 55% of the day and has one team-taught class. He reads at approximately a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. He was initially referred for Special Education in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade due to social adjustment issues and health concerns, but he did not qualify for Special Education services at that time. He was referred again in 6<sup>th</sup> grade due to uncontrolled behaviors in the classroom. At that time he was identified as having an emotional/behavioral disability.

Student H is a fifteen-year-old, African-American male in 10<sup>th</sup> grade with a specific learning disability and a speech/language disability. He is in the Special Education environment for 44% of the day and has one team-taught class. He reads at approximately a 1st grade level.

He was initially referred for Special Education in 9<sup>th</sup> grade after he moved from Jamaica with his family. At that time his mom expressed concerns about delays in reading and writing.

Student I is a fourteen-year-old, African American male in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with an emotional/behavioral disability. He participates in the Special Education environment for 66% of the day. He reads at approximately a 1<sup>st</sup> grade level. He was initially referred for Special Education in 5<sup>th</sup> grade due to uncontrolled behaviors in the school setting, but his mother refused to give permission for testing at that time. He was referred again in 7<sup>th</sup> grade for similar issues and was identified with an emotional/behavior disability.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a multiple-baseline single-subject design. The independent variable was the behavior interventions that were used for each student. The interventions were grouped as positive interventions. This included such strategies as student self-monitoring of attendance, goal writing and reflection, student empowerment and responsibility for choices made. The dependent variable was the rate of truancy and tardiness for the students who participated in the study. Baseline data was gathered for the first three weeks of the 2010-2011 school year. The interventions began with three students during the fourth week of school, continued with three more students during the fifth week of school and a final group of three students was added during the sixth week of school. The starting point for students was based on the severity of their attendance issues with the students with the highest rates of truancy starting first. Data was gathered through the ninth week of school.

The researcher met with the students individually a minimum of once per week to reflect, and review their attendance. Specific goals were then recorded to target the hours of the day in which students had the most difficulty arriving to class on time.

### **Reliability/Validity**

The attendance data was gathered from a computerized attendance system that is used by teachers school-wide during all class periods. Therefore, the researcher relied on other teachers to keep accurate attendance records during the day. One could consider a possible issue that could occur with the reliability of the data since all teachers have different routines for taking attendance. Since the computerized program showed the hours that attendance was not taken for students, teachers who did not keep accurate attendance records were contacted directly to track the participating students' attendance.

By using a multiple-baseline design the chance of the same external factor affecting all of the students was decreased. This increased the validity of the study by showing the impact of the interventions when started at different intervals.

### **Data Collection**

Student attendance reports were printed weekly. Since the interventions were considered routine educational practice, informed consent was not required for the students to participate. However an information sheet was sent home to parents of participating students explaining the interventions that were employed and how their child was selected to participate. Approval for this project to be conducted at the school site was granted by the school principal and the department chairperson for the school's Special Education department. IRB approval was required in order to conduct this study. The IRB approval letter can be found in appendix A.

In order to maintain confidentiality, all student information was coded as Students A-I. No specific identifying information for the students or school was used in the report. Attendance records were kept in the teacher's private workspace which is only accessible to teachers and staff by key.

At the conclusion of the nine week study, students' incidences of truancy and tardiness were tabulated by week. The following chapter contains a detailed description of the students' attendance data along with graphic representations of the data. The data begins with an overall picture of the results of the study followed by a more specific description for each student.

## Chapter Four

### Results

After six weeks of intervention the results of positive interventions for decreasing tardiness and truancy were gathered. The data were delineated by group. The data are presented first as an overall depiction for the entire group. Later the data are discussed by group and more information is presented regarding individual students. A discussion of the results follows in chapter five.

As stated in chapter three, the baseline phase began during week one for all students and continued through the implementation of interventions, which was staggered. The interventions for group one began with students A, B and C during the fourth week of school, continued for group two with students D, E and F during the fifth week of school and for group three with student G, H and I during the sixth week of school. The grouping of the students was based on when their IEP teacher or classroom teacher recommended them for the intervention.

#### Overall Results

Figure one shows the overall results for students from all groups over nine school weeks. The graph is divided by baseline phase and treatment phase for each group and shows the overlaps in baseline and treatment until all groups reached the treatment phase. One can see that the incidences of tardiness and truancy tended to trend downward from the baseline data phase with the lowest occurrences happening during the eighth week. However, a noted increase in tardiness /truancy occurred during the ninth week. The number during week nine still remained below the peak that occurred during the fourth week of data collection.

Tardiness and truancy are grouped on the y-axis as tardiness is considered a truant behavior at this school. Also the two behaviors overlap in many instances making a more compelling argument to combine the two numbers. The graphs for the separate groups present the data consistent with the overall group graph.

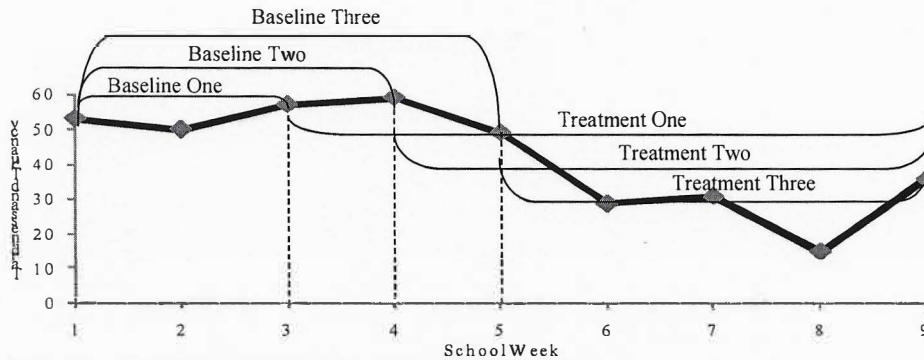


Figure 1. Frequency of tardiness and truancy per week for all students.

### Group One

Group one consisted of three participants: student A, student B and student C. Baseline data was collected for three weeks, and then positive interventions were implemented for following six weeks. The results of the intervention are shown in Figure two which represents the frequency of tardiness and truancy per student per school week.

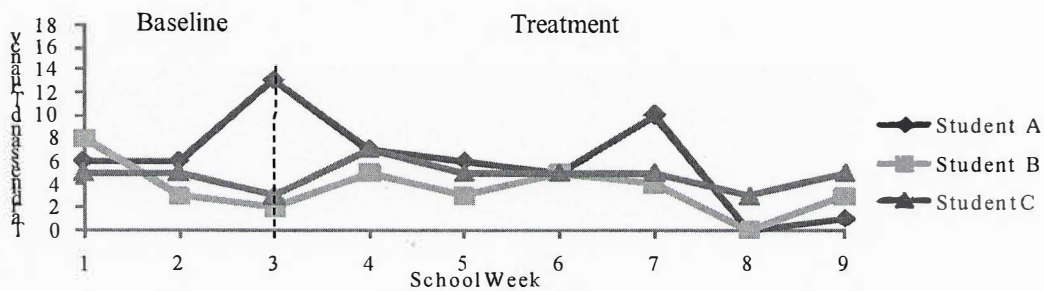


Figure 2. Frequency of Group One tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment

Figure two shows the frequency of tardiness and truancy each student had during the school weeks listed below. One can see frequency of tardiness and truancy for all students was

the lowest during the eighth week of school. It's interesting to note that the increase in tardiness and truancy during the first week of the intervention for students B and C is inconsistent with the dramatic decrease for student A.

Figure three is included to show behavior patterns that emerged for each student over the nine weeks. The graph shows the frequency of tardiness and truancy per class period for each student over the nine weeks. For example, if one removes the instances of tardiness and truancy for student C for first hour, the severity of the tardy/truant behavior is less apparent. Trends over time tended to emerge for each student making it easier to address these specific issues. It's also interesting to note the increased frequency of tardiness and truancy for the hour that follows each students' lunch period, which is denoted with an L on the x-axis.

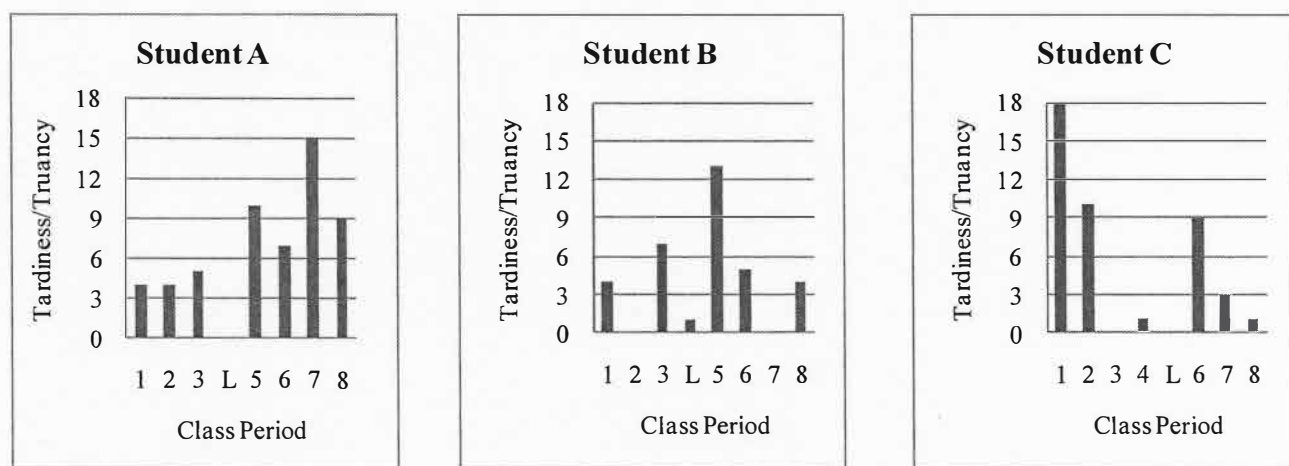


Figure 3. Students A, B and C tardiness and truancy per class period

## Group Two

Group two consisted of three participants: student D, student E and student F. Baseline data was collected for four weeks, and then the positive interventions were implemented for following five weeks. The results of the intervention are shown in Figure four which represents the frequency of tardiness and truancy per student per school week.

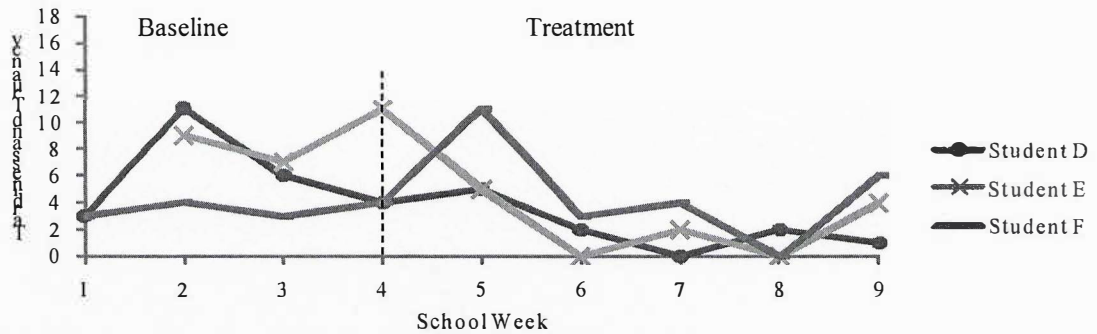


Figure 4. Frequency of Group Two tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment

As shown in Figure four, similar patterns of attendance emerged from group two with an increase in tardiness and truancy during the first week of treatment and a slight increase during the last week of treatment. Note that student E was not enrolled in the participating school during the first week of baseline; therefore the baseline for this student was only three weeks. It's interesting to note the dramatic decrease in tardiness and truanicies for student E during weeks five and six.

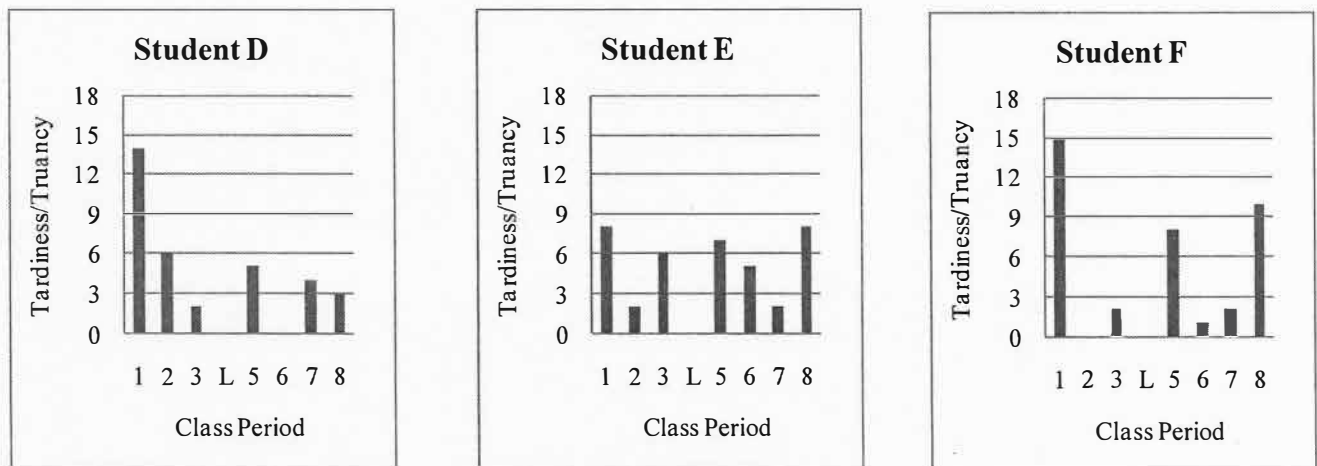


Figure 5. Students D, E and F tardiness and truancy per class period

Figure five shows the emergence of attendance problems in specific class periods for students D and E. However, the issue of tardiness and truancy seemed to be more evenly distributed across class periods for student E.

### Group Three

Group three consisted of three participants: student G, student H and student I. Baseline data was collected for five weeks, and then the positive interventions were implemented for following four weeks. The results of the intervention are shown in Figure six which represents the frequency of tardiness and truancy per student per school week.

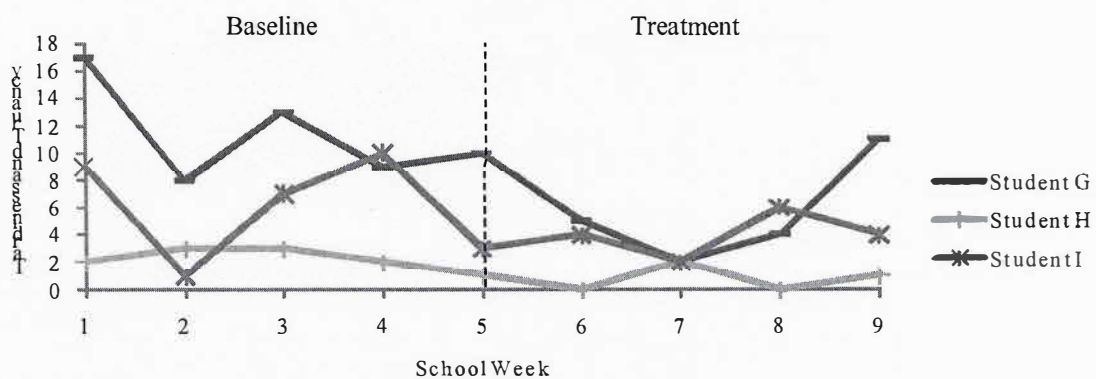


Figure 6. Frequency of Group Three tardiness and truancy in baseline and treatment

Figure seven shows the number of tardies and truancy per class for each student over the nine weeks. Patterns of attendance were similar to those of students in groups one and two. Through this graph one can note the severity of the tardiness and truancy problem for student G as it occurs across the day during many different class periods. However, student H's attendance issues seemed to be concentrated in two main class periods.

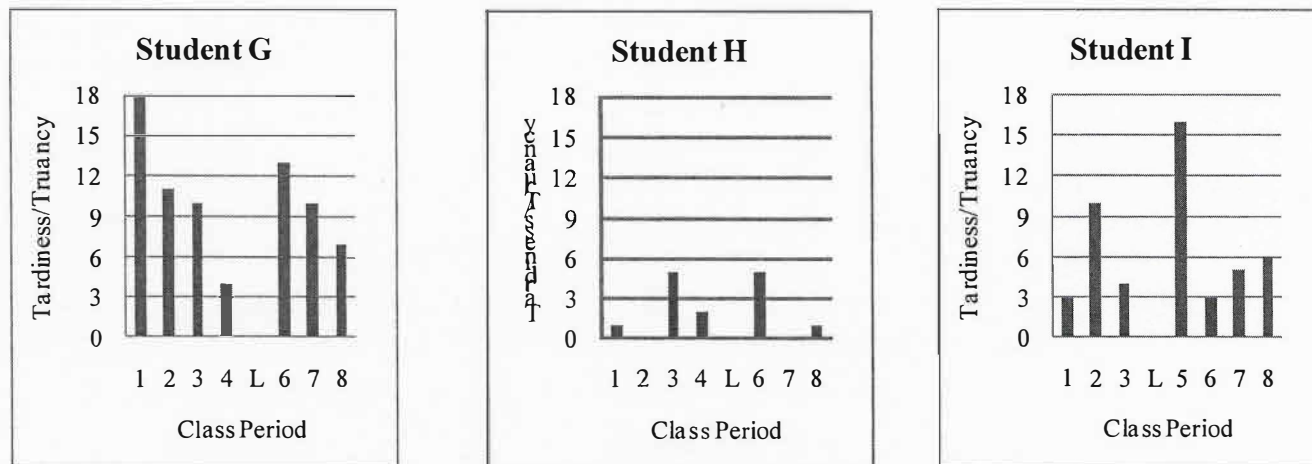


Figure 7. Students G, H and I tardiness and truancy per class period

### Conclusion

Through the Figures presented one can see the results of the intervention during the varying baseline and treatment times. The results also show the trends in attendance patterns for each group and for individual students. The results for students were not consistent when considered on an individual basis; however an overall decrease was seen in the frequency of tardiness and truancy for the group when all the data was combined. A discussion of the implications and limitations of this data follows in chapter five.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

The goal of this study was to decrease the instances of tardiness and truancy for students with high-incidence disabilities. The students were identified as having a difficulty with this issue and therefore chosen to participate. The results seem to show the relative success in decreasing the instances of tardiness and truancy in the short term, however the effect of the treatment did not appear to last. The reasons for this fading effect of the treatment are unknown, but one could speculate that they are as varied as the underlying issues to truancy and tardiness. Additionally, the results of this study have some practical implications for ways the information could be better coded and therefore addressed.

#### **Underlying Factors**

Much research exists that demonstrates the vast number of underlying factors that lead to truancy. In many cases one student will deal with many overlapping issues that make it difficult to get to school regularly and on time. (Boles, Biglan, & Smolkowski, 2009; Manual to Combat, 1996; Stover, 2005; DeSocio et al., 2007; Railsback, 2004; Gastic, 2008). This finding was consistent with the participants in this study.

The underlying factors tended to fall into two categories: external factor and internal factors. External factors included problems with getting up in the morning, needing to use the restroom, problems with lockers, and difficulty navigating the hallways in a timely manner. These external factors seemed easier to remedy because once a solution was found to an issue this solution tended to continue to work over time. Internal factors that were noted from the participants in this study included: issues with friends, lack of desire to go to class and problems

with teachers during specific class periods. These issues were more difficult to mitigate as they perpetuated over time and often changed from class period to class period. For example, if a student had an issue with a certain teacher, once that was worked out then an issue tended to come up with a different teacher. Another example would be the importance and anxiety that friends can create for adolescents. For students who have issues with their peer group, these problems tend to take precedence over school work. Therefore it is much more important for these students to socialize and stay in good standing with their friends than to get to class on time and regularly. This behavior is very difficult to change because it requires a conscious decision to be made by the student that goes against what they immediately want to do, what is fun and what their friends are doing.

### **Difficulties Presented**

During this research project it was difficult to maintain consistent contact with students whom the researcher did not already see in part of her daily schedule. At times the student was scheduled for a meeting, but they would have other school work to complete or be absent from class. This made it difficult to follow up in a timely manner with some students. Maintaining consistent contact with students who were already scheduled to be with the researcher increased the success of the interventions.

Another difficulty the researcher faced was including participants with whom there was no prior relationship. It was difficult to create a trusting relationship in a short period of time, but this relationship and trust is needed in order to delve into the underlying issues. The interventions were more successful with students whom the researcher already knew as the level of trust was higher with these students from the start of the intervention phase.

A final difficulty that was encountered during the research was that the effect of the treatment seemed to wear off over time. Keeping the interventions fresh and interesting was difficult especially when tempered with keeping the interventions consistent and basic. It seemed that the payoff was not immediate enough for the students to have the intervention make a lasting impact. Had students seen a more immediate improvement in their grades or a more drastic improvement in the relationship with their teachers, the interventions may have lasted and eventually could have been weaned away.

### **Implications for the Future**

In the current attendance tracking system employed for this study, teachers only have the choice to mark a student present, absent or tardy. Teachers are instructed that whether the student arrives one minute late or with one minute left in class, the student is to be marked tardy. Perhaps it would be easier to get a handle on the real issue if the information was delineated into further categories. Some examples of categories might be tardy-less than one minute, tardy –less than five minutes, tardy- more than five minutes, tardy-more than fifteen minutes. Another possible solution would be to allow teachers to record the arrival time of students with severe tardiness issues.

These categories would be helpful in indentifying the legitimacy and severity of the tardy behavior and solutions to the behavior. For example, if a student is tardy less than a minute, maybe all they would need is to be reminded to walk a little faster. In addition, if a student is tardy less than five minutes, this would then point to a legitimate reason for arriving tardy such as a problem with a locker or needing to use the restroom. Furthermore, if a student is arriving tardy more than fifteen minutes, this would lead one to wonder what behavior they are engaged

in when they are not in class as the chances of this being some type of delinquent behavior are a reality. This would then point to issues far greater than the tardiness and could be addressed appropriately.

Through this research two main factors seemed to come up when working with tardiness issues. It seems that the interventions need to be frequent and fresh. The student also has to have a level of trust established with the person intervening. If these two factors are present, the efficacy of the interventions should increase. Finally, though the results of this research are not generalizable to other populations, they can be used to point out problems with attendance systems that are employed by many schools. If schools cannot get a handle on the real issues with truancy and tardiness, then they will never be able to identify a realistic and appropriate solution to the problem.

## References

- Blood, E., & Neel, R. (2007). From FBA to implementation: a look at what is actually being delivered. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*(4), 67-80.
- Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Carney, K., Minnis-Kim, M. J., Anderson-Harriss, S., Moroz, K. B., Pigott, T. (2006, Summer). Schoolwide application of positive behavior support in an urban high school: a case study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 8*(3), 131-145.
- Bohanon, H., Fenning, P., Eber, L., & Flannery, B. (2007). Identifying a roadmap of support for secondary students in schoolwide positive behavior support applications. *International Journal of Special Education, 22*(1), 39-52.
- Bohanon, H., Flannery, K. B., Malloy, J., & Fenning, P. (2009). Utilizing positive behavior supports in high school settings to improve school completion rates for students with high incidence conditions. *Exceptionality, 17*, 30-44.
- Boldt, R. W., Witzel, M., Russell, C., & Jones, V. (n.d.). Replacing coercive power with relationship power. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 15*(4), 243-248.
- Boles, S., Biglan, A., & Smolkowski, K. (2009). Relationships among negative and positive behaviours in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence, 29*, 33-52.
- Brandibas, G., Jeunier, B., Clanet, C., & Fouraste, R. (2004). Truancy, school refusal and anxiety. *School Psychology International, 25*(1), 117-126.
- Cohen, R., Kincaid, D., & Elfner Childs, K. (2007, Fall). Measuring schoolwide positive behavior support implementation: development and validation of the benchmarks of quality. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*(4), 203-213.

- Conley, S., & Enomoto, E. K. (2009, March). Organizational routines in flux: a case study of change in recording and monitoring student attendance. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(3), 364-386. Retrieved from <http://eus.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/41/364>
- DeSocio, J., VanCura, M., Nelson, L. A., Hewitt, G., Kitzman, H., & Cole, R. (2007, Spring). Engaging truant adolescents: results from a multifaceted intervention pilot. *Preventing School Failure*, 51(3), 3-11.
- Feinstein, S. (2003, December). School-wide positive behavior supports. *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 54(4), 163-173.
- Freeman, R., Eber, L., Anderson, C., Irvin, L., Horner, R., Bounds, M., & Dunlap, G. (2006). Building inclusive school cultures using school-wide positive behavior support: designing effective individual support systems for students with significant disabilities. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(1), 4-17.
- Galotti, K. M., Kozberg, S. F., & Gustafson, M. (2009, April). Goal setting and decision making by at-risk youth. *The Prevention Researcher*, 16(2), 17-20.
- Gastic, B. (2008, November). School truancy and the disciplinary problems of bullying victims. *Educational Review*, 60(4), 391-404.
- Gregory, A., & Ripski, M. B. (2008). Adolescent trust in teachers: implications for behavior in the high school classroom. *School Psychology Review*, 37(3), 337-353.
- Hartnett, S. (2007-2008, December/January). Does peer group identity influence absenteeism in high school students? *The High School Journal*, 91(2), 35-44.

- Kane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., Robertson, E. J., & Rogers, L. A. (2007, Spring). How do different types of high school students respond to schoolwide positive behavior support programs? Characteristics and responsiveness of teacher-identified students. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 15*(1), 3-20.
- Lashley, C., & Tate, A. S. (2009, March). A Framework for educative, equitable and empowering disciplinary practice. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 22*(1), 34-35.
- LeBlanc, L., Swisher, R., Vitaro, F., & Tremblay, R. E. (2008). High school social climate and antisocial behavior: a 10 year longitudinal and multilevel study. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 18*(3), 395-419.
- Manual to Combat Truancy*. (1996). Retrieved from Department of Justice; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools Program website:  
<http://www.ed.gov/>
- Melvin, C., Korthase, N., & Marquoit, J. (2005, Summer). Beyond the Behavior. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 14*(2), 112-116.
- Munoz, M. A. (2001, July 31). *Whatever it takes; the impact of a truancy program on attendance* (Rep. ED 457 259). Retrieved from EDRS database.
- Muscott, H. S., Mann, E. L., & LeBrun, M. R. (2008, July). Positive behavioral interventions and support in New Hampshire: effects of large-scale implementation of schoolwide positive behavior support on student discipline and academic achievement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 10*(3), 190-205

*OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*

[Collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education and 11 technical assistance units across the United States.]. (n.d.). Retrieved June, 2010, from <http://www.pbis.org/>

Q and A: Questions and Answers on Discipline Procedures. (2009, June). *IDEA- Building the legacy of IDEA 2004*. Retrieved from US Department of Education, OSERS website: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CQaCorner%2C7%2C>

Railsback, J. (2004, June). Increasing student attendance: strategies from research and practice. *By Request*, i-73.

Sellman, E. (2009, March). Lessons learned: student voice at a school for pupils experiencing Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 14(1), 33-48.

*State Performance Plan Targets and Goals: 2007-2008 SY Update*. (2008). Retrieved from State Department of Public Instruction website: <http://dpi.xx.gov/sped/spp.html>

Stover, D. (2005, January). New ways, more reasons to fight truancy. *The Education Digest*, 48-51. Retrieved from <http://www.eddigest.com>

Student absenteeism and tardiness. (1996, June). In *Indicator of the Month* (Rep. NCES 96-798, pp. 3-4). Retrieved from EDRS database

*State Department of Public Instruction: Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)*

[PBIS Overview]. (n.d.). Retrieved from State Department of Public Instruction website: <http://dpi.xx.gov/rtp/pbis.html>

APPENDIX A

Parent Information Letter

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To: Parent or Guardian of \_\_\_\_\_  
From: Carissa Nusbaum  
Special Education Teacher  
XXXXXX High School

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your child has been chosen to participate in a program to help improve attendance. They may have been chosen for a variety reasons such as arriving late to class or skipping class. My goal is to help your child figure out the reasons for their tardiness or absence and then work on solutions to this problem. We will do this by meeting twice weekly for a 10-15 to minutes. During this time we will write goals and then reflect on their progress toward their goals. The students will also track their attendance to see the hours they are tardy or absent.

The information that is gathered through these interventions will be used in a report for the University of Wisconsin- Oshkosh. Please be assured that neither your child's name nor the school name will be mentioned in this report. Also, your child's privacy will be maintained at school as I will meet with students one-on-one to discuss their goals and chart their attendance rather than talk to them in class in front of a group of kids.

If you have any questions or feel that additional information about your child would be useful to me please contact me anytime at xxx-xxxx extension xxxxx. Or you can feel free to email me at xxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx . I look forward to working with you and your child!

Thank you,

Carissa Nusbaum

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval



## OSHKOSH

August 24, 2010

Ms. Carissa Nusbaum  
193 East River Dr  
De Pere, WI 54115

Dear Ms. Nusbaum:

On behalf of the L\V Oshkosh Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Participants (IRB), I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved for the following research: The Impact of Positive Behavioral Interventions on Truancy and Tardiness for Students with High Incidence Disabilities.

Your research protocol has been classified as EXEMPT. This means you will not be required to obtain signed consent. However, unless your research involves **only** the collection or study of existing data, documents, or records, you must provide each participant with a summary of your research that contains all of the elements of an Informed Consent document, as described in the IRB application material. Permitting the participant, or parent legal representative, to make a fully informed decision to participate in a research activity avoids potentially inequitable or coercive conditions of human participation and assures the voluntary nature of participant involvement.

Please note that it is the principal investigators responsibility to promptly report to the IRB Committee any changes in the research project, whether these changes occur prior to undertaking, or during the research. In addition, if harm or discomfort to anyone becomes apparent during the research, the principal investigator must contact the IRB Committee Chairperson. Harm or discomfort includes, but is not limited to, adverse reactions to psychology experiments, biologics, radioisotopes, labeled drugs, or to medical or other devices used. Please contact me if you have any questions (PH 920:424-7172 or e-mail: rauscher@uwosh.edu).

Sincerely,

*Dr. Frances Rauscher*

Dr. Frances Rauscher  
IRB Chair

cc: Dr. Berttram Chiang  
1 S64