

Spring 2010

Best Practices Employed by Georgia High School Administrators to Reduce Student Tardiness

Jason Scott Moore

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BEST PRACTICES EMPLOYED BY GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
TO REDUCE STUDENT TARDINESS

by

JASON SCOTT MOORE

(Under the direction of Barbara Mallory)

ABSTRACT

The problem of student tardiness was reported by principals over the past two decades as being one of the major problems facing 21st century high schools. This study employed a mixed methods approach and utilized one Georgia school district's student tardiness data for one school year to investigate the extent of tardiness across the district including factors, such as school size, school location, minority enrollment, socioeconomic status, and gender. The qualitative portion of this study utilized interviews to gain stakeholder's descriptions of conditions that contributed to tardiness and their views of what strategies and practices were most effective at reducing tardiness. The major results of this study found student tardiness to be a continuing problem in 21st century high schools. Major causes of tardiness were categorized as student issues, such as socializing and defiance; school factors, such as overcrowding, bathroom breaks, and locker problems; and personnel factors, such as teacher inconsistency and lack of administrative and teacher presence in the halls. All of the stakeholder respondents considered the best ways to reduce student tardiness were by the consistent issuing of consequences, such as after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention.

INDEX WORDS: Student tardiness, Tardiness, Tardies, Tardy, Reducing tardiness, Excessive tardies, Tardy occurrences, Punctuality, Late to class, Late to school

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TO REDUCE STUDENT TARDINESS

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A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2010

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May 2010

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my entire family, who have encouraged me to persevere through the challenges and rigors of this entire process. I am especially grateful for the patience and encouragement I received from my wife Jennifer and my son Cameron. I am thankful, and to them I give my gratitude and my continued, undying love. Also, to my mother, Patricia, and father, Josiah, who pushed me throughout my entire educational career and always encouraged me to never give up. They both deserve this degree more than I do. Their example and guidance have helped me and inspired me to keep going when things got tough. To my mother-in-law, Vickie, and my father-in-law, Larry, thank you for your support and understanding and help with babysitting Cameron when I had work to complete and deadlines to meet. I love you all and dedicate this work to you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their help, encouragement, and support throughout this process. Without them, I would have never reached the pinnacle of this accomplishment.

First, thank you to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Barbara Mallory. Thank you for taking on another student when Dr. Tekelselasia left for George Washington University. Your guidance and encouragement were instrumental in my completing this degree.

Thank you to Dr. Tekelselasia, who understood the value of this study and really seemed to understand the issue and complexity of student tardiness.

Thank you to the other members of my committee, Dr Linda Arthur and Dr. Sam Hardy. You both inspired me throughout your courses to take the challenge head on. Thank you for giving your time to help and guide me through this trial.

Again, thank you to my entire family. You are the reason I endured and struggled through the trying times and late nights. Everything I do, I do for you.

Thank you for the support of my colleagues, Lynn Warr, Nyleechee McRae, Chris Clancy, Albert Russo, Vanetta Lawrence, Tonya Bradburn, Michelle Olivares, and Mike Price, who throughout the years have given me the encouragement and support to continue and persevere.

Thank you to Karen Davis, my cohort partner and my friend. We agreed to help each other to not give up and challenged each other to finish at the same time. This process is not possible without the help of a collaborator, a colleague, and a friend.

Lastly, to my son Cameron who is my partner, and my little buddy. I try every day to be a good father and to model hard work and commitment, so one day you may accomplish all that you dream and set out to do.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Unfaithfulness in the keeping of an appointment is an act of clear dishonesty. You may as well borrow a person’s money as his time” -Horace Mann (Hamilton, 2005).

Since the establishment of schooling in the United States of America, student absenteeism and student tardiness have been a consistent problem for schools around the nation. Absenteeism and tardiness involve students missing one or more days of school and not reporting to class on time. One of the roles of principals as instructional leaders is to protect instructional time, which requires students to be on time and in the classroom. Yet, over the past 15 years, principals report student tardiness across the nation as one of the major problems facing their schools (Duncan, 1991; McMahan, 1997; Killon, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Barranger, 1999; Andrews, 2000; Gardner & Thompson, 2000; Devoe, Peter, Kaufman, Ruddy, Miller, Planty, Snyder, Duhart, & Rand, 2002, Nevius, 2004; Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007).

One major consequence of student tardiness is the loss of instructional time. The time actually spent in schools teaching and learning is at a premium and with disruption caused by student tardiness, teachers and students are faced with interruptions in the teaching and learning environment. Less instructional time for punctual students, the teacher, and even those students who are less inclined to make it to class on time eventually correlates to lower student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

Many educational leaders have engineered a variety of methods, strategies, and techniques to combat the student tardiness problem. A number of strategies have been successful, while others have not. Several of the strategies have been targeted at the entire school

population where others have focused on individual classrooms or the individual student (Mass Insight Education, n.d.; University of Wisconsin-la Crosse, n.d.; Duncan, 1992; Inkster & McLaughlin, 1993; Oliverson, 1994; Hegna, 1997; Killon, 1997; McMahan, 1997; Kosakowski, 1998; Delguzzi, 1999; St. Pierre, 2000; United Students Organization of Roosevelt High School, 2003; Lehr et al., 2004; Moroz, 2006; Muir, 2006). Still, further strategies, aimed at other targeted deficiencies, have been effective in reducing student tardiness as a secondary outcome of the original intercession (Mass Insight Education, n.d.; Finckler, 2000; Wahlstrom, 2002).

With the vast array of ideas, researchers and educators have created, the issue of student tardiness continues to plague our nation's schools on a daily basis. Some of the most recent student tardiness statistics were detailed in a 1998 report entitled, *Violence and Discipline Problems in Public Schools: 1996-1997*. In the report, forty percent of the surveyed principals cited student tardiness as the "most serious or moderate problem in their schools" followed by absenteeism or cutting and physical conflicts (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998, ¶ 3). In 2000, The Maine Education Policy Research Institute surveyed high school principals and found fifty-five percent reported student tardiness as a serious problem (Gardner & Thompson, 2000, ¶ 4). In addition, no one definitive strategy to alleviate the problem of student tardiness across the entire country may exist. However, it may be feasible to expect research to yield a better understanding of best practices and strategies educational leaders can employ under certain conditions targeting specific groups of students. Principal Harriet L. Ford encapsulated the tardy problem when she was asked for a solution to the quandary: "If someone finds it, they need to bottle it and sell it, and I will buy a couple of cases" (Blum, 2001, ¶ 20).

Background of the Problem

Since the compulsory attendance act of 1852 passed in Massachusetts, and guided by Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, student absenteeism and student tardiness have been a consistent problem for schools around the nation (Staff of Education Week, 2000). Year after year, many of the schools across the country share in the major dilemma of struggling with the attendance duo of absenteeism and tardiness. For this study, student tardiness was the focal point. One principal at Pittsburg High School in San Francisco, California, cited an alarming statistic on student tardiness where students at the school “racked up a quarter-of-a-million tardies” in the previous year (Nevius, 2004). Killon (1997) revealed, in a study of student discipline, the number one reported discipline problem in Indiana secondary schools to be student tardiness. McMahan (1997) also shared many of the “woes” of schools and principals concerning student tardiness and highlighted one school in Knox County, Tennessee where, “tardies to school and to class accounted for the major portion of discipline referrals to the office” (p. 114). In a 1998 report, *Violence and Discipline Problems in Public Schools: 1996-1997*, forty percent of the surveyed principals cited student tardiness as the “most serious or moderate problem in their schools” followed by absenteeism or cutting and physical conflicts (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, ¶ 3). In 2000, The Maine Education Policy Research Institute surveyed high school principals and found fifty-five percent reported student tardiness as a serious problem (Gardner & Thompson, 2000, ¶ 4). Lastly, Andrews (2000), in a case study of middle school and high school violence in the Camden City Public School System in Delaware, highlighted three principals who reported student tardiness and absenteeism to be the most serious problem in their schools. These testimonies alone indicate the severity of the student tardiness problem.

The issue of student tardiness has implications for schools that go far and above simple classroom disruption. Students who show up late to school and to class are disrespectful to the administration, the teachers, and the other students in the class with their constant tardiness (Reis, 2001). In a study entitled, *Student Empowerment: Effects on a High School Tardy Policy*, students who were regularly tardy to a particular class were “implying that there are other aspects of their life more important than the class” (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d., p. 23). Eventually the students did not even feel compelled to justify the tardy except with the reason “I am just late” (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d., p. 23).

The majority of students who do not comply with insignificant rules of the school do not comply with the foremost rules of the school, such as refraining from fighting, smoking, drug and alcohol use, and bringing weapons to school (Wenglinsky, 1999). In an address to the Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee, research scientist Wenglinsky (1999) stated:

While incidents of extreme violence focus attention on the issues of school discipline and security, I contend that our inability to combat school disorder is rooted in the everyday occurrence of, and to some degree toleration of, less serious transgressions: absenteeism, tardiness, cheating on tests and homework, incivility, and host of other petty offenses (¶ 1).

Ultimately, Wenglinsky called for administrators to emphasize the “minor” policies of the school, such as the tardy policy and make them the “major” policies of the school to create a well-ordered milieu conducive for student learning.

Students who are tardy miss valuable instructional time, and their defiance to follow the tardy policy affects the entire school culture (Kosakowski, 1998; Shupe, 1998; Williams, 1998; Mallinowski, 2006). Students who comply with the tardy policy have a willingness to learn but

are continually interrupted by students who are tardy. Their valuable instructional time is constantly taken from them on a daily basis, and many suffer because of student tardiness (Hegna, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000). A 1996 report from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, entitled *Student Absenteeism and Tardiness*, encapsulated the dilemma with the following statement:

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school, arrive late, or cut class, they forgo opportunities to learn. Furthermore, when students disrupt classes by being late or frequently absent, they interfere with other students' opportunities to learn (p.3).

Shupe (1998), a principal at Lakeview Middle School in Sanford, Florida, saw the importance of addressing the problem of student tardiness as well as other school-wide discipline problems based on the amount of classroom discipline problems and loss of instructional time and how it was affecting his school. Shupe stated, "Not only was instructional time being lost, teachers were feeling out of control and their morale was ebbing" (p. 25). Teachers were frustrated with the amount of classroom disruptions caused by the lack of control in the school, especially when it came to student tardiness, and the problem was draining the life out of the school.

A student's future success or failure is directly related to the attendance and tardiness patterns from their school career (Kosakowski, 1998; Gray, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). Kosakowski, Gray, and St. Pierre agreed that student tardiness had a negative effect on the future success rate of students in the work force. St. Pierre shared an experience with a local businessman who was frustrated by employees that were consistently late and absent. The businessman, who had hired many employees from the local school and checked school attendance records, concluded "the

students who had problems attending class were now the adults having problems attending work” and eventually terminated those employees (St. Pierre, 2000, ¶ 1).

There is an abundance of research, statistical reports, and anecdotal data highlighting student tardiness as a major problem for schools across the country (Duncan, 1991; McMahan, 1997; Killon, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Barranger, 1999; Andrews, 2000; Gardner & Thompson, 2000; Devoe et al., 2002; Nevius, 2004; Dinkes et al., 2007). However, there are very few studies aimed at reducing tardiness at the elementary level (Mass Insight Education, n.d.; Finckler, 2000; Lehr et al., 2004). Finckler, in a study of the effects of a teen mentor program on elementary and high school students, confirmed the mentor program as having a significant impact on an elementary student’s tardiness. Lehr et al, showed a reduction in student tardiness by use of the *Check and Connect* model along with more parental involvement. A similar proposal entitled, *Empowering (and enabling) Parents and Students to Take an Active Role in School Issues*, was developed by Sylvia Day, principal of Studley Elementary School in Attleboro, Massachusetts. There were many issues addressed by the proposal that affected the entire school community, including student tardiness. The “blueprint” for reform started with better tracking of student tardiness and absenteeism and more consistent and immediate contact with the parent. The model also suggested a solid system of rewards for students with good attendance and tardiness. The whole program was based around the foundation of “public awareness,” where paying attention to those with attendance and tardiness problems, as well as those with good attendance and tardiness, stirred a commitment for the entire community to work toward improvement (Mass Insight Education, n.d., ¶ 14).

The majority of research studies pertaining to reducing student tardiness were conducted in the high school setting aimed at reducing tardiness of high school students. Kosakowski

(1998) showed a decrease in student tardiness resulted from both positive and negative reinforcement. When the students knew there was no consequence for their tardiness, they continued to arrive late, but when they had to account for their tardiness and experience a punishment of some magnitude, tardiness dropped dramatically. Killon (1997) found that suspending students for discipline problems, such as tardiness, was an effective intervention method utilized by Indiana secondary school principals. Duncan (1992) also cited suspensions as an effective intervention for reducing tardiness but cited detention as the highest ranked deterrent as perceived by South Carolina public secondary administrators to alleviate all discipline problems. In school suspensions, parent conferences, and student conferences were also listed by Duncan as being effective deterrents. Analogous queries were introduced in a study entitled, *Student Empowerment: Effects on a High School Tardy Policy*. The inquiry posed the question, “How does student empowerment affect students’ motivation to follow a high school tardy policy” (University of Wisconsin-la Crosse, n.d., p. 5)? Student tardiness was one factor that was greatly reduced by allowing students to contribute to development and implementation of school-wide discipline policies. A study entitled, *The United Students Plan for Improving the Quality of Education at Roosevelt High School*, presented an empowered student population that monitored their own behavior and did not allow student tardiness to continue to negatively affect the school (United Students Organization of Roosevelt High School, 2003). School start times were highlighted by Wahlstrom (2002) in a review of a four-year study that looked at several high schools’ attempts to thwart student tardiness and attendance problems. The majority of the principals participating in the study identified a significant decrease in the number of tardy students in their schools, which greatly contributed to a more efficient school day and use of administrative time (Wahlstrom, 2002).

The research continued to reveal a superfluous number of strategies that high school principals implemented to attempt to thwart student tardiness. A number of principals locked students completely out of their schools while others charged the students money for each tardy. Some performed “tardy sweeps” of the halls of their schools and placed the late students into “tardy rooms” to wait until the next class period and to minimize disruptions to instruction (Delguzzi, 1999, ¶ 3; United Students Organization for Improving Roosevelt High School, 2003, p. 3). In a research brief, cited in *The Principal’s Partnership*, several responses to student tardiness were listed including an incident where “students in one California high school are fined one hundred and sixty-five dollars if they are tardy more than twice” (Muir, February, 2006). McMahan (1997) showed a decrease in tardiness which resulted from connecting attendance to credit in a high school course. Hegna (1997) and St. Pierre (2000) utilized a stricter tardy policy, more beginning educational opportunities, such as quizzes, and consequences, such as Saturday school, as a means of getting students to be more punctual. Wahlstrom (2002) revealed the strategy of later school start times as an obvious but effective way to reduce tardiness. More parental contact by schools to parents or guardians of tardy students was also shown to be an effective strategy to reduce student tardiness (Mass Insight Education, n.d.; Oliverson, 1994; Finckler, 2000; Lehr et al., 2004). Moroz (2006) found positive reinforcement and school-wide acknowledgment to be an effective means of reducing student tardiness in a targeted high school class. Positive reinforcement was also found to be effective in reducing tardiness of a socially and economically disadvantaged student (Inkster & McLaughlin, 1993). Detention, in school suspensions, out of school suspensions, parent conferences, and student conferences were reported by South Carolina public school administrators as being effective at reducing tardiness in high school students (Duncan, 1991).

Statement of the Problem

Student tardiness continues to plague schools and administrators across the nation. The problem of student tardiness has been reported by principals over the past two decades as being one of the major problems in their schools. Students who are tardy to class defy the authority of school leaders and teachers and detract from teaching and learning in their schools. Massive amounts of instructional time are spent on student tardiness daily. Student tardiness is correlated to students' future success in the work force where many students who had tardy problems during their high school career continued to have the same problem in their jobs. The research also presented a vast array of strategies aimed at reducing student tardiness at both the elementary and high school levels of education.

The limited number of relevant recent research studies pertaining to the area of student tardiness indicates that it is not a major focus for educational leaders as a whole when discussing ways of raising student achievement. However, the research does not reflect the statistics reported by high school principals across the nation as student tardiness being one of the major problems in their schools. The limited research studies that were completed highlighted strategies aimed at additional student deficiencies other than student tardiness, and any reduction in student tardiness, reported in the majority of research studies, was a secondary outcome.

Consequently, with not much focus given to the area of student tardiness and with student tardiness reported as a major problem in high schools across the nation, it is imperative that further research be conducted to explore this phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools and understand conditions, including strategies and practices that address tardiness problems.

Research Questions

The following overarching research question of this study was: What is the extent of student tardiness in high schools and what strategies and best practices are used to alleviate tardiness problems? The following sub-questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does the student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia?
2. How do stakeholders at high schools describe the conditions that cause student tardiness?
3. To what extent does student tardiness vary across high schools in Georgia controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and ethnicity?
4. What are strategies and best practices, which contribute to a reduction in student tardiness?

Significance of the Study

With student tardiness being reported by high school principals across the nation as the most significant and frequent problem in their schools, and with few recent, relevant studies on student tardiness, this researcher aimed to determine strategies and best practices used by high school administrators to reduce student tardiness. This study provided clarity to principals, superintendents, board members, and other educational practitioners about student tardiness and demonstrated how important the issue of student tardiness is to the day-to-day operation of a high school. This study also provided transparency as to what strategies and best practices school leaders are employing to reduce student tardiness at their respective schools. The overall goal of the study for practitioners was to provide a better understanding of the issue of tardiness from an overview of the problem and to provide a suite of solutions to the dilemma for various school settings and student demographics.

This study focused on student tardiness across one Georgia school district. A comparative analysis was conducted to examine the extent at which student tardiness varied among a school district's high schools in order to uncover which schools have the highest and lowest occurrences of student tardiness. The researcher sought to understand differences in strategies used in high and low incidence schools to identify best practices to reduce student tardiness. The findings from this study provided policymakers, such as board members, superintendents, and principals, a target to aim for when developing policies geared toward reforming high schools in order to raise student achievement and provide safer learning environments. More specifically, the findings related to effective consequences issued for violation of the tardy policy guided policymakers and board members when reviewing and writing county policy manuals.

The researcher, a current high school administrator, has had first hand experience with school environments that had both high and low occurrences of student tardiness and has seen how effective implementation of a tardy policy can completely turn a school around. The hope of the researcher was to gain a better understanding of ways to get students to school and to class on time. As an administrator, this better understanding of student tardiness aided the researcher in facilitating a safer and more conducive school environment for student learning and higher achievement.

Research Procedures

This study employed a mixed-methods approach and utilized the sequential explanatory strategy. Cresswell (2003) stated, "the sequential explanatory strategy is the most straight forward of the six major mixed methods approaches and is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data" (p. 215). The first phase of this study was quantitative and descriptive using student tardiness data

obtained from a selected Georgia school district's local database to gather information regarding the overall number of student tardiness occurrences in high schools located within the district.

The second phase of this study was qualitative and exploratory employing interviews to identify and explore strategies and best practices utilized to reduce student tardiness and stakeholders' descriptions of conditions relative to school environments and student tardiness.

The sample for this study was comprised of ten high schools in a selected Georgia school district. Student tardiness data was obtained from the school district's student database in order to gain information pertaining to student tardiness occurrences across the district throughout the duration of one school year. The data provided information regarding the extent of student tardiness in the high schools as well as how tardiness varied across the schools, controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and minority enrollment.

Administrators, teachers, and students from the sampled high schools were then interviewed to gain information regarding student tardiness at their respective schools. A detailed explanation of methods was presented in chapter 3 of the study. Findings were reported in Chapter 4, and a discussion of findings and conclusions were presented in Chapter 5.

Limitations

Limitations in this study evolve from several different areas. Glesne (2006) highlighted the position that, "demonstrating trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study" (p. 169). Cresswell (2003) suggested that researchers "provide limitations to identify weaknesses of the study" (p. 148). The main limitation in this study derives from the basis that there have been a relatively small number of studies performed on student tardiness. Therefore, a review of the literature pertaining to student tardiness, which directly correlates to several parts of this study, will not serve as a strong guide and foundation for this study (Glesne, 2006).

Other limitations in this study come from differences in how Georgia high schools defined tardiness in their respective context. Each school's policy may define a student to be tardy at various points of the ringing of the tardy bell and at various points of a classroom. One school may state a student is tardy when the bell first rings and the student is not in their seat in the classroom. Another school may allow students to enter the classroom once the bell has completed ringing. This minute discrepancy in the wording of the tardy policy will give some variance among student tardiness data among Georgia high schools.

In addition, limitations evolved from the use of interviews in the second part of the study. Participants may not be able to recall all information regarding student tardiness and may allow personal opinions and beliefs to interfere with sharing all pertinent information (Glesne, 2006).

Lastly, the data utilized in this study was based on numbers reported by each school, but the variability of accounting for tardiness may have varied from school to school.

Definition of Terms

The subsequent terms were defined for the purpose of this study:

Best practice: a term used in the educational realm to describe the most effective method of accomplishing a goal or a task that has been shown to be successful through research and application.

Strategy: how one undertakes the task of accomplishing a desired outcome.

Tardiness: arriving late to class and/or to school.

Summary

Student tardiness continued to be a reported major problem in high schools across the United States. Student tardiness was a disruptive factor in schools that detracted from the learning environment and overall student achievement. When one considered the addition of lost

minutes of instructional time compounded over the length of a school year managing student tardiness, it became an interruption of teaching and learning that warranted further investigation.

The literature identified student tardiness to be one of the biggest problems reported by administrators at all educational levels across the nation. However, high school administrators reported student tardiness as being one of the major problems that affected their schools more so than elementary and middle school administrators. The literature also uncovered many attempts by administrators and school leaders to combat student tardiness; however, the problem continued. Many school leaders were frustrated and were at a loss as to how to effectively reduce tardy occurrences in their particular schools.

This study provided educational leaders with a perspective of the vastness of the student tardiness problem, by providing an extensive analysis of student tardiness data for high schools across an entire Georgia school district. By analysis of this data, the researcher anticipated bringing student tardiness to the forefront of factors which directly affected the overall school community. In addition, an expectation of this research was to reveal a better understanding of the best practices and strategies educational leaders employed to effectively reduce student tardiness at their respective schools.

Student tardiness data was obtained from a selected Georgia school district's database. The information retrieved from the database revealed the extent of student tardiness occurrences across the school district over one school year. The data provided the scope and extent of the student tardiness phenomenon. The second part of the study was comprised of interviews of school administrators, teachers, and students, which provided information pertaining to stakeholders' descriptions of conditions that caused student tardiness, and what strategies were most effective at reducing student tardiness.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher completed a review of the literature pertaining to student tardiness. The chapter began with an introduction to student tardiness and a prelude to the extent of the problem for schools across the nation for the past several decades. A review of the literature on the impact of the problem of tardiness on instructional time and school-wide discipline was presented in the subsequent section of the chapter. Demographic factors related to student tardiness were then presented which include instructional level, school size, school locale, minority enrollment, and poverty level. The next section expounded on the organizational culture of high schools as it relates to daily scheduling of schools as well as high school start times. Finally, the chapter concluded with a presentation of many of the traditional and non-traditional strategies and best practices employed by educational leaders throughout the United States aimed at reducing student tardiness.

Student Tardiness: Extent of the Problem

Year after year, many of the schools across the country share in one major dilemma: student tardiness. Many administrators and teachers continued to report student tardiness as being a problem in their schools and ponder solutions to this ever-growing issue (Duncan, 1991; McMahan, 1997; Kaufman & Center, 1998; Killon, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Barranger, 1999; Andrews, 2000; Gardner & Thompson, 2000; Devoe et al., 2002; Nevius, 2004; Dinkes et al., 2007; Snyder, 1998). They also continued to reiterate their frustration and were at a loss of how to combat the problem. The number one reported discipline problem in Indiana secondary schools was revealed to be student tardiness following a study of student discipline (Killon, 1997). Student tardiness was also

highlighted by administrators in a Tennessee high school where it was said that managing the referrals for tardy students took up most of the administrative time (McMahan, 1997). Belden (2006) reported about accomplishments of the principal of Ames Elementary, where one of the main factors to improving the school was Principal Henderson “cracking down on absenteeism and tardiness” (2006, ¶ 2). Principal Gonzalez knew that one of the major issues concerning trying to improve his school would also be to “crack down” on over a quarter of a million tardies accumulated at his school the year before he arrived (Nevius, 2004). Snyder (1998) reported in *Trends in Education*, student tardiness, along with various other issues, was one of the most extensive discipline problems in elementary schools. Kaufman (1998) surveyed secondary school principals’ and assistant principals’ perceptions of disciplinary problems in Georgia secondary schools and found five hundred administrators ranked student tardiness to be one of the top five most serious and most common problems in their schools. The previous studies provided a glimpse into the problem of student tardiness and touched on the extent to which this minor problem has become a major issue for schools at all educational levels over the past several decades.

The literature also provided an in depth detailed look into the perceptions of discipline issues and violence in schools over the past two decades. In 1994, after the passing of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act by congress, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) was charged with the task of gathering and analyzing data pertaining to violence in secondary schools (Forgione, 1998). Many of the subsequent reports and studies completed by the NCES revealed a consistent and overwhelming set of continuous data focusing on discipline incidents in high schools, including the problem of student tardiness (Forgione, 1998). The 1998 report was the first of its kind following the 1994 Act and was a follow up to a

similar report done in 1991, which focused on principals' perceptions of disciplinary problems in their schools. In the 1998 report, *Violence and Discipline Problems in Public Schools: 1996-1997*, forty percent of the surveyed principals cited student tardiness as the "most serious or moderate problem in their schools," followed by absenteeism or cutting and physical conflicts (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). This was approximately the same response of the principals surveyed in 1991 (see figure 1).

Discipline issue	Extent of problem							
	1990-91				1996-97			
	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Student tardiness.....	6	28	46	20	9	32	45	14
Student absenteeism/class cutting..	5	20	40	35	4	21	46	29
Physical conflicts among students .	3	20	53	25	1	20	59	21
Robbery or theft of items over \$10.	(+)	7	31	62	1	5	37	58
Vandalism of school property.....	1	11	42	46	2	6	49	43
Student alcohol use.....	3	7	17	72	2	5	19	74
Student drug use.....	1	5	20	74	2	8	20	70
Sale of drugs on school grounds....	(+)	1	11	89	(+)	2	15	83
Student tobacco use.....	3	10	24	63	4	10	25	60
Student possession of weapons.....	(+)	3	16	81	(+)	2	21	77
Trespassing.....	1	6	27	67	(+)	4	25	71
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	2	9	44	45	2	10	46	42
Physical abuse of teachers.....	(+)	1	8	91	0	2	9	89
Teacher absenteeism.....	1	13	37	49	1	10	38	52
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	(+)	1	10	89	0	(-)	6	94
Racial tensions.....	(+)	5	21	74	(+)	3	24	73
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	(+)	4	19	76

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

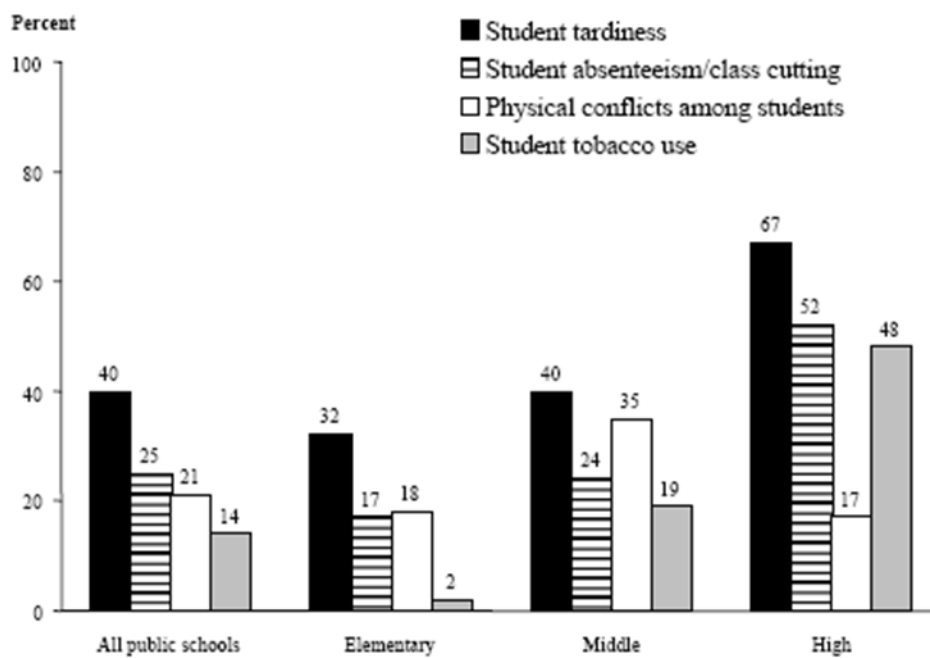
(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 1. Percentage of public school principals indicating the extent of problems in their schools with certain discipline issues: 1990-91 and 1996-97

In the same 1998 report, sixty-seven percent of the surveyed public high schools reported student tardiness as a serious or moderate problem, followed by student absenteeism/cutting class, physical conflicts among students, and student tobacco use (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). The overall school report was also a mirror of the principal report. In addition, this indicator also separated the data by instructional level, with student tardiness continuing to be reported at each level as the most serious or moderate problem. Middle and elementary public schools reported forty and thirty-two percent, respectively, for student tardiness (see figure 2).



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997.

Figure 2. Percent of public schools reporting that specific discipline issues were a serious or moderate problem at the school, by instructional level: 1996-1997

In 2002, another similar report done by the NCES indicated forty-eight percent of the surveyed principals reported student tardiness as the most serious or moderate problem in their school for 1999-2000 (see figure 3). Interestingly, in this report, student absenteeism and student use of alcohol tied with student tardiness at forty-eight percent. Secondary school principals indicated a higher percentage than elementary principals did for student tardiness, but student tardiness was still reported as the most serious or moderate problem by elementary principals at twenty-nine percent. Combined, both secondary and elementary school principals indicated that student tardiness was one of the top three problems at their respective schools (Devoe et al., 2002).

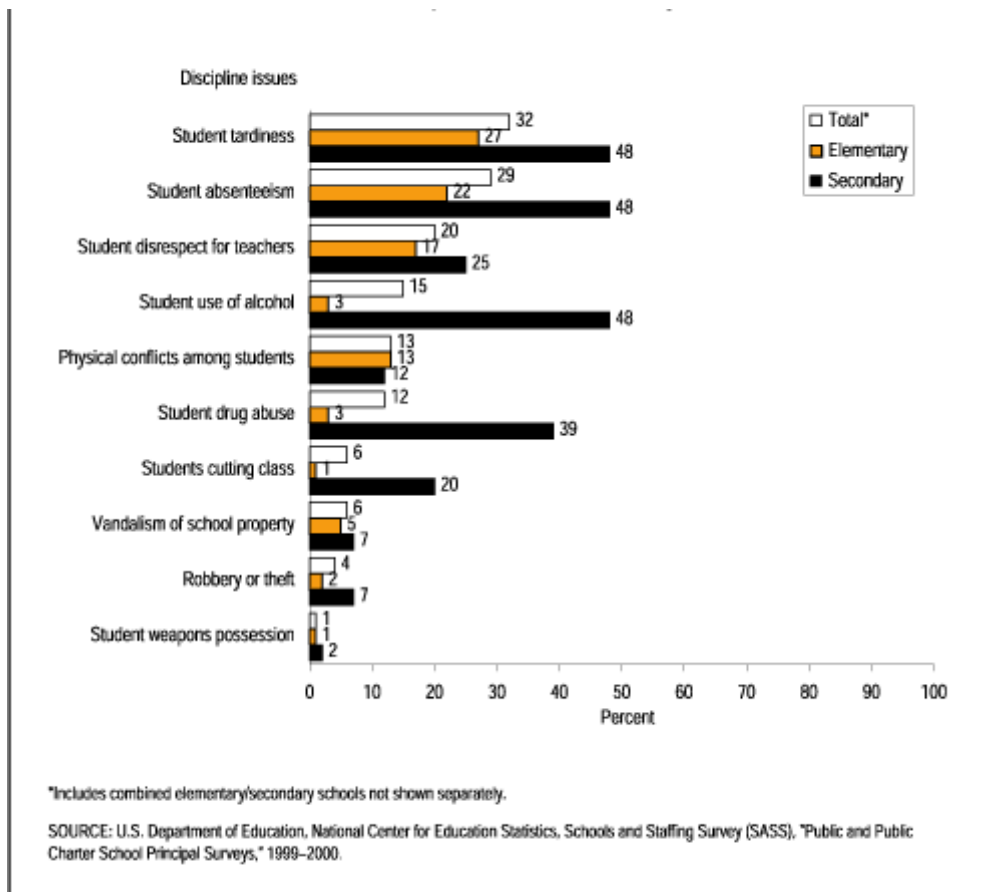


Figure 3. Percentage of public school principals who reported that selected discipline issues were a serious or moderate problem in their school, by school level: 1999-2000

In a 2007 report, entitled *Status of Education in Rural America*, a questionnaire was administered to elementary, middle, and high school teachers who were asked to rate the significance of eight identified problems facing their schools. Of the eight, student tardiness was listed, along with students coming to school unprepared to learn, lack of parental involvement, poverty, student apathy, students dropping out, and student pregnancy. Student tardiness was rated on the lower half at thirteen percent for all demographics measures, but highest in city schools compared to rural at all educational levels. Furthermore, ratings at the high school level for student tardiness increased dramatically for student tardiness as it rated fourth highest for high schools for all demographic areas, third highest for suburban high schools, and fourth highest for city schools (Provasnik, Kewal, Ramani, Coleman, Gilbertson, Herring, & Xie, 2007) (see figure 4). Bailey (2000) highlighted the 2007 report in an article entitled, *A Case for Smaller Schools*, where he shared the statistics from the 2007 information. His argument was that smaller, rural schools were overall more successful at helping students achieve and providing safer school environments. He specifically noted that smaller, rural schools had less incidents of student tardiness compared to larger city schools.

Locale and grade level taught	Students come to school unprepared to learn	Lack of parental involvement	Poverty	Student apathy	Student tardiness	Student class cutting	Students dropping out	Student pregnancy
Total	26.8	21.6	21.4	16.6	13.9	5.6	3.3	2.4
City	36.9	30.3	32.2	20.5	21.7	10.3	5.6	3.5
Suburban	22.2	18.3	14.6	14.3	12.4	4.3	2.0	1.4
Town	25.7	19.2	22.4	16.8	10.2	3.9	3.3	3.4
Rural	22.0	17.4	17.7	15.0	8.7	2.9	2.7	2.0
Elementary	21.7	18.5	23.2	6.2	9.1	0.6	0.4	0.1
City	32.4	27.6	35.2	8.9	15.9	1.3	0.6	0.2
Suburban	17.2	16.0	16.2	5.2	7.6	0.4	0.1	‡
Town	19.1	13.8	22.6	4.4	5.0	0.2	0.1	0.1
Rural	15.5	12.7	18.1	5.0	4.7	0.3	0.6	0.2
Middle	27.9	21.0	20.8	17.7	11.2	3.1	0.7	0.4
City	36.6	28.4	30.2	20.9	15.8	6.0	1.0	0.4
Suburban	24.9	19.1	15.7	17.2	10.6	2.2	0.2	0.2
Town	27.9	18.4	22.3	19.5	8.9	1.4	1.0	1.0
Rural	22.1	16.6	16.5	13.5	7.8	2.3	0.9	0.6
High school	33.0	26.5	19.5	30.3	23.2	14.8	10.0	7.5
City	44.8	36.8	29.9	39.0	37.0	28.8	18.2	11.9
Suburban	27.1	20.9	11.0	25.5	22.0	12.4	6.6	4.8
Town	32.3	26.8	22.2	31.3	18.8	11.4	9.9	10.3
Rural	29.0	22.9	18.0	26.8	13.6	6.0	6.2	4.9

! Interpret data with caution.

‡ Reporting standards not met.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, "Teacher Questionnaire," 2003-04.

Figure 4. Percentage of public school teachers who reported potential problems as “serious problems” in their schools, by type of problem, locale, and grade level taught: 2003-2004

Similar responses were conveyed by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute in a 2000 survey of high school principals. Fifty-five percent of the high school principals reported student tardiness as a serious problem (Gardner & Thompson, 2000, ¶ 4). The information provided by the 2000 report correlated with the NCES information on student tardiness reported earlier. However, in June of 2007, James Sloan, presented new findings from a similar Maine study. He reported that student tardiness was now listed as the fifth most reported problem by Maine high school principals at fifty percent. The 2007 percentage was close to the 2000 percentage but other issues were now reported as more of a problem including student motivation, lack of parental involvement, and funding for curricular enhancement (Sloan, 2007). Sloan's motivation for the study also stemmed from his view that smaller schools were the answer to Maine's problems with their high schools. To solidify this proposal, he reported many of the problems reported by Maine high school principals to be more of a problem in larger schools than in smaller schools. For example, sixty-three percent of the principals in larger Maine high schools reported student tardiness to be more of a problem as compared to thirty-seven percent of the principals in smaller Maine high schools (Sloan, 2007).

Lastly, another report from the National Center for Educational Statistics entitled, *Characteristics of At-Risk Students NELS: 88* provided some of the most alarming statistics concerning the correlation among factors such as student tardiness and student achievement. The report stated, "Students who were frequently absent or tardy, or who frequently cut classes were also more likely to fail at school" (Kaufman & Bradbury, 1992, p. 32). The study inspected eighth grade students who were characterized as "At-Risk." Several characteristics were observed including student behavior, which was one of seven qualities being measured and compared. The other characteristics were basic demographic characteristics, family and personal

background characteristics, the amount of parental involvement in the student's education, the student's academic history, teacher perceptions of the student, and the characteristics of the student's school (Kaufman & Bradbury, 1992). Student absenteeism, tardiness, and cutting school were associated with poor student outcomes for all demographic sub-groups. Students who were tardy three to four times per month had a one and a half times greater chance of low math and reading performance and twice the chance of ultimately dropping out of school than students who were never tardy (Kaufman & Bradbury, 1992). If a student was tardy ten times a month, the numbers climbed to three times the chance of poor math and reading performance and seven times the chance of dropping out of school (Kaufman & Bradbury, 1992). The chance of a student performing poorly in math, reading, and ultimately dropping out of school increased with the number of times a student was tardy to school and to class. Surprisingly, the statistics were higher for student tardiness than for student absenteeism.

Impact of the Problem of Tardiness

Instructional Time and Tardiness

Students who are tardy miss valuable instructional time, and those students who are on time to class continually have their learning interrupted by students who are tardy. Their valuable instructional time is constantly taken from them on a daily basis and many suffer because of student tardiness (U.S. Department of Education, national Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Shupe, 1998; Marzano, 2000; Dinkes, 2007; eCampus.net, 2008). A 1998 report from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, encapsulated student absenteeism and tardiness with the following statement:

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school, arrive late, or cut class, they

forgo opportunities to learn. Furthermore, when students disrupt classes by being late or frequently absent, they interfere with other students' opportunities to learn (p.3).

Student tardiness reduces instructional time, which can negatively affect an entire school organization (Shupe, 1998; Marzano, 2000; eCampusUSA.net, 2008). Shupe (1998), a principal at Lakeview Middle School in Sanford, Florida, saw the importance of addressing the problem of student tardiness as well as other school-wide discipline problems based on the amount of classroom discipline problems and loss of instructional time and how it was affecting his school. Shupe (1998) stated "Not only was instructional time being lost, teachers were feeling out of control and their morale was ebbing" (p. 25). Teachers were frustrated with the amount of classroom disruptions caused by the lack of control in the school, especially when it came to student tardiness, and the problem was draining the life out of the school. Xiaofeng (2007) reiterated these feelings in an article entitled, *what is the Most Effective Way to keep Teachers?*, which highlighted a study aimed at looking at ways of keeping teachers in the profession. Student tardiness was one factor that began to stress teachers and detract from the learning and teaching environment and ultimately led to their disconnection and resignation from the field of teaching (Xiaofeng, 2007).

Grayson (2008) indicated in a report entitled *What do a Million Tardies Teach Us about Accountability* an alarming 166,667 hours of instructional time was lost on average to student tardiness when analyzing the effects of a campus tracking system on student tardiness. The report looked at a proposed tracking system to help alleviate student tardiness on high school campuses. The study tracked student tardiness over a three year period at "dozens of high schools" (eCampusUSA.net, 2008, pg. 2). In the report, Grayson stated:

The most dramatic conclusion is that if you reduce 1,000,000 tardies by 75%-85% the net result is a minimum gain of approximately 125,000 hours of instruction. If this is divided by 875 hours of instruction in a school year, the result is 142.85 years of instruction. Not a small number! (eCampusUSA.net, 2008, pg. 5)

Even more alarming was the statistic of over 190 years that the administration spent in coping with the issues related to student tardiness, which had instructional and economic effects.

The gain of 142.85 years to teach students is important but equally important is that by reducing the tardies it also results in at least an equal freeing of administration time. If 125,000 hours of administration time for a person paid \$20 per hour were gained, it would result in a savings of \$2,500,000.00. Again, this is no small number. Those 10-minute intervals for tardiness add up. Even if you cut the number in half, it would still be significant. (eCampusUSA.net, 2008, pg. 5)

Marzano (2000), one of the leading experts of effective school reform, highlighted studies where instructional time lost to student tardiness had detrimental effects on overall student achievement and school performance. Marzano (2000) referred to the time lost to student tardiness as “variable” time instead of “allocated” time and called for the reduction of time lost due to student tardiness to be a critical piece of school reform.

In another study by the NCES in 2007, entitled *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007*, the percentage of public and private school teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that student misbehavior, student tardiness, and class cutting interfered with their teaching, by selected teacher and school characteristic was presented (Dinkes et al, 2007). The data was presented in figure 5. Throughout various school years, 1987 through 2003-2004, the percentage of teachers was thirty-one percent in 2003-2004 for all schools as compared to thirty-two percent

in 1987-1988 for all schools. Student tardiness was reported by secondary teachers to be more of a distraction to their teaching than elementary teachers reported, throughout all measured years of the survey, as well as being reported higher in public schools compared to private. City schools were also reported to have the highest percentage of teachers indicating student tardiness as an interference at thirty seven percent, followed by town, suburban, and then rural. Lastly, schools with an enrollment of 1,000 or more students had the highest percentage of teachers reporting tardiness as a disruption to teaching with forty-four percent followed successively by lower percentages for smaller school populations (Dinkes et al., 2007).

Teacher or school characteristic	Interfered with teaching									
	Student misbehavior					Student tardiness and class cutting				
	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04	1987–88	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000	2003–04
Total	40.2	33.8	41.4	38.6	35.2	32.7	—	25.5	29.4	31.4
Years of teaching experience										
3 or fewer	42.2	35.6	45.0	41.5	39.5	34.7	—	27.9	32.4	34.2
4 to 9	40.1	33.6	42.0	40.5	36.3	31.4	—	25.6	30.1	32.1
10 to 19	39.5	33.0	40.7	36.4	34.1	31.7	—	24.3	26.7	30.7
20 or more	40.7	34.2	40.2	37.6	32.9	34.4	—	25.6	29.3	29.7
School level ¹										
Elementary	39.2	34.1	40.9	39.1	33.9	22.6	—	17.2	24.2	26.5
Secondary	43.2	34.9	43.7	39.5	40.1	49.9	—	43.0	41.5	43.8
Sector										
Public ²	42.4	35.7	44.2	40.8	37.3	34.7	—	27.9	31.5	33.4
Private	24.2	20.0	22.4	24.1	20.8	17.2	—	8.7	15.0	16.9
School enrollment										
Fewer than 200	31.9	25.0	31.2	32.6	29.7	24.6	—	14.8	21.8	25.0
200–499	36.7	30.6	36.9	36.4	30.9	24.0	—	17.0	25.1	26.3
500–749	41.2	34.9	42.0	40.0	34.0	29.0	—	21.2	27.2	28.1
750–999	44.6	39.3	47.5	39.8	37.2	35.6	—	30.2	27.7	31.1
1,000 or more	47.0	38.9	48.0	41.9	43.7	54.2	—	46.8	41.7	44.9
Urbanicity ³										
City	—	—	—	—	41.9	—	—	—	—	36.9
Suburban	—	—	—	—	32.7	—	—	—	—	28.8
Town	—	—	—	—	33.5	—	—	—	—	30.6
Rural	—	—	—	—	31.2	—	—	—	—	28.4

— Not available.

¹ Elementary schools are defined as schools in which the lowest grade is less than or equal to grade 6 and the highest grade is less than or equal to grade 8. Secondary schools are defined as schools in which the lowest grade is greater than or equal to grade 7. Combined schools are included in totals, but are not shown separately.

² The public sector includes public, public charter, and Bureau of Indian Education school teachers.

³ Substantial improvements in geocoding technology and changes in the Office of Management and Budget's definition of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas allow for more precision in describing an area. Comparisons with earlier years are not possible.

NOTE: Teachers who taught only prekindergarten students are excluded. Population sizes for teachers are 2,623,000 in 1987–88; 2,905,000 in 1990–91; 2,930,000 in 1993–94; 3,452,000

in 1999–2000; and 3,704,000 in 2003–04.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," and "Private School Teacher Data File," 1993–94, 1999–2000, and 2003–04; "Charter School Teacher Data File," 1999–2000; and "Bureau of Indian Affairs Teacher Data File," 1999–2000 and 2003–04.

Figure 5. Percentage of public and private school teachers who agreed or strongly agreed that student misbehavior and student tardiness and class cutting interfered with their teaching, by selected teacher and school characteristics: Various school years, 1987-88 through 2003-2004

Disrespect and Student Tardiness

The superfluous amount of previously affirmed studies have shown the detrimental effects student tardiness has on teachers, students, and instructional time, as well as the extent of the issue as reported by educational leaders (Reis, 2001; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d.; Wenglinsky, 1999). However, the issue of student tardiness has implications for schools that go far and above the simple classroom disruption. The underlying issue stemmed from the unpretentious lack of respect and disregard for the authority of teachers and administrators. Students who arrived late to school and to class were disrespecting the administration, the teachers, and the other students in the class with their constant tardiness (Reis, 2001). In a study entitled, *Student Empowerment: Effects on a High School Tardy Policy*, students who were regularly tardy to a particular class were “implying that there are other aspects of their life more important than the class,” and eventually did not even feel compelled to justify the tardy except with the reason “I am just late” (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d., p. 23). The insolent attitude often translated into other major infractions of school rules and policies. Higher-level policy infractions included fighting, smoking, drug and alcohol use, and bringing weapons to school. In an address to the Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee, Research scientist Wenglinsky (1999) highlighted findings from a study he conducted entitled, *Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement*. Wenglinsky (1999) testified:

The central lesson to learn from that study is that, while levels of violence and drug use are far too high in our schools, there is as great, and perhaps a greater, problem. Namely, that many of our students fail to meet the basic standards of conduct that make learning possible, from treating teachers with respect, to attending class in a regular fashion (Appendix B, ¶2).

He also found, from a survey of 1300 students, most did not think it was appropriate to strike a teacher or steal but did think it was acceptable to cheat, skip class, or disrespect a teacher. In addition, his findings were correlated to achievement in core subjects, and both major and minor offenses, such as tardiness, had detrimental effects on the test results. Lastly, Wenglinsky (1999) presented findings related to strategies aimed at reducing both major and minor offenses. He found strategies that were most effective were those which “target less serious behaviors to controlling student movements during the day, and ones that provide less severe punishments for less serious behaviors, and more severe punishments for more serious behaviors” (Wenglinsky, 1999, Appendix B, ¶ 11). He summarized his findings by calling for school leaders to put “less serious transgressions,” such as tardiness, which he termed “quality of life offenses,” to the forefront of educational reform (Wenglinsky, 1999, Appendix B, p. 14). Focusing on the minor offenses in a school helped reduce the number of more dangerous and serious transgressions happening in schools, raise student achievement, and had an overall positive impact on the school culture and the school community.

Demographic Factors Related to Student Tardiness

Several factors, which created conditions where student tardiness flourished, were revealed from the research (Kosakowski, 1998; Nelson, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Williams, 1998; Wahlstrom, 2002; United Students Organization of Roosevelt High School, 2003). A research project presented by the *United Students Organization of Roosevelt High School* indicated overcrowded conditions contributed to student tardiness, and one student exclaimed, “Overcrowding!!! I hate being in a crowded school” (2003, p.3). Some students identified the teacher as not valuing or enforcing the tardy policy and recognized they could arrive late to class and not be penalized for being tardy. A

teacher who did not stay consistent with the policies of the school triggered a break down in the organizational structure of the school (Williams, 1998).

Damico (1990), in a study entitled *The Route to Graduation: Perceptions of General Education Students. Final Report*, had similar responses given by two hundred and thirty-six students, administrators, teachers, and counselors from six Florida high schools. Students in the survey reported “overcrowding had a negative impact on all problems” in the school and cited “crowded halls, limited opportunities for social interaction, irrelevant course content, and teacher indifference” to be main factors contributing to student tardiness (Damico, 1990, p. 9).

Nelson (1998) presented several other reasons in a study entitled, “*I Got Lost on the Way*”-*Why Students Are Late to School. Student Spotlight*. Female students at a private middle school were interviewed and asked for the reasons they were often late to school. Transportation problems were the most frequently reported reason for being tardy to school. Other explanations were medical issues, getting up late, family problems, and various additional reasons including no reason at all.

Instructional Level and Student Tardiness

The literature was consistent with the findings that student tardiness was a problem for schools at all levels of education including elementary, middle, and secondary. As stated earlier in the chapter, in the 1998 NCES report on violence and discipline problems in U.S. public schools, forty percent of the all public school principals surveyed said student tardiness was the most serious or moderate problem in their school. In addition, in the same report, student tardiness was reported by high school principals to be more of a problem than middle or elementary school principals reported. Again, this was consistent with the literature where student tardiness was a bigger problem in high schools than elementary or middle schools. The

data was presented in figure 6. In the 1996-97 school year, sixty-seven percent of the high school principals reported student tardiness was a serious or moderate problem as compared to fifty percent during the 1990-91 school year (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). The percentage of student tardiness reported was higher during the 1996-97 school year than the 1990-91 school year and the percentages were consistent with each instructional level. In both measured years, high school principals reported student tardiness as being more of a problem at their instructional level than at the middle or elementary levels (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998).

Discipline issue	Instructional level							
	1990-91				1996-97			
	Total	Elementary school	Middle school	High school	Total	Elementary school	Middle school	High school
Student tardiness.....	34	25	44	50	40	32	40	67
Student absenteeism/class cutting.....	25	18	31	39	25	17	24	52
Physical conflicts among students	23	20	40	17	21	18	35	17
Robbery or theft of items over \$10...	7	4	10	14	5	2	7	15
Vandalism of school property.....	12	10	16	13	8	6	10	13
Student alcohol use.....	10	1	10	37	7	1	7	27
Student drug use.....	6	1	5	20	9	(+)	10	36
Sale of drugs on school grounds.....	1	(+)	1	2	2	0	1	10
Student tobacco use.....	13	1	21	40	14	2	19	48
Student possession of weapons.....	3	2	6	3	2	1	5	2
Trespassing.....	7	5	14	7	4	3	5	8
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	11	8	20	13	12	6	23	20
Physical abuse of teachers.....	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	1
Teacher absenteeism.....	14	11	21	17	10	7	15	17
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	1	1	2	1	(+)	0	(+)	(+)
Racial tensions.....	5	4	7	5	3	2	4	7
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	5	2	10	9

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey On School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 6. Percent of public school principals reporting that certain discipline issues were serious or moderate problems in their schools, by type of issue and instructional level: 1990-91 and 1996-97.

School Size and Student Tardiness

The 1998 NCES report also looked at the size of the school in regards to student tardiness. The data was presented in figure 7. Student tardiness was reported as a more serious or moderate problem in schools with student populations of one thousand or more during both the 1996-97 school year and the 1990-91 school year. Sixty-four percent of the principals in 1996 reported student tardiness as a problem, and sixty-two percent in 1990 reported student tardiness to be a problem. The percentages for both academic years were lower for middle schools at forty-two percent in 1996 and thirty-four percent in 1990 and elementary schools at twenty-nine percent in 1996 and twenty-six percent in 1990 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). Schools with student populations of one thousand or more were more likely to have higher incidents of student tardiness compared to schools with populations ranging from 999 to 300 students. Student populations of less than three hundred students had the lowest occurrences of student tardiness for both surveyed years. Bailey (2000) reiterated findings from a report entitled, *Status of Education in Rural America*, which concurred with the finding in the 1998 NCES report where smaller schools had fewer occurrences of student tardiness than larger schools.

In 1988, an assessment was given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to various schools across the nation. The assessments and questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers across grades four, eight, and twelve and focused on policy changes and school climate. The report showed policy changes were more frequent in schools with a higher minority enrollment. The report also highlighted the indicator of student tardiness as being reported by teachers to be more of a problem in larger, city schools with a high minority, low socioeconomic enrollment (Bernstein, 1990).

Discipline issue	School size							
	1990-91				1996-97			
	Total	<300	300-999	1,000 or more	Total	<300	300-999	1,000 or more
Student tardiness.....	34	26	34	62	40	29	42	64
Student absenteeism/class cutting.....	25	18	25	44	25	19	24	53
Physical conflicts among students.....	23	16	25	30	21	13	22	31
Robbery or theft of items over \$10.....	7	5	7	16	5	2	6	12
Vandalism of school property.....	12	12	10	24	8	7	7	20
Student alcohol use.....	10	13	7	25	7	7	6	18
Student drug use.....	6	6	3	19	9	8	7	29
Sale of drugs on school grounds.....	1	0	1	4	2	1	1	11
Student tobacco use.....	13	11	10	33	14	13	11	40
Student possession of weapons.....	3	1	3	9	2	1	2	3
Trespassing.....	7	3	8	12	4	2	4	12
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	11	4	14	17	12	7	12	26
Physical abuse of teachers.....	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	1
Teacher absenteeism.....	14	9	15	26	10	5	11	25
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	1	1	1	2	(+)	0	(+)	1
Racial tensions.....	5	3	5	11	3	(+)	4	7
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	5	2	5	16

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 7. Percentage of public school principals reporting that certain discipline issues were serious or moderate problems in their schools, by type of issue and size of school: 1990-91 and 1996-97

School Locale and Student Tardiness

The location of the public school was also examined in the NCES 1998 report. The data was presented in figure 8. Student tardiness was reported by public school principals as being higher in city schools during both instructional years. In 1996, forty-nine percent of the principals reported student tardiness as being a serious or moderate problem as compared to forty-seven percent in 1990. Forty-four percent of the principals of urban schools in 1996 reported student tardiness as being an issue as compared to thirty-three percent of the principals of urban schools in 1990. Thirty-eight percent of the principals of schools in towns in 1996 reported student tardiness as a problem as compared to thirty percent of the town principals in 1990. Lastly, thirty-one percent of the principals in rural schools reported student tardiness as a problem in 1996 as compared to twenty-seven percent of the principals in 1990. In both years, the ratio of principals reporting that tardiness was a serious or moderate problem at their school locale was unsurprisingly similar. Again, the findings highlighted rural schools had lower occurrences of tardiness compared to town, urban, and city schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Bailey, 2000). The previously referenced 1988 assessment given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also highlighted the indicator of student tardiness as being reported by teachers to be more of a problem in city schools as compared to rural, town, and urban (Bernstein, 1990).

Butterfield, Muse, and Anderson (1996) showed, in a study examining differences between rural and urban junior high schools, more problems were reported with student tardiness in urban junior high schools than in rural junior high schools. The study, which examined twelve urban and rural middle and junior high schools, also showed an overall increase in the amount and frequency of all discipline problems in urban schools compared to rural schools. However,

even though rural schools reported less occurrences of student tardiness than urban schools, rural schools did report higher occurrences of classroom disruption and fighting.

Discipline issue	Locale									
	1990-91					1996-97				
	Total	City	Urban fringe	Town	Rural	Total	City	Urban fringe	Town	Rural
Student tardiness.....	34	47	33	30	27	40	49	44	38	31
Student absenteeism/class cutting.....	25	35	24	22	20	25	28	24	24	25
Physical conflicts among students.....	23	30	26	21	15	21	25	25	19	14
Robbery or theft of items over \$10.....	7	9	6	4	9	5	5	5	7	4
Vandalism of school property.....	12	19	10	8	11	8	11	9	7	5
Student alcohol use.....	10	9	7	7	17	7	4	6	9	9
Student drug use.....	6	7	4	5	6	9	7	8	12	10
Sale of drugs on school grounds.....	1	1	2	0	1	2	2	2	3	2
Student tobacco use.....	13	11	9	13	17	14	10	11	17	18
Student possession of weapons.....	3	7	1	2	1	2	4	2	0	1
Trespassing.....	7	14	7	2	5	4	7	5	3	3
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	11	18	10	9	7	12	17	12	10	9
Physical abuse of teachers.....	1	3	(+)	1	0	2	5	(+)	1	1
Teacher absenteeism.....	14	20	14	11	12	10	12	10	11	10
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	1	2	2	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	0
Racial tensions.....	5	8	5	5	2	3	6	3	3	1
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	5	10	6	3	2

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 8. Percent of public school principals reporting that certain discipline issues were serious or moderate problems in their schools, by type of issue and location of school: 1990-91 and 1996-1997

Minority Enrollment and Student Tardiness

The 1998 NCES report went on to examine discipline problems reported by principals by minority enrollment. The data was presented in figure 9. It was reported that schools with a higher enrollment of minority students had a higher reported percentage of principals reporting student tardiness as a serious or moderate problem. In 1996, fifty percent of the surveyed principals reported student tardiness to be a problem, and in 1990 fifty-three percent of the principals reported student tardiness to be a problem. In both years, the percentages of principals reporting tardiness as a problem decreased with the decrease in minority enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). In addition, the 1988 assessment given by NAEP showed policy changes were more frequent in schools with a higher minority enrollment and highlighted the indicator of student tardiness as being reported by teachers to be more of a problem in schools with a high minority enrollment (Bernstein, 1990).

Discipline issue	Minority enrollment									
	1990-91					1996-97				
	Total	<5%	5-19%	20-49%	50% or more	Total	<5%	5-19%	20-49%	50% or more
Student tardiness.....	34	22	32	48	53	41	25	42	45	56
Student absenteeism/class cutting.....	25	18	17	36	39	26	19	24	26	35
Physical conflicts among students.....	23	16	16	32	40	21	12	19	23	31
Robbery or theft of items over \$10.....	7	5	10	7	9	5	4	6	5	7
Vandalism of school property.....	12	7	11	18	21	8	6	6	6	16
Student alcohol use.....	10	11	12	6	11	7	10	10	5	3
Student drug use.....	6	6	4	5	7	9	9	14	7	7
Sale of drugs on school grounds.....	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	1	3
Student tobacco use.....	13	16	11	10	9	14	16	19	15	7
Student possession of weapons.....	3	2	(+)	5	7	2	1	2	2	3
Trespassing.....	7	4	7	8	12	4	2	6	3	7
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	11	9	5	19	15	12	9	11	13	17
Physical abuse of teachers.....	1	1	0	1	3	2	1	2	3	1
Teacher absenteeism.....	14	11	9	15	28	10	9	5	9	18
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	1	1	(+)	1	1	(+)	(+)	0	0	(+)
Racial tensions.....	5	2	2	13	6	3	1	5	3	4
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	5	(+)	5	4	12

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 9. Percentage of public school principals reporting that certain discipline issues were serious or moderate problems in their schools, by type of issue and minority enrollment of school: 1990-91 and 1996-97

Poverty Level and Student Tardiness

The last indicator, highlighted in the 1998 NCES report, pertained to student tardiness and poverty level of the school. The data was presented in figure 10. Student tardiness was reported to be more of a problem in schools with a higher percentage of students eligible for the federally funded free or reduced-price lunch program. In 1996, forty-seven percent of the surveyed principals in schools with seventy-five percent or higher of free and reduced lunch eligible students reported tardiness to be a serious or moderate problem as compared to fifty-one percent in 1990. The percentages steadily reduced with the reduction in the student population that was eligible for free and reduced lunch (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). In addition, schools with a high number of students in less advantaged situations were also reported to have higher occurrences of student tardiness as reported by NAEP in the 1988 report on policy changes and school climate (Bernstein, 1990).

Discipline issue	Percent of students eligible for the federally funded free or reduced-price lunch program											
	1990-91						1996-97					
	Total	<20%	20-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75% or more	Total	<20%	20-34%	35-49%	50-74%	75% or more
Student tardiness.....	34	27	26	30	49	51	40	36	36	45	42	47
Student absenteeism/class cutting.....	25	17	18	23	35	46	25	21	24	25	28	32
Physical conflicts among students.....	23	15	19	21	32	40	21	13	19	22	24	29
Robbery or theft of items over \$10.....	7	7	6	4	11	8	5	6	6	5	4	6
Vandalism of school property.....	12	7	9	11	16	25	8	5	6	6	8	17
Student alcohol use.....	10	13	9	7	9	12	7	11	8	8	4	3
Student drug use.....	6	7	3	2	4	13	9	12	10	9	7	5
Sale of drugs on school grounds.....	1	1	1	(+)	(+)	0	2	3	3	1	2	1
Student tobacco use.....	13	16	11	10	13	9	14	18	17	20	10	6
Student possession of weapons.....	3	1	2	2	4	11	2	1	1	3	3	2
Trespassing.....	7	7	5	3	9	13	4	3	3	4	5	7
Verbal abuse of teachers.....	11	7	7	9	17	24	12	8	13	13	13	13
Physical abuse of teachers.....	1	0	1	0	2	6	2	0	2	4	2	1
Teacher absenteeism.....	14	9	11	12	16	33	10	7	8	13	11	15
Teacher alcohol or drug use.....	1	1	(+)	2	1	1	(+)	(+)	(+)	0	(+)	0
Racial tensions.....	5	3	2	6	7	7	3	3	3	3	4	4
Gangs.....	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	5	1	4	4	6	11

*The percent of students eligible for the federally funded free or reduced-price lunch program was used as a measure of poverty for the school population.

‡ Data not available because this item was not asked in the 1991 survey.

(+) Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Principal/School Disciplinary Survey on School Violence," FRSS 63, 1997; "Public School Principal Survey on Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools," FRSS 41, 1991.

Figure 10. Percentage of public school principals reporting that certain discipline issues were serious or moderate problems in their schools, by type of issue and poverty level of school: 1990-91 and 1996-97

Organizational Culture of High Schools and Student Tardiness

Marzano (2000) provided several consistent factors associated with high performing schools including strong leadership, high expectations for students, an orderly atmosphere, an emphasis on basic skills, and effective monitoring. Lezotte (2008) shared similar factors with his *Effective Schools Correlates*, which included: instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relations, opportunities to learn, and student time on task. Furthermore, there was an abundance of literature that utilized, in some manner, the correlates and factors presented by Marzano and Lezotte (Herman, J., 1993; Taylor & Bullard, 1995; Association for Effective Schools, Inc., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Intermountain Center for Education Effectiveness, 2001). The third correlate presented by Marzano and Lezotte drew a parallel to the organizational culture of high schools. The following sections elaborated on several topics connected to the organizational culture of high schools, including how high schools are organized in reference to scheduling, school start times, and the correlation to student tardiness.

Daily Schedules of High School

Marzano (2000) provided several consistent factors associated with high performing schools, including strong leadership, high expectations for students, an orderly atmosphere, an emphasis on basic skills, and effective monitoring. The third correlate given by Marzano drew a parallel to how high schools were organized. High schools across the United States differed in the way the school day was organized, and until recently, the majority of the nation's high schools followed a traditional daily schedule, which allowed for six to eight instructional periods per day (Freeman, 2001). Students commonly spent from thirty to forty-five minutes in each

class and transitioned from class to class in four to five minute increments (Smith & Camara, 2009). However, in the age of school reform, in hopes of raising student achievement, many schools have opted for the less traditional, block scheduling. Block scheduling allowed the student to remain in the class for a longer duration to receive more, continuous instruction but attend fewer classes each day. A research report compiled by the Office of Research and Development at the College Board described two types of block schedules that schools employed. The first was termed semesterized block scheduling where “schedules compress a full year course into a semester through daily extended class periods that extend class periods from over sixty to ninety minutes each day per course” (Smith & Camara, 2009, p. 1). The second was termed extended block scheduling and “is completed through the same extended class periods throughout the year” (Smith & Camara, 2009, p.1). There was an abundance of research offering pros and cons for both types of high school scheduling options and if the scheduling options had any effect on the school community and overall student achievement (Baker, Joireman, Clay, & Abbott, 2006; Freeman, 2001; Freeman & Muryama, 2006; McCoy & Helen, 1998; Smith & Camara, 2009; Walker, 2000; Wallinger, 1999).

High School Start Times

High schools were also set on specific time schedules in which instruction commenced and ended and, as with scheduling, the times of the instructional day varied from school to school and from state to state. A study completed by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota presented variations the Minneapolis School District made to their high school start times prior to the 1997-98 school year. The traditional start time of the instructional day was changed from 7:15 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., and

dismissal time was changed from 1:45 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. (Wahlstrom, 2002; Wahlstrom, Davison, Choi & Ross, 2001).

Wolfson and Carskadon (2005) revealed information pertaining to high school start times from their study entitled, *A Survey of Factors Influencing High School Start Times*. The study identified three hundred and forty- five high schools across the nation to partake in the study. School personnel were surveyed as to their perception of high school start times. Other information was also gathered; including information concerning aspects of school start times, as well as organizational and decision making data. The surveys exposed many factors concerning why a school may or may not change its start time. The majority of the schools surveyed had not considered changing their start times, while those that did change the start time showed concerns for students' sleep time. The study also highlighted many positive results, including a reduction in student tardiness. Dawson (2005) agreed with the sleep concerns identified by Wolfson and Carskadon (2005) for teenagers and affirmed that later start times would have positive benefits for high school teenagers, including a significant reduction in student tardiness.

Strategies and Best Practices Aimed at Reducing Student Tardiness

Several studies revealed numerous principals' strategies aimed at combating student tardiness. Delguzzi (1999) gave several examples of how principals have been creative with trying to solve this problem. Some principals locked students completely out of their schools while others charged the students money for each tardy. Some swept the halls of their schools and placed the late students into "tardy rooms" to wait until the next class period and to minimize disruptions to instruction (Delguzzi, 1999, ¶ 3; United Students Organization for Improving Roosevelt High School, 2003, p. 3). The following presented the vast array of

strategies school administrators have undertaken to reduce student tardiness in their respective schools.

Traditional Strategies Aimed at Reducing Student Tardiness

Some principals relied on strategies that were more traditional by following district policy manuals when battling the problem (Duncan, 1992; Killon, 1997). Examples of traditional consequences for student tardiness were specified in The Richmond County Board of Education *Code of Student Conduct and Discipline*, where a student was given one hour of detention and a letter was sent home at the fifth tardy level, suspended for three days at eleven tardies, suspended five days for sixteen tardies, and given ten days suspension for every five tardies past that level (2006, p.11). Killon (1997) found that suspending students for discipline problems, such as tardiness, was an effective strategy utilized by Indiana secondary school principals, with the least effective being detention. Duncan (1992) also cited suspensions as an effective consequence for reducing tardiness but cited detention as the highest ranked deterrent as perceived by South Carolina public secondary administrators to alleviate all discipline problems. In school suspensions, parent conferences, and student conferences were also listed by Duncan (1992) as being effective deterrents. Interestingly, the 1920 *Manual of General Information: Public Schools of Augusta and Richmond County Georgia*, addressed student tardiness where “pupils are required to be punctual” and the “loss of lesson by reason of tardiness must be made up after school hours” (1920, p.18). It continued by stating: “Two cases of tardiness shall be considered equivalent to one case of absence,” and excessive absences would result in pupils “to forfeit their seats” (The Richmond County Board of Education, 1920, p.18).

Non-traditional Strategies Aimed at Reducing Student Tardiness

Less traditional approaches were also reported in the literature as being utilized by high school principals across the nation (Mass Insight Education, n.d.; University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d.; Furtwengler, 1996; Delguzzi, 1999; United Students Organization for Improving Roosevelt High School, 2003; Muir, 2006). In a research brief cited in *The Principal's Partnership*, several responses to student tardiness were listed, including an incident where “students in one California high school are fined one hundred and sixty-five dollars if they are tardy more than twice” (Muir, February, 2006). Following the monetary penalty for student tardiness, one principal in Tennessee charged an undisclosed amount to each student who was late (Delguzzi, 1999). Another less traditional solution was introduced in a study entitled, *Student Empowerment: Effects on a High School Tardy Policy*. The inquiry posed the question, “How does student empowerment affect students’ motivation to follow a high school tardy policy?” (University of Wisconsin-la Crosse, n.d., p. 5). The study theorized that students of the school would create the tardy policy, and their ownership in the policy would cause them to abide by it more closely, thus reducing student tardiness school-wide. Several studies conducted by Furtwengler (1996) indicated when students had a voice in the policies of their school; they would be more likely to abide by them. Student tardiness was one factor that was greatly reduced by allowing students to contribute to the development and implementation of school-wide discipline policies. The environment created by this type of empowerment would be open and democratic where all would have input into the workings of the school. Brooker and McDonald (as cited in *Student Empowerment*, n.d., p. 7) eluded that even though students were the focal point of education, they were rarely, if ever, conferred with when it came to the policies of their schools.

A similar proposal entitled *Empowering (and enabling) Parents and Students to Take an Active Role in School Issues* was developed by Sylvia Day, principal of Studley Elementary School in Attleboro, Massachusetts, where she “built a sense of increased accountability among parents and students alike empowering (and enabling) parents and students to take an active role in school issues” (Mass Insight Education, n.d., ¶ 1). There were many issues addressed by the proposal, which affected the entire school community including student tardiness. The “blueprint” for reform started with better tracking of a student’s tardiness and absenteeism and more consistent and immediate contact with the parent. The model also suggested a solid system of rewards to be implemented for students with good attendance and tardiness. The whole program was based on the foundation of “public awareness,” where paying attention to those with attendance and tardiness problems, as well as those with good attendance and tardiness, stirred a commitment for the entire community to work toward improvement (Mass Insight Education, n.d., ¶ 14). Owens (2004) highlighted a similar motivational effect with the Western Electric Studies, which revealed “a direct relationship between productivity and psychological phenomena, such as the expectations of others and being the focus of attention” (p. 352). Owens warned that “just paying attention to people” was not all required to motivate people to improve, but it was through empowerment and “ownership” where true effective change ensued (2004, p. 354).

Another strategy aimed at reducing student tardiness was presented in a study entitled *The United Students Plan for Improving the Quality of Education at Roosevelt High School* (2003). The plan focused on improving the graduation rate and college eligibility of students from the inner city Los Angeles School. The entire plan was researched, developed, and presented by the student organization with hopes of improving learning conditions for the

students of the school and facilitating an environment of fairness and collaboration between the administration, the faculty, and the students. The main target of the proposal, on the issue of student tardiness, was the use of a “tardy room” when students of the school were tardy to class. One student commented on the tardy room by saying, “The tardy room is taking our education. Instead of teaching us something, they make us write things that make no sense” (United Students Organization for Improving Roosevelt High School, 2003, p. 3). Students also perceived the “tardy room” as being at the root of the drop out problem where some would drop out of school after continually being placed in the room. The student organization proposed several changes to help improve the student achievement at the school, including elimination of the tardy room and a more proactive intervention by the counselors. Again, this approach called for a closer tracking of a student’s attendance and more empowerment of students and parents to help correct the problem. Finckler (2000) also showed, in a study of the effectiveness of a teen mentoring program, that getting students involved with school concerns greatly reduced the amount of student tardiness. Burns (as cited in Owens, 2004, p. 275) added, when leaders empowered teachers, which can also be true for students, they “participate actively”, and “acquire greater personal ownership, and thus a greater sense of personal commitment”. The empowered student population monitored their own behavior and did not allow student tardiness to negatively affect the school (United Students Organization for Improving Roosevelt High School, 2003).

The “No Passing Plan” was presented by Harriman and Pierre (2009) as an effective strategy for reducing student tardiness in a high school. Associate principals Harriman and Pierre at White Bear Lake High School, which is a suburban high school in Minnesota with an enrollment of over 1300 students, developed the plan as an alternative to suspension for students

with chronic tardiness. The plan called for the identified students to leave their classes two minutes early and arrive at their next class at the ringing of the next bell. The plan was also effective in reducing incidents of misbehavior as a proactive approach when students were having conflicts with one another. However, research pertaining to the plan revealed that for the plan to be effective, the “administrator needs to know students as individuals to make discipline most effective” (Harriman & Pierre, 2009, p. 1).

Another strategy, a positive behavior support plan, called active supervision, was implemented in a rural, southeast high school with an enrollment of four hundred and fifty students (Johnson-Gros, Lyons, & Griffin, 2008). The plan called for teachers to monitor students in the halls of the school during class changes and to pre-correct behaviors before they escalated into discipline infractions including tardiness. The students were given a non-verbal cue, such as a hand gesture, or a verbal reminder to correct incorrect behavior and intervene before subsequent violations occur. The findings from the study showed a decrease in student tardiness throughout the entire instructional day by use of the active supervision strategy.

An additional round of strategies were reported by Chaker (2005) in an article published in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled, “Schools get tough on tardy students; Facing funding sanctions, educators try sticks, carrots; from popcorn to the police”. One principal at a North Carolina elementary school placed students in a tardy tank when they were late to school until the next subject began. The principal reported a reduction in tardiness to school because the students did not like being placed in the secluded room (Chaker, 2005). Chaker (2005) also reported one principal who bought alarm clocks, held raffles, and gave free ice cream in an attempt to get students to school on time. Another principal threatened to have students put in jail

if they did not report to school on time. Further strategies, reported by Chaker (2005), aimed at reducing tardiness were as follows:

- Monthly after school movies for punctual students
- Raffles for bicycles, computer games, and ice cream parties
- Popcorn parties on Fridays
- Raffles for watches
- Principal letter detailing the consequences for further tardiness
- Tardy tank

The previously listed strategies were reported to have a positive impact on student tardiness at their schools.

Neace, Munoz, Olson-Allen, Weber, and Johnson (2003), revealed a reduction in student tardiness in a study that examined the effects of project SHIELD on at-risk students in a large urban public school district. The program, Supporting Healthy Individuals and Environments for Life (SHIELD), provided students and schools in the system support in the areas of education, mental health, and social services. The program utilized many strategies aligned with each identified area to better equip schools in order to help at-risk students. The study examined the first year of the program, and the findings revealed many small positive outcomes, including a reduction in a student's tardiness.

Din, Isack, and Rietveid (2003) presented results from their study where contingency contracts were employed to reduce tardiness in a high school. The study involved thirty-two high school students with sixteen students being assigned to two different groups, one a control and one an experimental group. The students in the experimental group were given contingency

contracts to sign, and the students were monitored and tracked for twelve weeks. The study revealed a reduction in the amount of tardiness with the students who signed the contracts.

Several studies have identified changing high school start times as being an effective strategy at reducing student tardiness (Wahlstrom, 2002; Dawson, 2005; Wolfson & Carskadon, 2005). School start times were highlighted by Wahlstrom (2002) in a review of a four-year study that looked at one high school's attempts to thwart student tardiness and attendance problems. The school delayed the start time of the school day by an hour in order to give consistently tardy and absent students more time to get to school. There was a reported significant decrease in the number of tardy students arriving to school, which greatly contributed to a more efficient school day and use of administrative time (Wahlstrom, 2002, p. 17). The results of changing school start times were also made known by Wolfson and Carskadon (2005) as being an effective strategy intended to decrease student tardiness, as reported by school personnel across the nation in a survey of factors influencing school start times. Lastly, Dawson (2005) revealed a reduction in student tardiness by changing high school start times.

Block scheduling was shown to be an effective means by which to organize a high school with the overall result of successfully reducing occurrences of student tardiness (McCoy & Helen, 1998; Rickard & Banville, 2005). One study conducted in a rural, public, secondary school, focused on block scheduling and the school's transition to utilize the less traditional method of scheduling. Students, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators were interviewed as to their perceptions and feelings about block scheduling and the transition. The findings revealed an overall positive response to the new scheduling and, more specifically, a decrease in student tardiness. Another study carried out in a southeastern school system, observed fifteen high school physical education teachers perceptions of block scheduling (Rickard

& Banville, 2005). The study, as with the previous, noted many positive outcomes from the implementation of block scheduling, including a reduction in student tardiness.

Summary

Several issues made the problem of student tardiness complex. Numerous studies and reports were presented highlighting student tardiness as a continuing problem for schools across the nation. Student tardiness was also reported to continually interfere with instructional time and create conditions that detracted from student learning and student achievement.

Many conditions that perpetuated student tardiness and environments where student tardiness was an enduring problem were also detailed. Student tardiness was detailed as being a major problem in city schools, schools with high minority enrollments, larger schools, and school with high percentages of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The research also detailed environments where there was inconsistent enforcement of the tardy policy were those with high occurrences of tardies.

The organizational differences of how high schools were structured pertaining to scheduling and start times was also presented. The research detailed high schools that followed the traditional six or seven period day and those which utilized a non-traditional block schedule. Later start times were also employed by many high schools to help reduce student tardiness by allowing more time in the morning as compared to high school that started earlier. The research cited high schools instituting an 8:40 a.m. start time as compared to the earlier 7:40 start time as a means to reduce tardiness to school.

Lastly, the previous chapter cited many attempts employed by school leaders to solve the problem of student tardiness and some effective strategies used to alleviate them. Major strategies suggested included distributing consequences, such as, suspension, in school

suspension, and detention for chronically tardy students. Other strategies included monetary penalties, student empowerment plans, parental contact and tracking campaigns, positive behavior supports, active supervision plans, no class change plans, lock downs, and tardy tanks, to name a few.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The problem of student tardiness was reported by principals over the past two decades as being one of the major problems in schools. Students who were tardy to class defied the authority of school leaders and teachers and detracted from teaching and learning in their schools. Massive amounts of instructional time were spent managing student tardiness on a daily basis. Student tardiness was correlated to a student's future success in the work force where many students who experienced tardy problems during their high school careers continued to have the same problem in their jobs. The research also presented a vast array of strategies aimed at reducing student tardiness at both the elementary and high school levels of education.

There were a limited number of relevant, recent research studies pertaining to the area of student tardiness. This deficiency in the research did not reflect the seriousness of the problem reported by high school principals. The limited research studies that were completed highlighted strategies aimed at additional student deficiencies other than student tardiness, and any reduction in student tardiness reported in the majority of research studies, was a secondary outcome. Yet, tardiness interfered with increased student learning, which was a major focus of leadership in 21st century schools.

Consequently, with not much focus given to the area of student tardiness and with student tardiness reported as a major problem in high schools across the nation, it was imperative that further research be conducted to explore this phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools and understand conditions, including strategies and best practices, which addressed tardiness problems.

Research Questions

The following overarching research question of this study was: What is the extent of student tardiness in high schools and what strategies and best practices are used to alleviate tardiness problems? The following sub-questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia?
2. How do stakeholders at high schools describe the conditions that cause student tardiness?
3. To what extent does student tardiness vary across high schools in Georgia controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and ethnicity?
4. What are strategies and best practices, which contribute to a reduction in student tardiness?

Research Design

The researcher utilized a mixed-methods study with a sequential explanatory strategy (Cresswell, 2003). Cresswell stated, “The sequential explanatory strategy is the most straight forward of the six major mixed methods approaches. It is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data” (p. 215). The first phase of this study was quantitative and descriptive using student tardiness data obtained from a selected Georgia school district’s database in order to ascertain information regarding student tardiness occurrences in high schools situated in the district. The second phase of this study was qualitative and exploratory using interviews to explore and explain effective strategies utilized to reduce student tardiness and stakeholders’ descriptions of conditions relative to student tardiness (Nardi, 2006).

This dual use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry was driven by the paradigm of logical empiricism or post-positivism and interpretivism (Glesne, 2006). Trochim

(2006) referred to post-positivism as an alignment between the scientific world of thinking and the “common sense” way of thinking. The two are not separated by much, and there should be a definite order and method for both arenas (Trochim, 2006). Both Glesne (2006) and Trochim (2006) agreed that with a post-positivist methodology, mixed or multiple methods of gathering data are necessary. Referring to interpretivism, Glesne (2006) explained it as gaining a full understanding of those involved in the study and their interactions and not just making a synopsis or summary of events.

Sample

The population for the quantitative component of this study was 9,372 students who attended ten high schools in a large, urban district in Georgia. Since the Georgia Department of Education does not collect student tardiness data as part of their measurements of discipline for high schools, the researcher relied on the database from XYZ district to provide tardiness data. Consequently, the school district served as the census sample for this study. District policies governing tardiness were consistent within the sample. The researcher was granted access to the tardiness database, and as an employee of the district, he also had access to participants involved in the qualitative part of the study.

The XYZ school district had a student population of over 32,000 students with a racial make up of one percent Asian, seventy-three percent Black, two percent Hispanic, twenty-two percent White, and two percent Multi-racial. There were ten high schools in the district, which were diverse in school size and locale. The largest high school had a population of over 1,600 students, and the smallest high school had a population under four hundred. The schools ranged in location from urban, suburban, to rural, and the minority enrollment as well as poverty level varied at each of the selected high schools. Of the ten high schools in this study and in the

district, five were ranked as urban, four as suburban, and one as rural. Of the ten schools, eight were comprehensive high schools, and two were magnet schools. The quantitative portion of this study utilized student tardiness data obtained from the XYZ school district's student database, which was an integral component in presenting the scope and magnitude of the tardiness problem.

The participants for the qualitative part of this study were administrators, teachers, and students selected by random sampling from the ten high schools in the XYZ school district. Five administrators were chosen randomly from the ten high schools and were interviewed to gain information regarding student tardiness at his/her particular site (Cresswell, 2003). Administrators were chosen randomly based on school leaders' overall responsibility of managing and supervising the school, as well as serving in the role of instructional leaders. Three teachers from one randomly chosen high school were randomly chosen from teacher rosters for the semi-structured interviews. Two focus groups of five students each were interviewed from one randomly chosen high school to obtain information pertaining to student tardiness at their respective campuses. The ten students were also randomly chosen from the school's student directory. All of the participants provided information as to what conditions they felt contributed to the student tardiness including special conditions. The participants also provided information pertaining to what strategies and practices helped reduced student tardiness occurrences. The teachers and students were chosen to gain another perspective as to the student tardiness phenomenon, which added overall depth and breadth to the study.

Instrumentation

The first part of this mixed methods study, the quantitative portion, utilized student tardiness obtained from the local database for the selected Georgia school district. The school

district utilized the web based SchoolMax system to gather, collect, report, and store student and school information. Specifically, the database collected and housed information regarding the following:

- Student contact and demographic information
- Student and school schedules
- Attendance and tardiness information
- Academic information including grades, transcripts, and standardized test scores
- Student bus and locker information
- Lunch information pertaining to free, reduced, or full priced lunches
- Information regarding students' classifications (i.e. students with disabilities, gifted, etc.)
- Discipline information

Reports for all aspects of student information contained in the database could be accessed by school and district level personnel (Harris Computers Inc., 2008). The data collected regarding student tardiness was entered into the system through use of a segment of the software called I-Que. Once a student was scheduled for a particular class and teacher, that teacher had access to class rosters available through the on-line attendance book system. Instead of entering information regarding a student's tardiness or absenteeism into the traditional attendance book, the teacher now logged onto the I-Que site through his/her classroom computer and entered the appropriate information. For tardy students, the teacher clicked on the tardy button located next to the student's name and pressed submit to transfer the data to SchoolMax. The data was then collected in the database for each student and could be accessed for the individual student, for the entire school, or for the entire district. Reports were run with the selection of many variables

including: date range of occurrences, gender, race, school, and time of occurrence. Data obtained from SchoolMax for a high school's overall tardiness for a full school year provided information as to the scope and magnitude of each school's student tardiness. The data also provided information regarding correlations among student tardiness and school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and ethnicity.

The instrument for the second part of the study was semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed by the researcher in conjunction with a professor of qualitative research from Georgia Southern University (see Appendix A). The questions were also derived by review of several research studies relevant to both qualitative and quantitative techniques and interpretivist and post-positivist epistemologies (Bogler, 1999; Bogler, 2000; Cresswell & Fisher, 1998; Glesne, 2006; Liebman et al, 2005; LoVette et al, 2001; Wilhelm, 2005; Yamagat-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006).

Data Collection

The sample for the first part of the study was a purposeful selection of ten high schools in a selected Georgia school district. Prior to the collection of student tardiness data, permission was requested from the selected school district Board of Education and Superintendent in order to gain access to high school student tardiness data for all of the district's high schools and to gain access to the administrators, teachers, and students for participation in the study. Once permission was granted, the student tardiness data was collected from the school district's local database and analyzed in order to identify the extent of student tardiness across the district over the duration of one school year. Following the analysis of the student tardiness data, an informed consent letter (see Appendix B) was given to each selected administrator and teacher participant for review and signature to gain permission to participate in the study. In addition, a minor assent

letter (see Appendix C) and a parental informed consent letter (see Appendix D) were sent home to the parents or guardians of the participating students a week prior to the interview. This letter explained the study, the instrument utilized, the requirements of participation, and the rights of the participant, and to gain parental permission for their child to participate. After permission was granted, the participants were interviewed at their school site at a time that was convenient for them. Triangulation was employed by the application of multiple data collection techniques utilized to gather the data and the many varied perspectives of different participants (Glesne, 2006). Triangulation was also evident by the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. Data was gathered from the school district's local database as well as from participant interviews. Triangulation was also evident from interviewing participants from various schools and from various levels in the school setting, including administrators, teachers, and students. This variation in the collection of data aided in the alleviation of any potential biases that may have been present in this study.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools, to understand conditions, which caused student tardiness, and to identify strategies, which addressed tardiness problems and reduced occurrences of tardiness. Therefore, in the first phase of this study, descriptive statistical analysis methods were employed in order to summarize data obtained from the selected school district's database concerning student tardiness. Reports were generated for each of the ten high schools in the district for the total number tardy occurrences, which transpired during the 2008-2009 school year. The ten reports displayed the total number of tardy occurrences that transpired at each high school for the entire student population and by

gender. The statistical analysis of the student tardy data consisted of calculating the range, minimum, maximum, median, and standard deviation for the following:

- The total number of high school students in the district
- The total number of tardy occurrences in the district for school year 2008-2009,
- The average number of tardy occurrences per school per day (180) for school year 2008-2009
- The average number of tardy occurrences per school per class change (7) for school year 2008-2009
- The average number of tardy occurrences per school per student for school year 2008-2009

In addition, the analysis was completed to provide information regarding student tardiness at each of the ten high schools. Comparisons were done which included:

- Total student population versus total number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009
- Total student population versus average number of tardy occurrences per day (180 school days)
- Total student population versus average number of tardy occurrences per student
- Total student population versus average number of tardy occurrences per class change (7)
- Percentage of student tardiness attributed to each high school

The analysis provided the researcher specific information as to the extent of the tardiness problem across the district. This enabled the researcher to make determinations as to the most effective and least effective schools at enforcing the tardy policy for school year 2008-2009. The

tardy data was then analyzed according to the high schools' size, school locale, free and reduced lunch percentages, minority enrollment, and gender. This information provided the researcher information regarding student tardiness and the relation to the listed factors. The information was compared to the findings accessible in previous studies presented in chapter two in order to generate findings regarding student tardiness in the district. In the second phase of this study, a thematic analysis of the qualitative data was employed to categorize stakeholders' thoughts concerning student tardiness at their respective schools.

Therefore, to answer research question one, the researcher, in the first part of this study, analyzed student tardiness data for all of the selected school district's high schools. The researcher utilized common statistical methods, such as, range, minimum, maximum, median, and standard deviation to identify the extent to which student tardiness existed in the ten high schools in the selected Georgia school district. The analysis of student tardiness data was also used to identify the two high schools in the district, which were the most effective at enforcing the tardy policy and the two high schools, which were the least effective at enforcing the tardy policy.

To answer research question two, the researcher, in the second part of the study, conducted interviews of stakeholders from randomly selected high schools, and transcribed and analyzed the recorded dialogue, reducing the data into codes and categories in order to discern various stakeholders' thoughts concerning the conditions that caused student tardiness. More specifically, research question two asked how stakeholders at high schools described conditions that caused student tardiness. The researcher coded the data to compare conditions that contributed to tardiness. The coding and the categories provided information regarding all

participants' perceptions and awareness of student tardiness as well as common characteristics that encompassed student tardiness.

To answer research question three, the researcher analyzed student tardiness data for all of the selected school district's high schools to identify the extent at which student tardiness data varied across the ten high schools in the selected Georgia school district controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and minority enrollment. The researcher utilized common statistical methods to identify the extent to which student tardiness existed in the ten high schools in the selected Georgia school district regarding the listed factors. The information gained from the analysis was then compared to the previously presented studies regarding student tardiness to identify correlations and discrepancies in the research.

To answer research question four, the researcher conducted interviews of stakeholders from randomly selected high schools, and transcribed and analyzed the recorded dialogue, reducing the data into codes and categories in order to determine various stakeholders' thoughts concerning the strategies and practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness. The coding and the categories provided information regarding all participants' perceptions as to what helped reduce student tardiness at their respective schools.

Summary

The research design and research methods were described in the chapter. The descriptive, mixed methods study was designed to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools and understand conditions, including strategies and best practices, which addressed tardiness problems. Methods for selecting the population, sample, and participants for the study were described. The quantitative portion of this study utilized student tardiness data obtained from the XYZ school district's student database. The participants for the qualitative part of this study

were administrators, teachers, and students selected by random sampling from the ten high schools in the XYZ school district. Five administrators, three teachers, and ten students were randomly selected for the semi-structured interviews. The student tardiness data was analyzed using common statistical methods to provide specific information pertaining to tardiness across the district. The information from the stakeholder interviews was transcribed and reduced into codes and categories in order to gain information regarding conditions, which contributed to student tardiness and what strategies and practices were effective at helping reduce them. Results of the data analysis were presented in the following chapter. The procedures, which were employed throughout this study, including the means of gaining proper consent and permission and how the data was analyzed, were also presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools, understand conditions, which caused tardiness, and determine what strategies and practices were most effective at reducing tardiness problems. A mixed-methods strategy was employed to ascertain information regarding student tardiness in a selected Georgia school district. The quantitative data obtained from the school district's student database was analyzed to provide insight into the extent of the tardiness problem and to report information pertaining to how student tardiness varied across all of the high schools and student subgroups in the district. The qualitative analysis, in the second phase of the study, was used to identify and explore stakeholder's descriptions of conditions that caused tardiness and to reveal effective strategies utilized to reduce student tardiness.

The following overarching research question of this study was: What is the extent of student tardiness in high schools and what strategies and best practices are used to alleviate tardiness problems? The following sub-questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia?
2. How do stakeholders at high schools describe the conditions that cause student tardiness?
3. To what extent does student tardiness vary in high schools controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, minority enrollment, and gender?
4. What are strategies and best practices that contribute to a reduction in student tardiness?

Data Analysis

Profile of the District in the Study

The first section displayed the data profile of the district in the study. Analyses were performed utilizing the student tardiness data obtained from the XYZ school district's database. The researcher used two terms throughout the data analysis that were synonymous with student tardiness. The terms were tardy or tardies. A tardy was defined by the researcher as being late to school or late to class. Each student participant in the study had seven opportunities during the day in which a tardy could be obtained. A student could attain one tardy for arriving late to school or a maximum of six tardies throughout the school day due to being late from the changing of classes. Each of the high schools in the district had seven classes in one school day in which there were six class changes. Each of the class changes at all of the district's high school were five minutes in length. The section also presented the analysis performed following the semi-structured interviews with selected administrators, teachers, and students. Findings were presented in the subsequent sections in correlation to the pertinent research question.

From an analysis of the demographic data obtained from the school district, the following profile was ascertained. The school district's student population had a racial make up of one percent Asian, seventy-three percent Black, two percent Hispanic, twenty-two percent White, and two percent Multi-racial. There were ten high schools in the district, which were diverse in school size, location, socio-economic status, minority enrollment and gender. The largest high school had a population of over 1,600 students, and the smallest high school had a population under four hundred. The schools ranged in location from urban, suburban, to rural, and the minority enrollment as well as poverty level varied at each of the selected high schools. Of the ten high schools in this study and in the district, five were urban, four were suburban, and one

was rural. The study was a mixed methods study, and the participants included a sample of the ten high schools. Census sampling was employed in order to utilize student tardiness data for all of the high schools in the district (Cresswell, 2003). This was a fundamental component in presenting the extent and enormity of the tardiness quandary.

Research Question 1

To address research question one, to what extent does student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia, student tardiness data was analyzed and was presented through the following sub topics: (a) Total student population versus total number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009, (b) Total student population versus average number of tardy occurrences per day (180), (c) Total student population versus the average number of tardy occurrences per class change at each high school (7) (d) Variation of student tardiness across the school district (e) Percentage of student tardiness attributed to each high school.

Table 1 displayed the overall number of tardy occurrences for each school during the 2008-2009 school year. Table 1 also illustrated the total population for each school during the same school year. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The total number of high school students in the school district was 9,732. The total number of tardy occurrences for the school district during school year 2008-2009 was 244,466. School A had the largest student population with 1,648 students. School F had the smallest student population with 375 students. School D had the largest number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 with 68,907 total tardy occurrences. The student population for School D was 1,157. The school with the lowest number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 was School F with 3,654 tardies.

Table 1

Total student population versus total number of tardy occurrences

School	Total student population	Total tardy occurrences
A	1,648	34,472
B	1,272	44,934
C	1,365	18,788
D	1,157	68,907
E	1,280	13,487
F	375	3,654
G	961	21,379
H	756	21,595
I	918	17,250
Total	9,732	244,466

N = 9

Table 2 illustrated the total student population for each school in relation to the average number of tardy occurrences per day (180 school days). The total high school student population for the school district was 9,732 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the entire school district for high schools was 219 tardies per day. School D, which had the highest number of tardy occurrences, 68,907, also had the highest average number of tardies occurring each school day with 383. School F, which had the lowest number of tardy occurrences with 3,654, and the smallest student population, 375, had the lowest average number of tardies per day with 20.

Table 2

Total Student Population v. Average Number of Tardy Occurrences Per Day

School	Total student population	Average number of tardy occurrences per day (180)
A	1,648	192
B	1,272	250
C	1,365	104
D	1,157	383
E	1,280	75
F	375	20
G	961	120
H	756	120
I	918	96
Total	9,732	219

N = 9

Table 3 displayed the total student population for each high school in relation to the average number of tardy occurrences per student in each school. The total high school student population was 9,732 and the average number of tardy occurrences for each student in the district was 25.1. School D had the highest average number of tardy occurrences per student with 59.56 tardies per student followed by School B with 35.3. School F had the fewest number of tardy occurrences per student with 9.74 tardies per student followed by School E with 10.5.

Table 3

Total Student Population v. Average Number of Tardy Occurrences Per Student

School	Total student population	Average number of tardy occurrences per student
A	1,648	21.00
B	1,272	35.32
C	1,365	13.76
D	1,157	59.56
E	1,280	11.00
F	375	9.74
G	961	22.00
H	756	28.56
I	918	18.78
Total	9,732	25.12
N = 9		

Table 4 showed the total student population and the correlation to the average number of tardy occurrences per school per class change. There were seven opportunities for a student to obtain a tardy. One occurred during arrival to school and six occurred during the six class changes throughout the school day. The total high school student population was 9,732 students and the average number of tardies that occurred per class change for the district was 31.2. School D had the highest average of tardy occurrences per class change with 54.7 followed by School B with an average of 35.7. School F had the lowest average number of tardy occurrences per class change with 2.9 followed by School E with an average of 10.7.

Table 4

Total Student Population v. Average Number of Tardy Occurrences Per Class Change

School	Total student population	Average number of tardy occurrences per class change (7)
A	1,648	27.4
B	1,272	35.7
C	1,365	14.8
D	1,157	54.7
E	1,280	10.7
F	375	2.9
G	961	17.1
H	756	17.1
I	918	13.7
Total	9,732	31.2
N = 9		

Table 5 displayed the percentage of student tardiness attributed to each high school in the school district for school year 2008-2009. There were 244,466 total tardy occurrences in the school district for school year 2008-2009. School D attributed for 28.0 % of the total number of tardies that occurred during the 2009 school year followed by School B, which ranked second with 18.0 %. School F attributed for 1.0 % of the total number of tardy occurrences followed by School E with 6.0 %.

Table 5

Percentage of Student Tardiness Attributed to Each High School

School	Total number of tardy occurrences	Percentage of student tardiness
A	34,472	14.0 %
B	44,934	18.0 %
C	18,788	8.0 %
D	68,907	28.0 %
E	13,487	6.0 %
F	3,654	1.0 %
G	21,379	9.0 %
H	21,595	9.0 %
I	17,250	7.0 %
Total	244,466	100 %

N = 9

Table 6 displayed the summary of student tardiness for each high school in the district that collected student tardiness data in the student information system for school year 2008-2009. School J utilized a manual system of collecting and tracking student tardiness. This process was explained in the subsequent qualitative sections. There were 244,466 total tardy occurrences in the school district for school year 2008-2009. The district, minus School J, had a total high school student population of 9,732 students, an average of 219 tardies per day per school, 25.12 tardies per student, and 31.2 tardies per class change. The table also displayed student tardiness for the district and demographic factors related to each school. Student tardiness and the correlation to various demographic factors were detailed in the subsequent sections related to sub question three.

Table 6

District Tardiness Summary Table

School	Size	Location	Socioeconomic Status	Minority Enrollment	Total tardies	Average/day	Average/student	Average/class change	Percentage Attributed
A	1,648	Urban	46%	79%	34,472	192	21.00	27.4	14.0%
B	1,272	Sub-urban	62%	90%	44,934	250	35.32	35.7	18.0%
C	1,365	Sub-urban	48%	63%	18,788	104	13.76	14.8	8.0%
D	1,157	Sub Urban	67%	98%	68,907	383	59.56	54.7	28.0%
E	1,280	Rural	46%	67%	13,487	75	11.00	10.7	6.0%
F	375	Urban	44%	72%	3,654	20	9.74	2.9	1.0%
G	961	Urban	78%	97%	21,379	120	22.00	17.1	9.0%
H	756	Urban	85%	99%	21,595	120	28.56	17.1	9.0%
I	918	Sub-urban	39%	67%	17,250	96	18.78	13.7	7.0%
Total	9,732	Urban	52%	81%	244,466	219	25.12	31.2	100%

N = 9

Table 7 presented the variation of student tardiness across the entire school district. The total number of high schools analyzed in the district was nine. The total high school student population was 9,732 students. The mean number of students enrolled in the high schools in the district was 1081.33 (SD=375.67). The maximum number of students enrolled in the high schools in the district was 1648 and the minimum was 375.

The total number of tardy occurrences in the district for the school year 2008-2009 was 244,466. The mean number of tardy occurrences for the high schools in the district (N=9) was 27,162.89 (SD=19,635.31). The maximum number of tardy occurrences at a specific high school was 68,907 and the minimum number of tardy occurrences at a specific high school was 3,654.

The mean number of average tardy occurrences per school day for each school in the district for 180 school days was 151.1 (SD=109.2). The maximum average number of tardy occurrences per school per day was 383 and the minimum was 20.

The mean number of average tardy occurrences per class change (N=7) per school in the district for school year 2008-2009 was 18.7 (SD=13.5). The maximum average number of tardy occurrences per period per school was 47 and the minimum was two.

Lastly, the mean number of average tardy occurrences per student per high school in the district was 24.4 (SD=15.6). The maximum average number of tardy occurrences per student for each high school in the district was 59.6 and the minimum was 9.7.

Table 7

Variation of High School Student Tardiness Across the School District

District	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Number of high school students in the district (N=9732)	1273.00	375.00	1648.00	1081.33	375.67
Total number of tardy occurrences in the district for school year 2009 (N = 9)	65253.00	3654.00	68907.00	27162.89	19635.31
Average number of tardy occurrences per day per school in the district for school year 2009 (N = 9)	363.0	20.0	383.0	151.1	109.2
Average number of tardy occurrences per period per school in the district for school year 2009 (N=9)	45.0	2.0	47.0	18.7	13.5
Average number of tardy occurrences per student per school in the district for school year 2009 (N = 9)	49.6	9.7	59.6	24.4	15.6

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

In response to research question 1, To what extent does student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia?, the researcher found tardiness to be prevalent in all high schools. The student data revealed that student tardiness was extensive and varied across the school district. The tardy occurrences ranged from one high school with over sixty-five thousand tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 to a school with just over three thousand five hundred tardy occurrences. In addition, based on an individual school's student population in comparison to the total number of tardy occurrences, the average tardy occurrences per student, per school day, per class change, and the percentage contributed by the school to the district's overall tardiness for school year 2008-2009, the researcher identified two of the high schools that experienced fewer tardiness problems and two of the high schools that experienced more tardiness problems for school year 2008-2009. Schools E and F were considered to be high schools with fewer tardies for academic year 2008-2009. The schools ranked first and second best, respectively, across all tardiness categories. The researcher found School E to experience fewer problems with tardiness, based on comprising the largest student population and having the second lowest occurrences of student tardiness. Schools D and B were considered the two high schools in the district with more tardiness problems during the academic year 2008-2009. The schools ranked first and second worst for all measured student tardiness categories, even though they ranked fourth and fifth largest based on enrollment.

Research Question 2

To address research question two, how do stakeholders at high schools describe the conditions that cause student tardiness, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted and were presented through the following sub topics: (a) Administrators' descriptions

of conditions that cause student tardiness, (b) Teachers' descriptions of conditions that cause student tardiness, and (c) Students' descriptions of conditions that cause student tardiness.

Administrators' Descriptions of Conditions

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five administrators from the school district. Each administrator was asked questions pertaining to student tardiness as it related to their respective high school. Table 8 presented responses from the semi-structured interviews with the administrators as it pertained to reasons for student tardiness and special conditions, which caused student tardiness.

The first interviewee was an administrator from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The second administrator was from School B. School B, as previously noted, had a student population of 1,272 students who contributed 44,934 tardies for school year 2008-2009. The school ranked second worst in getting to students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The third participant was an administrator from School E. School E had a student population of 1,280 students who included 13,487 tardies for school year 2008-2009. The school ranked second best in getting students to school on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The fourth administrator participant was from School G. School G had a student population of 961 students who contributed 21,379 tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked sixth best out of the nine schools participating in the study.

The last administrator participating in the study was from the only school in the county that did not have data in the student database to analyze. When the researcher pulled the student tardiness data, the reports revealed only data pertaining to middle school students housed at the school. Upon further investigation, the process of collecting and storing data at this particular school was different from other schools in the county. Tardy infractions were written on referrals, which were then turned into the administration for follow up, recording, and discipline. The interviewee shared that tardiness was still a problem regardless of what the database revealed. The administrator responses were included based on the significance of the responses by respondent as well as the alignment the responses revealed in comparison to the other administrator respondents from across the district.

Each of the administrator respondents shared various reasons for student tardiness at their respective school. The reasons ranged from transportation issues in the morning, which caused students to be late to school, to socializing and over crowdedness, which was a main factor in student tardiness between classes. The following was a summary of the reasons the administrator respondents shared for student tardiness as their particular schools. The overall subject was the reasons for student tardiness. Each reason was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the administrator transcripts. The responses were then quantified according to the number of respondents that referred to what caused student tardiness throughout their interview. The major themes, which become apparent following the analysis, were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. The following was a summary of the reasons the administrator respondents shared for student tardiness as their respective schools.

- Three out of five of the administrator respondents (60 %) identified transportation as being a reason high school students arrive late to school. Students were tardy to

- school who began driving later in their high school career, they rode with someone to school, either their parents or another student who was late, or they were held up due to a train, an inattentive crossing guard, or other outside factors.
- All of the administrators (100 %) noted that parent issues were a main factor in student tardiness. The parent issues ranged from students being new parents themselves who had to take their children to day care, which caused them to arrive late to school. Several students must wait for their parents to arrive home from work in order to have them watch their child. It was also stated that many student must get their younger siblings up and off to school before they can go to school. This was cited as causing high school students to be tardy to school. Several administrators noted that some parents were just apathetic and really did not see the value in being punctual so they did not make a concerted effort to ensure their child's punctual arrival to school.
 - Three of the five administrator respondents (60 %) identified waking up late for various reasons as being a cause of student tardiness to school. Students staying up late for either work related or school related reasons was acknowledged as contributing to student tardiness in the morning. In addition, students who stayed up late watching television or talking with friends on the phone were also stated as being consistent reasons for tardiness to school.
 - Three out of the five respondents (60 %) recognized teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy as being a cause of student tardiness. Some did not adhere to the policy because of apathy, inconsistency in their record keeping, or lack of technology proficiency. It was also noted that the inconsistency was caused by a lack

of understanding in the value of getting students to class on time. Lastly, teacher inconsistency was denoted by those teachers who kept students after class for various reasons, which caused them to be late to their next class. Teacher presence or lack there of was also a significant reason why students were either on time or late to class.

- All of the administrators (100%) cited student defiance of the tardy policy as a major cause of student tardiness. The defiance ranged from students who outwardly challenged the tardy policy, who were not motivated or did not care to follow any of the rules of the school, or who pushed the number of tardies they could accumulate before a consequence was issued right up to the last possible tardy.
- Four of the five respondents (80 %) acknowledged administrators having a significant impact on student tardiness. Absence of the administration in the hallways was noted a being a reason students were late to class. One administrator admitted that their lack of planning and organization lead to higher occurrences of student tardiness. The administrative part of pulling reports and recording keeping, if not organized, could lead to higher occurrences of student tardiness. The deficiencies of poor record keeping led to inconsistent follow up and delays in administering punishment for accumulation of tardies.
- Socializing was mentioned by all of the administrator respondents (100 %) as being a major cause of student tardiness. The respondents noted that students would socialize with friends and block the halls and others from getting to class on time. It was also noted that male students walked their girlfriends to class, which caused them to receive tardies to class.

- Two of the five administrators (40 %) cited the size of the school population as being a factor, which contributed to student tardiness. The overcrowding of the halls along with other factors caused many students to arrive late to class.
- Two of the five respondents (40 %) cited the district's tardy policy as causing student tardiness. The policy was noted as allowing the students too much leeway with tardiness. The administrators stated that they wanted more accountability to be weighted for each tardy instead of allowing students to accumulate several tardies before discipline was issued.
- Two of the five administrators (40%) identified the layout of the school and the logistics of the building being a cause of student tardiness. It was a challenge for students who must travel across the entire campus from one class to another to avoid accumulating tardies.
- Two of the five administrators (40 %) identified lockers and problems with lockers as being a reason for student tardiness.
- Two of the five respondents (40 %) cited bathroom breaks by students between class changes as causing students to arrive late to their next subsequent class.

Table 8

Administrators' Descriptions of Conditions that Contribute to Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	Reasons for student tardiness	Special conditions
Administrator A	<p>Some students now have their own transportation the car they drive may be a second hand car so the car may have problems</p> <p>Students who depend on parents that are trying to juggle their work schedules and dropping kids off for day care</p> <p>Late buses</p> <p>I overslept thing from staying up late and of course a lot of kids are working</p> <p>They work late hours and afternoon shifts because that's when they can work</p> <p>Those kids that just stay up watching TV late and they just can't get up.</p> <p>Students ids that have their own kids that are dropping their own kids off at day care</p> <p>Some teachers are not following the policy and logging the tardies in</p> <p>Students that challenge the policy</p> <p>There are some classes that kids will drag because they know that it's not a challenge and it's a bit boring.</p> <p>Transition from lockers, problems with lockers, bathroom breaks</p>	<p>Warning bell: we saw that students were just lingering until the minute bell</p> <p>You know five minutes for thirteen hundred students to go to their locker and use the bathroom is a challenge.</p> <p>Crowded hallways and kids just blocking the halls</p> <p>Teacher and administrative presence in the hallway: If we weren't in the hallway prompting kids to get to class, we would have the same old situation with hundreds of kids just milling around trying to get through the door at the same time.</p>

<p>Administrator B</p>	<p>Teacher inconsistency with enforcing the policy: Getting the teachers to be consistent with it is one of your biggest problems</p> <p>Some of they guys like walking their girlfriends to class</p> <p>Some are not motivated they don't care about the rules f the school</p> <p>Some of them really don't see the punishment in it, they don't see the effects of it cause they accumulate tardies</p> <p>They don't see an immediate punishment.</p> <p>Some of them rely on other people to get them to school that are unreliable rides to school.</p> <p>Some of them you really have to get on your gym people, you get some slack gym people, and they will stay in there three gym periods.</p>	<p>Starting the year as principal after three months</p> <p>county policy does not hold them accountable for every tardy</p> <p>Administration: We had a plan together and then it fell apart. We got off our plan, we tried to use technology to get us the plan together and then it fell apart.</p> <p>System has one size fits all policy. What might work well at one school might not work well at another school.</p> <p>Logistic wise, I think my school is so spread out its hard to contain tardies at my school.</p>
<p>Administrator C</p>	<p>To school, I just think the parents don't seem to mind if they are late</p> <p>Some are on their own so the parents are gone so they, there's never been an emphasis of getting somewhere on time</p> <p>To class, generally socializing. That's the main reason. You know when you have we have over twelve hundred kids this year. When you have nine hundred or one thousand one hundred and fifty that never get a tardy it's not the logistics, it's a personal problem. The main reason is socializing.</p>	<p>Trying to pull those reports and getting the tardies is kind of impossible out of SchoolMax (the school's data base)</p> <p>Sixth period tardies from lunch</p> <p>Parents don't realize what a problem it is</p>

Administrator D	<p>Late to class, most of the time it is from talking with their friends.</p> <p>Late to school that can be a whole lot of things. I have a large number of students that have younger brothers and sisters and the parents will be out of the home working and the students have to get their brothers and sisters together and off to school in the mornings.</p> <p>Waking up late and not getting to school on time.</p>	<p>Making sure that everyone understands how important it is to get to class on time</p> <p>Parents don't see the importance of their child getting to class on time so the students may not see the importance of it</p>
Administrator E *	<p>Teacher inconsistency: In the past we've had some teachers who would issue tardies to class and other who were a little more lenient when it came to that so the kids knew who they could get away with that</p> <p>I think there are some teachers who, to be honest, don't really pay attention to when a kid comes late to their class</p> <p>Inaccurate record keeping: Even though we have the data management system sometimes the stuff that gets put in there is not necessarily accurate so we have to go back and cross reference stuff</p> <p>Teachers uncomfortable with technology so they don't log in tardies</p> <p>car breaks down on the way to school</p> <p>Overslept.</p> <p>Car trouble.</p> <p>There are the one's getting themselves up for school after their parents have already left for work.</p> <p>Car pool is late.</p> <p>The alarm clock didn't go off.</p>	<p>County policy to lenient: I think that when the county changed and gave the student more tardies we saw an increase in the number of tardies students got.</p> <p>Students' attitudes were that if I get sixteen tardies then I'm gonna push it to the max...many of them were interested in just going until they got that many</p> <p>kids take advantage of the policy by getting too many tardies until there is a consequence</p> <p>For us, one of our biggest issues is the train. We have a train coming across the train tracks that blocks the traffic, traffic get back up in the parking lot and the kids are late to homeroom</p> <p>We have dance and kids have to get dressed after dance and if the teacher does not give them a pass then they get a tardy.</p>

	<p>Some will come in and say they are sick in the morning</p> <p>They had a doctor's appointment in the morning or a dental appointment. Orthodontics is a huge one in the high school and the middle schools.</p> <p>They can't get their locker open.</p> <p>They had to go to the bathroom and they took too long.</p> <p>Teachers not in the hallways</p> <p>There hasn't been an administrative presence in the hallways visible to reinforce teachers being in the hallways and making kids to move on</p> <p>Teachers dismissing kids late to class</p>	<p>Sometimes our kids have to move across three buildings to go to class. If they are coming from the art building to the academic building and they don't move they can get a tardy. So, the distance they have to travel is sometimes pretty extensive, but if they don't stop and talk, they could get to where they need to go.</p>
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Summary of Administrators' Views

The data obtained from the interviews with the five administrators revealed substantial information pertaining to stakeholder's views of reasons students were tardy at their respective schools. Special conditions were also detailed. The administrators cited the following school factors as reasons, which caused student tardiness:

- Teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy
- Lack of administrator presence in the hallway
- Lack of administrator organization
- Overcrowded halls
- Size of the student population
- School layout
- Lockers and problems with lockers
- Bathroom break between class changes

The major school factors cited by administrators were teacher inconsistency in following the tardy policy, lack of administrator presence in the hallway, and lack of administrator organization and consistency. If the teacher was inconsistent in following the policy, then students knew they could arrive late to class without consequence. Therefore, the students were more apt to stay in the hallways after the ringing of the tardy bell resulting in more congestion in the halls, more students missing instruction, and an overall chaotic climate after the ringing of the tardy bell. Each of the previously listed school factors were those, which were malleable and could be corrected given the proper professional learning was provided and accepted by the school leadership.

The administrators also cited the following student factors as major causes of student tardiness:

- transportation issues
- parental issues
- waking up late for various reasons
- student defiance
- students socializing in the halls
- problems with lockers
- bathroom breaks between class changes

Parental issues were cited by administrators as a main factor in student tardiness. There were several reasons previously noted which caused students to arrive late to school including parent apathy, students getting younger siblings up and off to school before they can go to school, and students being parents themselves. The parental factors were less malleable because they were outside of the school's control. Even with communication and training provided to the parents by the school, many issues remained and students continued to arrive late to school. In addition, many students were ensnared in situations outside of their control, especially if they were new parents and they were responsible for their own children.

Teachers' Descriptions of Conditions

A focus group interview was conducted with three teachers chosen randomly from the school district. The teachers were asked questions pertaining to causes of student tardiness as it related to their respective high school. Table 9 presented responses from the focus group interview conducted with the teachers as it pertained to reasons for student tardiness and special conditions that caused student tardiness.

The selected teachers were from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

Each of the teacher respondents shared various reasons for student tardiness at their respective school. The reasons ranged from parental supervision issues in the morning, which caused students to be late to school, to socializing and locker problems, which were main causes for student tardiness between classes. The following was a summary of the reasons the teacher respondents shared for student tardiness in their class and at their specific school. The overall subject was the reasons for student tardiness. Each reason was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the teacher transcripts. The codes were then quantified according to the number of teacher respondents that referred to the reason throughout their interview. The major themes, which become apparent following the analysis, were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. The following was a summary of the reasons the teacher respondents shared for student tardiness in their class and at their respective school.

- All of the teacher respondents (100 %) cited teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy as a major cause of student tardiness. More specifically, at their particular school, they noted that the in your seat portion of the policy was not being followed with fidelity. This inconsistency and discrepancy often led to contention and conflict between other teachers and students.
- Two of the teachers (66 %) cited the class change following lunch as being one of the worst times for tardiness during the school day. Overcrowding and a larger student population was observed as being a probable source of this problem. More students

- trying to eat during the same point in time was a reason students had a difficult time eating and getting to class on time following lunch.
- Two of the respondents (66 %) cited teachers who either defiantly did not keep track of tardies or, due to their lack of computer skills, could not accurately keep track of their student's tardies as contributing to the tardiness issue school wide.
 - Two of the teachers (66 %) pointed out that some students, who they felt did not care about school or their education, tried to get enough tardies in order to be suspended and sent home. The discipline consequence would give them an excuse and a reason to be suspended and not come to school.
 - "I overslept" or "I did not feel like coming to school early" were excuses for coming late to school shared by two of the respondents (66 %).
 - One respondent (33 %) shared that the majority of the students that arrived late to school were those that drove themselves to school.
 - Two of the respondents (66 %) cited students having to use the restroom between class changes as a reason for tardiness.
 - All of the respondents (100 %) observed lockers and problems with lockers as being a major cause of tardiness to their class and school wide. Either the student could not remember their locker combinations after many weeks in school or the lockers were just too packed with others books from too many students sharing the same locker.
 - All of the teachers (100 %) cited socializing of students in the halls during class changes as being a major cause of student tardiness.
 - All of the teacher respondents (100 %) stated that the lack of parental supervision and care was a contributing factor to student tardiness. The teachers also shared that on

many occasions when they called the parents, the parents were “clueless” as to their child’s tardiness and whereabouts in the morning. This was caused either by parental apathy or by parents having to work several jobs. The teachers also felt as though the same parents that were probably late to their own jobs and lost jobs due to tardiness were passing on the same tardiness traits to their children.

- Two of the teachers (66 %) noted that it was usually the same students who received tardies and would risk getting tardies for various reasons. In addition, if they were not reminded daily, they would not care and would receive tardies. The teachers also referred to the correlation of student tardiness and student achievement. They felt as though the students who were always tardy were the same students who were failing their classes.
- One teacher (33 %) noted that tardiness was not encouraged, but if it came down to a zero for leaving your notebook to be graded in your locker or a tardy, the teacher suggested taking the tardy.

Table 9

Teachers' Descriptions of Conditions that Contributed to Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	Reasons for student tardiness	Special conditions
Teacher A	<p>And, I think it comes down to, teachers are letting them get by in the classroom without tardies. If they are in the classroom, or in the doorway, and not in their seat, they are not giving them tardies. So, there are a lot of teachers not following the tardy policy.</p> <p>The change over from lunch is pretty bad. Because sometimes even when we are eating lunch sometimes I'm like man that wasn't enough time to finish and I spend a few seconds monger eating. So we tend to rush back from lunch eating. So, it seems like the lunch one needs to be a little bit longer.</p> <p>We are increasing the number of kids going through the lunch line but our lunchtime hasn't increased. So if you are actually at the end of that line, then you actually are getting less time for lunch.</p> <p>But then, you are going to have those teachers who are lenient or really don't keep track of them (tardies) at all.</p> <p>One kid told me today, that I need one more tardy to go home.</p> <p>The most I hear is I overslept.</p> <p>Or, I didn't feel like coming early this morning.</p> <p>The majority of the kids that are late to school are those that drive.</p> <p>I've got to go to the restroom.</p> <p>Couldn't get my locker open.</p> <p>My locker's stuck.</p>	<p>If they are not being reminded, they don't care.</p> <p>It comes down to, if the teacher's not there to push them every day, they don't think it's gonna count.</p> <p>But, it's the same kids that do that (risk getting tardies).</p> <p>Sometimes they would rather take a tardy if they have to go to the bathroom that bad.</p> <p>Smart alleck kids.</p> <p>Some parents don't understand why we have the tardy policy. That's probably the same parents that get fired at their work for being late.</p> <p>If I bring up the fact that the child has a lot of tardies to a parent, it's usually because the child is failing. And, there is a big correlation. The kids who are usually tardy all the time are also failing.</p>

	<p>I don't have my combination to my locker and it was locked.</p> <p>That's one of the biggest problems. Oh, my locker is stuck; I could not get it open. Have you gone to ROTC to get them to help? No. It's not my locker. We have kids with lockers on every hallway because they are sharing lockers.</p> <p>Yeah, socializing.</p>	
Teacher B	<p>Yeah, I had to stress that to the ninth graders that if they are in the room and not in their seat they are tardy.</p> <p>Some of them (students) know if they get enough tardies, then they are going home.</p> <p>The restroom, that's a big one.</p> <p>Yeah, the locker is one too.</p> <p>I don't know how to open it (my locker). And, it's eight weeks in. I don't know how to open my locker. Probably because it's not your locker.</p> <p>Socializing</p>	<p>In general, the parents should care about the tardy policy. The one's who just consider us baby sitters in the first place couldn't care less.</p> <p>Those are the parents that are usually late to work, they don't teach their child to be punctual, and we are teaching them.</p>
Teacher C	<p>And the tardy time where I see them running and getting tardies is during fifth period and the lunch changes. I think that's the worst.</p> <p>Yeah, or I was in my seat and they weren't. This teacher lets us be at the door and this teacher makes us be in our seats.</p> <p>If all of the teachers don't submit their tardies, even if what they have is accurate, if they don't submit accurately and the kids being out and being on field trips and being in guidance.</p>	<p>I have tardies but it's usually the same ones. The same kids that come in after the bell, the same ones.</p> <p>It's the same bunch but still (that get tardies).</p> <p>I tell them to be careful about using the passes all at once because if you find yourself on your way to my class and you see the crate up there and</p>

	<p>The lack of parental supervision. The parents leave for work earlier than they leave is a problem.</p> <p>I called a dad of a student that was late every day and dad works full time and is in medical school and he had no clue because he works all the time.</p> <p>I called the parents of another student several years ago and the two girls rode together to school. They were late every day and I called the parents and they did not know. They were supposed to be gone but there was no adult supervision so they hit the snooze button a few more times.</p> <p>I couldn't get it (my locker) open.</p> <p>One girl told me today that she could not bring her work to class today because she could not get the locker open. I said is something wrong with it. She said no it's just that it's so full. She said that there are four of us sharing one locker.</p> <p>Yeah, our books are just so big. That is a problem.</p> <p>Most of it is just socializing.</p>	<p>you realize your folder is due and you don't have it. I said, that's the time to get a tardy. That's when it's worth getting a tardy cause you are going to get a zero. I mean, if its gonna mean getting a zero, take the tardy.</p> <p>I don't encourage tardies but if you are going to get a tardy, make it be worth something like to keep yourself from getting a zero like on your folder grade.</p> <p>Which brings up another issue, are they failing because they are tardy, or because they don't have education on their mind? Doing other things in the hallway? Is it the lateness that makes them fail or that they have other things on their mind? I would probably say it's because they have other things on their mind, not because they were thirty seconds late or a minute late to class.</p>
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Summary of Teachers' Views

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews with the three teachers contributed to the information pertaining to stakeholder's views of reasons students were tardy at their respective schools. Special conditions were also detailed. The teachers cited the following school factors as reasons, which caused student tardiness:

- Teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy
- Teacher defiance or lack of organizational skills in keeping track of tardies
- Lockers and problems with lockers
- Overcrowding
- A larger student population trying to eat lunch

The teachers felt as though many of the teachers were not consistent with following the tardy policy and this inconsistency caused resentment and dissention among other staff members and students. The teachers also noted lockers as being a major cause of student tardiness. Students were seen sharing lockers, which caused them to arrive late to class, or they could not remember their combination even after several weeks of school. Lastly, lunch was mentioned as being a school factor in causing student tardiness. The teachers felt as though they did not have enough time for lunch themselves and they empathized with the students not having enough time for lunch. The school factors listed were malleable and can be changed to help reduce tardiness. More time can be added to the lunch period to allow student more time to eat and more time to arrive to class on time following lunch. Also, if administrators monitored teachers enforcing the policy, this would help reduce the number of students arriving late. In addition, the school leadership could offer more professional development aligned with technology, organization, and

classroom management, which would result in more teachers enforcing the policy effectively and less tardiness.

The teachers also cited the following student factors as major causes of student tardiness:

- Student apathy
- Oversleeping
- Students driving themselves to school
- Students having to use the restroom between class changes
- Lockers and problems with lockers
- Socializing of students in the halls during class changes
- Lack of parental supervision and care
- Failing students
- Bathroom breaks between class changes

The major student factors identified by the teacher respondents as being causes of student tardiness were lockers and problems with lockers, students socializing in the halls during class changes, and the lack of parental supervision and care. Teachers again cited students as sharing lockers and students forgetting their locker combination as major contributing factors of student tardiness. The teachers also noted the socializing of students in the halls during class changes as a problem. Lastly, the parental lack of care and concerning was one factor that appeared to genuinely incense the teacher respondents. They cited many instances where parents did not follow up with their children and hold them accountable for the attendance and punctuality. They also noted the parents as not caring about tardiness themselves and felt as though the parents had probably been fired for their tardiness to their own jobs. These factors are less malleable and outside of the realm of control for the school. However, with more teacher and administrator

vigilance in the halls during class changes, the socializing problem can be alleviated to help reduce overall student tardiness.

Both the teachers and administrators felt as though the major factors of student tardiness were caused by the teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy, student apathy, and the lack of teacher and administrator presence in the halls during class changes.

Students' Descriptions of Conditions

Two focus group interviews were conducted with five students each chosen randomly from a randomly chosen high school in the school district. The students were asked questions pertaining to student tardiness as it related to their respective high school. Table 10 presented responses from the focus group interviews conducted with the students as it pertained to reasons for student tardiness and special conditions causing student tardiness.

The selected students were from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

Each of the student respondents shared various reasons for student tardiness at their respective school (see Table 9). The reasons ranged from transportation issues in the morning, which caused students to be late to school, to socializing and over crowdedness, which was a main factor in student tardiness between classes. The following was a summary of the reasons the student respondents shared for student tardiness as their particular schools. The overall subject was the reasons for student tardiness. Each reason was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the student transcripts. The codes were then quantified according to the number of student respondents that referred to the reason throughout their interview. The major themes,

which become apparent following the analysis, were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. The following was a summary of the reasons the student respondents shared for student tardiness as their respective schools.

- Five of the ten student respondents (50 %) cited the transportation as causing them to arrive late to school. They were either late because of riding with someone else who was late, their parents who were late, late buses, traffic, or from running out of gas.
- Eight out of the ten student respondents (80 %) mentioned their locker as being a cause of their tardiness to class. They revealed that trying to change classes in a crowded school, go to the restroom, and stop by their locker to get books was a challenge to them getting to class on time. They also pointed out that where their locker was located in conjunction with their schedule made a difference. Lastly, other students standing around their locker, which impeded them from getting to their own locker, caused them to be late to class.
- Seven out of ten students (70 %) affirmed that socializing caused them to arrive late to their classes. The talking and socializing was either their own chatting or the conversations of other, which was a main factor in their tardiness to class.
- Eight out of ten students (80 %) cited bathrooms as being a reason for student tardiness. They pointed out there was not enough time between class changes to use the bathroom and get to class on time. Compounding the bathroom issue was going to their locker which was previously mentioned. Several students mentioned that the bathrooms got extremely crowded from those who were using the restroom or those that were talking and taking up space.

- Four of the ten student respondents (40 %) cited waking up late as causing them to be late to school in the morning. Either they had too much homework, they had to work, or they just stayed up to watch television.
- All of the respondents (100 %) stated that over crowdedness and people standing around in the middle of the halls as being the major factor, which caused them to be late to class. The student respondents were adamant about this reason for student tardiness. The student respondents were adamant about this reason for student tardiness. They shared specifics as to where and when the halls became crowded and even alluded to their own talking and standing which contributed to the overall tardiness problem. Fights in school caused the crowdedness to go to the extreme as many students stopped to watch the scuffle before going to class.
- Four out of ten students (40 %) cited student apathy as a cause of student tardiness. Either the apathy was attributed to those students who did not care if they were late to class and stood in the halls and blocked others from getting to class, or it was credited to their own lack of care to get to class on time. One student mentioned that she did not understand why she received tardies to classes that she really did not care about or need.
- Two students (20 %) cited doctor's appointments as being the reason they were late to school.
- Three of the student respondents (30 %) mentioned that their class schedule was a factor that caused them to be late to class. Logistically it was almost impossible for them to make it to class on time because of the way their schedule was set up.
- Four students (40 %) recognized the teacher as causing their tardiness. The teacher would not release the students from class on time or they would hold them back from

talking with the students. Some teachers cause students to be late based on their attitude. If the teacher gave the student a hard time about coming to class, especially in front of other students, then they would continue to arrive late in order to give the grief back to the teacher.

- One female student (10%) mentioned wearing high heels as a reason for her tardiness.
- Two students (20%) mentioned the lunchroom as a cause of their tardiness to the next subsequent class. Long lines and delays in getting their food caused them to arrive late to their next class on several occasions.

Table 10

Students' Descriptions of Conditions that Contributed to Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	Reasons for student tardiness	Special conditions
Student A	<p>You stop by your locker or your class is all the way over on the other side of the school.</p> <p>I probably have a lot of tardies from coming to school late from getting dropped off to school.</p> <p>Talking to friends</p> <p>Or for female personal reasons</p> <p>Doctors appointment</p> <p>Breakfast, if you drive to school or your parents take you to go get breakfast.</p>	<p>Personally I don't like being woken up out of my sleep, so when the alarm goes off I hit the snooze for about ten minutes. Then I will eventually wake up and then come to school.</p> <p>I'm lazy and I am getting a lot of tardies to school but not between classes.</p> <p>Maybe like one of my teachers if you have to use the bathroom they will charge you a tardy.</p> <p>It's a lot of students. And some people just stand there and talk while I am trying to walk. I'm like; you have some place to be.</p>
Student B	<p>Yeah friends and you have to go to the bathroom. You don't have enough time to use the bathroom and go to your locker and get to class.</p> <p>Laziness</p> <p>Over crowdedness sometimes</p> <p>Not wanting to wake up.</p> <p>Not having a ride</p> <p>Doctor's appointment</p> <p>We also have the busses late</p>	<p>Because I was getting used to the school and uhm. I think it was morning time the getting up process. Getting to classes and I was still trying to figure out how to do things. It was the beginning of the year when I was still trying to figure out things. That was the only time I got tardies.</p> <p>Getting in fights with parents that give you a ride.</p> <p>Running out of gas</p> <p>People who get tardies just to get tardies</p>

Student C	<p>Responsibility</p> <p>The crossing guard will let the buses go but then he won't direct traffic</p> <p>Talking</p> <p>My brain scrambles and I can't remember my combination</p>	<p>People being in the hallway</p> <p>Everyone is stopping and talking</p> <p>The way your schedule is set up can be a problem</p> <p>Trying to go to the bathroom in that time is impossible</p> <p>I'm trying to get to my locker and people are just standing</p>
Student C	<p>You have to be in your seat. You can be in the room and get a tardy. Can we just be in the room?</p>	<p>Everyone moves slow</p> <p>Don't be just standing in the middle of the hallway</p> <p>Guidance does not want to listen to you about your schedule so its not like you have to go all the way up there then all the way down there and then all the way back to there.</p>
Student D	<p>Sometimes I get up a little late in the morning and start off and get a tardy and God dang.</p> <p>I have three people to pick up in the morning. If I don't do it right, or I just get one more minute of sleep, then I'm off schedule</p> <p>Picking up people.</p> <p>Waking up late</p> <p>I usually do good for about three weeks and then one day out of the three weeks I get thrown off. Cause I end up staying up late doing homework.</p> <p>There's always traffic</p>	<p>Working, or talking, or doing stuff, or teachers want to talk to you. And, teachers don't want to give you a pass.</p> <p>If you have to go to the bathroom</p> <p>You get held up working in the shop and Teacher A don't give you passes.</p> <p>I've run out of gas before</p> <p>You got people standing in front of you and you get a tardy for what they are doing.</p>

Student E	<p>People constantly stopping in the middle of the hallway</p> <p>Playing around</p> <p>Thinking they have all the time in the World</p> <p>Some people have locker complications, they can't get their locker open fast enough.</p> <p>People at their lockers are a problem. Some people just stand t at their lockers and mess around.</p>	<p>Like I have to go all the way to the 100 hall then to the 500 hall then get your books.</p> <p>In the main hallway its all crowded and jammed up at the ends of the hall and all like that.</p> <p>Some people who are actually trying to get to class on time, they will be right at the door and the teacher will shut the door in your face.</p>
Student F	<p>These halls are crowded. You can't move. You can't make the crowd move</p> <p>I socialize. I talk and lose track of time.</p> <p>Some of my classes are far apart. I have to go from five hundred to one hundred and I don't walk but so fast</p> <p>Then when you ride with other people. You have to depend on somebody else. If they're late, they make you late.</p> <p>The books are heavy so I have to go to my locker</p> <p>I try runnin' in my heels tryin' to get to class</p> <p>Sometimes I get tardies to classes that I don't even need.</p>	<p>Can we bring that minute bell back because, uhm, it catches me off guard every time.</p> <p>Fights. Cause you know. People are gonna stop and watch a fight. But you can't keep walkin' when everyone else done stop.</p> <p>I keep hand sanitizer in my purse cause I don't be havin' time to wash my hands when I go to the restroom.</p> <p>Two hundred is so crowded</p> <p>In certain classes you have to work up to the bell. Then I have to gather my stuff up, then go to my locker and then try to get through everybody to get to my locker.</p> <p>Classes are all the way at the end of the hall</p> <p>Like some teachers don't care, but if they see you standin' around, not tryin' to get to class, then they'll give you a tardy</p>

Student G	<p>They stand in the middle of the hallway and talk</p> <p>No book bags</p> <p>Restroom, go to your locker, and go to class all in five minutes</p> <p>The lunchroom makes you tardy too. Stand in that line. By the time you get your food and eat good it's time to go. Eat your food quick and then go to class.</p>	<p>The books. Towin' books. You try to save time by totin' two or three books, but you're still strugglin'. You gotta walk slower with the books.</p> <p>The bathroom be packed too. Everyone else tryin' to use it</p> <p>That bathroom by the cafeteria is locked. One year when it wasn't locked, I had an extra bathroom to use. Now it's only two that's open.</p> <p>They keep adding more kids</p>
Student H	<p>Where you locker is at</p> <p>You can't run</p> <p>I may be tired from my last night's work or whatever and I end up waking up late and then I come in late.</p>	<p>People want to lounge</p> <p>Fights. They stop and watch it and you try to get around it but you can't. Soon as it starts there's a big huddle in the middle of the hallway. And you try to get around it and people bump into you and then you get mad.</p> <p>Two hundred gets really thick</p> <p>The bathroom area and in the boys restroom for some reason they want to sit in there and post up and then talk in a big huddle.</p> <p>It seems that when that bell rings that v everybody comes out of there at one time and just sits there and moves slow. They take baby steps.</p> <p>It's too many. It's too many. It's a lot of kids. It's getting bigger and bigger it seems every time.</p>

		<p>Other teachers though give you a hard time when you are tardy and I'm like I don't want to hear that. Matter of fact, I'm gonna keep botherin' you about it.</p> <p>They get detention and they start riding it our until they get to the point of suspension.</p>
Student J	Where your locker is	<p>They're late, then they make you late.</p> <p>Some people go in the bathrooms and just sit there and chill.</p> <p>They sit there in the middle</p>

Summary of Students' Views

The data obtained from the focus group interviews with the ten students enhanced the information pertaining to stakeholder's views of reasons students were tardy at their respective schools. Special conditions were also detailed. The students cited the following school factors as reasons, which caused student tardiness:

- Lockers, locker problems, and locker location
- Overcrowding
- Lack of time to use the restroom during class changes
- Students socializing in the halls
- Crowded bathrooms
- Over crowdedness and people standing around in the middle of the halls
- Fights
- Logistically poor class schedule
- The teacher not releasing students on time, and talking to the teacher
- Poor teacher attitude
- Long lines in the lunchroom.

The major school factors identified by the student respondents that contributed to tardiness were lockers, bathroom breaks, and over crowdedness. The students cited trying to go to class in a crowded school, stop by their locker to get books for their class, and use the restroom was a challenge. If their locker was not in a convenient location in conjunction with their class, they had problems getting to class on time. The bathrooms factor was also a major impediment to getting to class on time. They pointed out there was not enough time between class changes to use the bathroom and get to class on time. Compounding the bathroom issue

was going to their locker, which was previously mentioned. Several students mentioned that the bathrooms got extremely crowded from those who were using the restroom or those that were talking and taking up space. Lastly, the school factors of over crowdedness and people standing around in the middle of the halls was cited by the students as being a major cause of tardiness. The student respondents were adamant about this reason for student tardiness. They shared specifics as to where and when the halls became crowded and even alluded to their own talking and standing which contributed to the overall tardiness problem. The students also cited the following student factors as major causes of student tardiness:

- Transportation issues
- Waking up late
- Student apathy
- Doctor's appointments
- Wearing high heels
- Socializing and other students standing around in the middle of the hall

The major student factors identified by the student respondents were socializing and other students standing around in the middle of the hall. The students cited socializing caused them to arrive late to their classes. The talking and socializing was either their own chatting or the conversations of others. Other students standing around in the middle of the halls was another major factor, which caused them to be late to class. The student respondents were adamant about this reason for student tardiness and wanted more to be done by the administration to improve this issue. Many of the student respondents mentioned the consequence of suspension as being a deterrent to their socializing, standing in the middle of the hall, and arriving to class late.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

All of the respondent groups identified major causes of tardiness as being transportation issues in the morning, parental difficulties, waking up late for various reasons, student defiance, students socializing in the halls, school size, overcrowding, lockers and problems with lockers, and bathroom breaks between class changes.

The transportation issues ranged from being late to school due to riding to school with another student to having problems with traffic or the crossing guard. The transportation issue was mentioned by all respondent groups.

Parental issues were also aligned among the three sets of respondents. All of the groups identified problems with parents from either apathy or having less than punctual traits themselves. The students appeared to blame their parents for causing them to be late to school, whereas the teachers were more critical and malicious and blamed the parents for tardiness as is common to the education profession. The administrators saw parental issues for what they were, which were just common problems with getting their children up, dressed, and off to school.

All of the groups identified staying up late and waking up late as a cause of student tardiness. The students were quite honest about staying up late and not being able to get up on time for school. However, they blamed much of the problem of going to bed late on the teachers and having too much homework to do every night.

Student defiance was a common, identified cause of student tardiness. The teachers and administrators cited the defiance as any adults would in reference to teenagers. However, the students mentioned defiance in a more critical sense especially in regards to their peers who caused them to arrive late to class. Surprisingly, the students were honest about instances where their own defiance got in the way of them getting to class on time.

Socializing of students in the halls was another common theme identified by all respondent groups. The teachers and administrators identified the standing and socializing of students in the halls during class change as a major cause of student tardiness. This comes as no surprise. However, the students identified their own socializing and the socializing of others as a major cause of tardiness. In fact, the students were quite adamant about other students standing in the halls being a major cause of tardiness. Not only were they quite incensed about this issue, but they wanted the administration to hold other students accountable for the standing and blocking of others especially in such a crowded school.

All of the respondent groups identified the overcrowding and the size of the school as a major cause of student tardiness. The teachers and administrators were always battling the issue of trying to get the crowd moving. The students were again frustrated at times with the overcrowding and wanted the school and the district to do something about students continually enrolling in their school.

Lockers and problems with lockers was another common theme identified by all respondent groups as being a cause of tardiness. The teachers and administrators noted that students stood around at their lockers and talked to other students, which caused them to be late and clogged up already congested halls. The teacher also noted that students sporadically forgot their combinations, which caused them to be late. The students also identified other students standing around their lockers as a cause of tardiness. They cited where their locker was in relation to their classes as a major determining factor in how many tardies they would get that school year.

Lastly, all of the respondent groups identified bathroom breaks and bathroom to be a main cause of tardiness. The administrators and the students noted other students standing in the

bathrooms talking as a problem, which caused tardiness. The teachers cited specific restrictions on giving hall passes and students having to “take a tardy” if they were out of hall passes as a foremost reason for tardiness. The students related not having enough time to use the restroom, not enough restrooms, and overcrowding in the restrooms as all chief causes of their tardiness.

Even though the student respondents aligned many reasons for tardiness with the teacher and administrator groups, their view was more school factor centered instead of student factor centered. The majority of the student responses blamed the tardiness problem on the previously mentioned school factors of not having enough time, over crowding, locker location, and bathroom breaks. Facility use and facilities specifically was a major cause of student tardiness as noted by the student respondent group.

Across all groups, the major school factors were:

- Teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy
- Lack of administrator presence in the hallway
- Overcrowded halls
- Lockers and problems with lockers
- Bathroom break between class changes
- Students socializing in the halls
- Logistically poor class schedule

Across all groups, major student factors were:

- Transportation issues
- Parental issues
- Waking up late for various reasons
- Student defiance

- Students socializing in the halls
- Problems with lockers
- Bathroom breaks between class changes
- Student apathy
- Lockers and problems with lockers

Research Question 3

To address research question three, to what extent does student tardiness vary in high schools controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic status, gender, and minority enrollment, student tardiness data was obtained from the district's student information data base, analyzed and was presented through the following sub topics: (a) Student tardiness and school size, (b) Student tardiness and school location, (c) Student tardiness and socioeconomic status, (d) Student tardiness and minority enrollment (e) Student tardiness and gender.

Student Tardiness and School Size

Table 11 illustrated the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 for the school district by school size. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The average enrollment for high schools in the district was 1,081 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the school district was 27,163 for school year 2008-2009. The average number of tardy occurrences per student in the school district was 24.3. The categories for school size were separated into student population of one thousand or more students, 999 to 400 students, and less than 400 students. Five of the high schools in the district had an enrollment of 1000 or more students. Three of the high schools in the district had an enrollment of 999 to 400 students. One school had an enrollment of less than 400 students for school year 2008-2009. Schools with an enrollment of less than 400 students had an average of

3,654 total tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 and 9.7 average tardies per student. Schools with an enrollment of 999 to 400 students had an average of 20,075 total tardy occurrences and an average of 23.2 tardies per student. Schools with an enrollment of 1000 or more students had an average of 36,118 total tardy occurrences and an average of 28.0 tardies per student. The high schools with smaller student enrollments had a substantially lower average number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average number of tardy occurrences per student.

Table 11

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by School Size

School size	N	Average enrollment	Average tardy occurrences	Average tardy occurrences per student
1000 or more	5	1,344	36,118	28.0
999 to 400	3	878	20,075	23.2
Less than 400	1	375	3,654	9.7
District	9	1,081	27,163	24.3

Student Tardiness and School Locale

Table 12 illustrated the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 for the school district by school locale. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The average enrollment for high schools in the district was 1,081 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the school district was 27,163 for school year 2008-2009. The average number of tardy occurrences per student in the school district was 24.3. The categories for school locale were separated into urban, sub-urban, and rural. Four of the high schools in the district were classified as urban, four were classified as sub-urban, and one school was classified as rural. Information for classification was obtained from the school district's web site for each school. The average enrollment for the urban schools in the district was 935 students, for sub-urban, 1,178 students, and for rural, 1,280 students. Sub-urban high schools in the district had the highest average number of total tardy occurrences with 37,470 and the highest average per student with 31.9 for school year 2008-2009. Urban high schools were ranked second with an average of 20,275 total tardy occurrences and an average per student of 20.4 tardies. The rural high school had the lowest average number of tardy occurrences with 13,487 and the lowest student average with 10.5 tardies. Rural high schools were more effective at getting students to class on time for school year 2008-2009.

Table 12

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by School Locale

School locale	N	Average enrollment	Average tardy occurrences	Average per student
Urban	4	935	20,275	20.4
Sub-urban	4	1,178	37,470	31.9
Rural	1	1,280	13,487	10.5
District	9	1,081	27,163	24.3

Student Tardiness and Socioeconomic Level

Table 13 illustrated the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 for the school district by socioeconomic level. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The average enrollment for high schools in the district was 1,081 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the school district was 27,163 for school year 2008-2009. The average number of tardy occurrences per student in the school district was 24.3. The categories for socioeconomic level were based on the number of free and reduced lunch eligible students attended each high school. The categories for the district were separated into 75 % or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch, 50 % to 75 % of the student attending the school eligible for free and reduced lunch and 35 % to 49 % of the students attending the school eligible for free and reduced lunch. The district had an average of 52 % of the high school students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Two of the high schools had a percentage of 75 % or more students eligible, two of the high schools have an average between 50 % to 74% of the students eligible, and four of the high school had a percentage of 35 % to 49 % of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Information for classification was obtained from the school district's web site for each school. The school with free and reduced lunch eligible percentages of 50 % to 74 % had the highest number of tardy occurrences with 56,921 and the highest average tardy occurrence per student with 47.4. The two high school with 75 % or more of their students on free and reduced lunch had the second highest number of tardy occurrences with 21,487 and the second highest average tardy occurrence per student with 25.4. School with 35 % to 49 % of students eligible for free and reduced lunch had the lowest number of tardy occurrences with 17,530 and the lowest average tardy occurrence per student with 14.7. High schools with percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students that were less than 50

% had a significantly lower number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average tardy occurrence per student than the high schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students for school year 2008-2009.

Table 14 displayed the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 200-2009 by percentage of free and reduced lunch eligible students per school. School F had the lowest number of tardy occurrences and the lowest average tardy occurrence per students with 44 % of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Schools E, I C, and A had the next lowest number of tardy occurrences and average tardies per student and had free and reduced lunch eligible percentages of 46 %, 39 %, 48 %, and 46 % respectively. When free and reduced lunch eligibility percentages were above 50 %, the number of tardy occurrences and the average tardy occurrence per student increased significantly. Again, the data revealed high schools with percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students that were less than 50 % had a significantly lower number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average tardy occurrence per student than the high schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students for school year 2008-2009.

Table 13

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by Socioeconomic Level

Percentage of free And reduced lunch Eligible students	N	Average tardy occurrences	Average tardy occurrences per student
75 % or more	2	21,487	25.4
50 % to 74 %	2	56,921	47.4
35 % to 49 %	5	17,530	14.7
District=52 %	9	27,162	24.3

Table 14

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by Socioeconomic Level for Each School

School	Percentage of free and reduced lunch eligible students	Total number of tardy occurrences	Average number of tardy occurrences per student
A	46 %	34,472	20.9
B	62 %	44,934	35.3
C	48 %	18,788	13.8
D	67 %	68,907	59.6
E	46 %	13,487	10.5
F	44 %	3,654	9.7
G	78 %	21,379	22.3
H	85 %	21,595	28.6
I	39 %	17,250	18.8
District	52 %	244,466	24.3

N = 9

Student Tardiness and Minority Enrollment

Table 16 showed the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 2008-2009 for the school district by minority enrollment. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The average enrollment for high schools in the district was 1,081 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the school district was 27,163 for school year 2008-2009. The average number of tardy occurrences per student in the school district was 24.3. The categories for minority enrollment for each high school in the district were separated into 90 % or more minority enrollment, 70 % to 89 % minority enrollment, and less than 70 % minority enrollment. Four of the high schools in the district have a minority enrollment of 90 % or more, two of the schools have a minority enrollment of 70 % to 89 %, and three of the schools have a minority enrollment of less than 70 %. Information for classification was obtained from the school district's web site for each school. The high schools with minority enrollments of 90 % or more had the highest number of tardy occurrences with 39,204 and the highest tardy per student average of 36.4. High schools with minority enrollments of 70 % to 89 % were second with 19,063 total tardy occurrences and second with a tardy per student average of 15.3. High schools with minority enrollments of less than 70 % had the lowest total tardy occurrences with 16,508 and the lowest tardy per student average of 14.3. High schools with lower minority enrollment had less occurrences of tardies and a lower tardy per student average than high schools with higher minority enrollments for school year 2008-2009.

Table 15 displays the average number of tardy occurrences for school year 200-2009 by minority enrollment per school. Schools C, E, and I had the lowest minority enrollments with 63 %, 67 % and 67 %, respectively, and the second, third, and fourth lowest tardy per student averages with 10.5, 13.8, and 18.8. Schools H, D, and G had the highest minority enrollments

with 99 %, 98 %, and 97 %, respectively, and the third, first, and fourth highest tardy per student average out of the nine high schools participating in the study. As stated previously, high school in the school district with higher minority enrollments had higher occurrences of student tardiness and a higher tardy per student average than high schools with lower minority enrollments.

Table 15

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by Minority Enrollment Per School

School	Minority enrollment percentage	Total number of tardy occurrences	Average number of tardy occurrences per student
A	79 %	34,472	20.9
B	90 %	44,934	35.3
C	63 %	18,788	13.8
D	98 %	68,907	59.6
E	67 %	13,487	10.5
F	72 %	3,654	9.7
G	97 %	21,379	22.3
H	99 %	21,595	28.6
I	67 %	17,250	18.8
District	81 %	244,466	24.3

N = 9

Table 16

Average Number of Tardy Occurrences by Minority Enrollment

Minority enrollment Percentage	N	Average tardy occurrences	Average tardy occurrences per student
90 % or more	4	39,204	36.4
70 % to 89 %	2	19,063	15.3
Less than 70 %	3	16,508	14.3
District=81 %	9	27,162	24.3

Student Tardiness and Gender

Table 17 displayed the total number of male and female students per school versus total number of tardy occurrences for male and female students for school year 2009. The total number of high schools in the school district was nine (N=9). The average enrollment for high schools in the district was 1,081 students. The average number of tardy occurrences for the school district was 27,163 for school year 2008-2009. The average number of tardy occurrences per student in the school district was 24.3. The average male enrollment for the district was 4,791 and the enrollment for female students was 4,941. The total number of tardy occurrences for male students was 130,652 and for female students was 113,814. School D had the highest number of tardy occurrences for male students with 37,527 and the highest number of tardy occurrences for female students with 31,380 even though the school had the fifth highest enrollment for both male and female students. School F, which had the lowest enrollment for both male and female students, had the lowest number of tardy occurrences for both male and female students with 1,435 and 2,219 respectively. Seven out of the nine high schools in the study had a higher total number of tardy occurrences for male students even though six out of the nine high schools had female enrollment. The two schools with higher total tardy occurrences for female students was School F and School H. High schools in the district generally had a higher total number of tardy occurrences for male students than for female students for school year 2008-2009.

Table 18 displayed the average number of tardy occurrences per male and per female students per school for school year 200-2009. The average tardy per male for the entire district was 27.2 and the average tardy per female student in the district was 23.0. The average tardy per male and female student follows the same trend as the total number of tardy occurrences for male

and female students in the school district. Seven out of the nine total high schools participating in the study had a higher average tardy per male student than female students. Only School F and H had higher averages for female students with 10.0 and 29.6, correspondingly. School D had the highest average tardy per male student with 65.3 and the higher average tardy per female student with 53.8. School F had the lowest average tardy per male and female student with 9.4 and 10.0 respectively. High schools in the district in general had a higher average tardy per male student than female student for school 2008-2009.

Table 17

Total Number of Male and Female Students per School v. Total Number of Tardy Occurrences

School	Population Male	Population Female	Tardy occurrences Male	Tardy occurrences Female
A	749	899	17,786	16,686
B	666	606	25,518	19,416
C	703	662	10,010	8,778
D	574	583	37,527	31,380
E	623	657	7,174	6,313
F	152	223	1,435	2,219
G	456	505	10,977	10,402
H	375	381	10,287	11,308
I	493	425	9,938	7,312
Total	4,791	4,941	130,652	113,814

N = 9

Table 18

Total Number of Male and Female Students per School v. the Average Number of Tardies

School	Population Male	Population Female	Average tardies per male	Average tardies per female
A	749	899	23.7	18.6
B	666	606	38.3	32.0
C	703	662	14.4	13.3
D	574	583	65.3	53.8
E	623	657	11.5	9.6
F	152	223	9.4	10.0
G	456	505	24.1	20.6
H	375	381	27.4	29.6
I	493	425	20.1	17.2
Total	4,791	4,941	27.2	23.0

N = 9

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

Major findings were:

- High schools in the district with smaller student enrollments had a substantially lower average number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average number of tardy occurrences per student.
- Rural high schools in the district had lower occurrences of tardiness and a lower average tardy per student as compared to urban and sub-urban high schools.
- High schools in the district with percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students that were less than 50 % had a significantly lower number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average tardy occurrence per student than the high schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students for school year 2008-2009.
- High schools in the district with lower minority enrollments had fewer occurrences of tardiness and a lower tardy per student average than high schools with higher minority enrollments for school year 2008-2009.
- High schools in the district generally had a higher total number of tardy occurrences for male students and a higher average tardy per male student than female student for school 2008-2009.

Research Question 4

To address research question four, what are strategies and best practices that contribute to a reduction in student tardiness, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted and were presented through the following sub topics: (a) Administrators' descriptions of strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness, (b) Teachers' descriptions of strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness, (c) Students' descriptions of strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness.

Administrators' Descriptions of Best Practices

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five administrators from the school district. Each administrator was asked questions pertaining to strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness. Table 19 presented responses from the semi-structured interviews with the administrators' as it pertained to ways to reduce student tardiness, including special conditions that may have helped reduce tardiness as well as possible positive behavioral supports.

The first interviewee was an administrator from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The second administrator was from School B. School B, as previously noted, had a student population of 1,272 students who contributed 44,934 tardies for school year 2008-2009. The school ranked second worst in getting to students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The third participant was an administrator from School E. School E had a student population of 1,280 students who included 13,487 tardies for school year 2008-2009. The school ranked second best in getting students to school on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

The fourth administrator participant was from School G. School G had a student population of 961 students who contributed 21,379 tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked sixth best out of the nine schools participating in the study.

The last administrator participating in the study was from the only school in the county that did not have data in the student database to analyze. When the researcher pulled the student tardiness data, the reports revealed only data pertaining to middle school students housed at the school. Upon further investigation, the process of collecting and storing data at this particular school was different from other schools in the county. Tardy infractions were written on referrals, which were then turned into the administration for follow up, recording, and discipline. The interviewee shared that tardiness was still a problem regardless of what the database revealed. The administrator responses were included based on the significance of the responses by the respondent as well as the alignment that the responses revealed in comparison to the other administrator respondents from across the district.

Each of the administrator respondents shared various strategies and practices that they employed to reduce student tardiness at their respective school. The strategies and practices ranged from administrator and teacher presence in the hallway during class changes to consistency with paperwork and consistency with issuing discipline for tardiness. The following was a summary of the strategies and best practices shared by the administrator respondents in which they utilized to reduce student tardiness at their particular school. The overall subject was

what caused a reduction in student tardiness. Each strategy and practice was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the administrator transcripts. The responses were then quantified according to the number of respondents that referred to what caused a reduction in student tardiness throughout their interview. The major themes, which become apparent following the analysis, were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. In addition, for informational purposes only, all of the strategies and practices were listed in the following summary. The subsequent was a synopsis of what the five administrator respondents shared as to strategies and best practices, which resulted in a reduction in student tardiness at their respective schools. Special conditions and possible positive behavior supports were also detailed.

- One administrator (20 %) mentioned not having a warning bell as helping to reduce tardiness.
- Two out of five administrators (40 %) cited administrator and teacher presence in the hallway as helping reduce tardiness. The constant prompting by the staff for the students to move to class and the consistent vigilance of all faculty made a significant impact on student tardiness.
- All administrator respondents (100 %) stated consistency with enforcement by teachers and administration as reducing student tardiness. The consistency with administrators issuing consequences to students with excessive tardies was also a key to successful reduction in tardiness.
- All five respondents (100 %) noted parental contact about tardiness as being a strategy to aid in enforcing and reducing student tardiness.
- Three out of the five respondents (60 %) cited that they utilized the strategy of having either an administrator and/or teacher helpers writing tardy passes throughout their

- school day. This was employed to either ensure teachers were locking their doors and not letting tardy students into class without proper documentation or as a means of making individual and person contact with those students who were chronically tardy.
- One administrator (10 %) mentioned the practice of having students in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just being in the classroom or walking through the door at the ringing of the tardy bell.
 - One administrator (10 %) pointed out that knowing the students on an individual basis and being aware of special circumstances was an effective strategy to help reduce overall student tardiness.
 - Two out of the five administrators (40 %) cited bell ringer activities and extra points given to those students on time to class to be an effective strategy to get students to class on time.
 - One administrator (10 %) mentioned that teachers that provided good, interesting, and fun instruction had less occurrences of student tardiness.
 - One administrator (10 %) revealed that having a consequence for every tardy was an effective way to reduce student tardiness.
 - All five administrator respondents (100 %) stated consistent consequences for tardiness were an effective means at reducing student tardiness. The consequences ranged from after school detention and in school suspension to out of school suspension and Saturday school detention.
 - Three out of the five respondents (60 %) cited tardy sweeps and lock downs as an efficient way at reducing tardiness.

- One administrator (10 %) stated that making the tardy process clerical instead of administrative helped in the practice of handling tardy referrals and ultimately helped to reduce tardiness.
- One administrator (10 %) mentioned assigning lockers to students based upon where their middle of the day class was located as a strategy to reduce student tardiness.
- Two of the five respondents (40 %) said to make the tardy process as teacher friendly as possible by reducing the number of referrals a teacher must write and only having them enter the tardies into the database when a student is tardy.
- One administrator (10 %) recommended the loss of driving privileges for students consistently tardy to school as an effective strategy to reduce tardiness.
- One administrator (10 %) stated that they issued a more severe consequence for sixth and seventh period tardies following lunch.
- One administrator (10 %) developed a no pep rally list for habitually tardy students.
- One administrator (10 %) made parents of chronically tardy students walk their child to class.
- Two of the five respondents (40 %) noted that effective enforcement of the tardy policy was facilitated by administrators who were there every day staying on students about getting to class on time.
- All of the respondents (100 %) mentioned that strict adherence to the county policy effectively reduced tardiness. However, each of the respondents made some minor adjustments to the policy with the issuing of discipline.
- One administrator (10 %) suggested that having both punishment and incentive combinations effectively reduce tardiness.

- One administrator (10 %) cited having one entrance for students to enter upon arrival to school was an efficient way to reduce tardies to school.
- Three of the five respondents (60 %) cited positive behavior supports as an effective method of reducing student tardiness. Several of the shared positive behavior supports were no tardy pens, extra points for coming to class on time, and movie, soda, and popcorn parties during seventh period for students without any tardies at the end of each grading period.
- One administrator (10 %) stated that the tardy policy should be posted in every classroom.
- One administrator (10 %) acknowledged that the tardy policy should be stressed at the beginning of the year orientations as a means of reducing student tardiness.
- Two of the five respondents (40 %) cited administrators should monitor teacher's enforcement of the policy to help reduce tardiness.
- One administrator (10 %) cited giving a clock or a bell to floating teachers to dismiss students from their class on time as an effective strategy to reduce tardiness.

Table 19

Administrators' Descriptions of Strategies and Best Practices that Contributed to a Reduction in Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	What causes a reduction in student tardiness?	Special conditions	Positive behavior supports
Administrator A	<p>We actually changed the bell system. We actually found it was more effective just to have our regular bell system and we found that the kids vacate the hall even closer to a minute before the bell rings.</p> <p>These kids really make an effort simply because they know there are consequences.</p> <p>Presence of the administrators and the teachers in the hall</p> <p>We are constantly telling them to move, we don't let them linger in the hallway, there's no standing around, to move faster</p> <p>Constant vigilance of everyone in the hallway</p> <p>Consistent discipline consequences: making sure we enforce those consequences</p> <p>Looking at those kids</p>	<p>We eliminated that warning bell. Students would have to keep better track of the five minute span. They are more conscious of it so the halls are actually clear prior to the five minutes now.</p> <p>Students are expected to be in their seats when the tardy bell rings.</p> <p>Writing a tardy pass</p> <p>The tardy pass is more for the benefit of the administrators, we personally see them and personally write their names down, we know first names and last names, we ask them the reason they are tardy instead of just saying your tardy here's a pass and go to class, we can discern what some of the reasons are for tardiness. I think it's a good keep in touch method, we're not just telling kids get out of the hall. It also tells us which teachers are following the policy and logging the tardies in. because if you're not logging the tardies in and we're writing the passes we soon see there's a problem.</p>	<p>Some teachers have bell ringer activities or whatever you want to call them. A lot of kids are aware of them and they want to get to class to get extra points.</p>

	<p>on an individual basis</p> <p>We do make contact about tardies</p> <p>The effort that the administration and the faculty put into it</p> <p>Our constant effort and our constant presence in the hallway and of course the efforts of our teachers, the kids know we're concerned. We're concerned enough to be out there seven times a day for class changes I think the kids start to get concerned enough to get to class on time.</p>	<p>We don't get a reaction from the parents until there's a consequence given.</p> <p>I think it depends on the teacher. We have a lot of teachers that kids enjoy being in their class. They get there because they want to.</p> <p>Most of our teachers have classes that are fairly interesting where the kids want to get there.</p>	
Administrator B	<p>We wanted the kids to be accountable for every tardy. Cause when the kids were held accountable for every tardy they were running to class.</p> <p>After school detention and Saturday school detention</p> <p>Lock downs every period</p> <p>In school suspension and out of school suspension</p> <p>Getting their punishment on the spot, we go straight to</p>	<p>Just working out a system where it is clerical so you can keep up with it.</p> <p>I had a full time athletic director, that's all he did, he was my tardy man, he kept up with all my tardies.</p> <p>Getting the teachers to buy into it. They have to be consistent.</p> <p>I encourage all my teachers to do a warm up exercise.</p> <p>I want to get the fourth or third period teachers to assign lockers, and I want them to do a book exchange during their fourth period class. You have the books</p>	<p>Offer more incentives for students that do not get any tardies. I've found this pen company that had some nice pens. No tardies and ill give you a pen. Those high school kids like that stuff, they like ice cream parties and things like that.</p>

	<p>after school detention</p> <p>When the bell rung, the secretary got on the intercom, “teachers we are implementing the sweeps, lock your doors and do not let anyone in without a pass”. Then we had sweeps every period, we swept them all down to the cafeteria.</p> <p>We had folks helping, we had a log book, ok this is your first tardy, sign the log book, boom, then they went to class.</p> <p>Teachers would not let them in without the sheet.</p>	<p>for the first half of the day and then exchange them for the books for the last half of the day.</p> <p>We want it as teacher friendly as possible. If you have a number of people keeping up with tardies where the entire teacher had to do was to fill out the name and sign it and turn it in and they are through with it.</p> <p>Parent is being notified throughout the process</p>	
Administrator C	<p>When the bell rings, and teachers lock their doors. I will hold the kids in the lunchroom and make them write the tardy pass and then that’s their pass back to class.</p> <p>I’ll have teachers on planning that period help us get the kids to the lunchroom. It’s every period, every day.</p> <p>The teachers lock their doors and start teaching with a bell ringer or whatever to start class.</p>	<p>If they are late to first period they lose driving privileges for three weeks if they get suspended.</p> <p>I handle all those tardies.</p> <p>If you’re tardy to sixth or seventh period, sixth or seventh period tardies will result in one day of in house.</p> <p>We had a no pep rally list. The habitual violators were no aloud to go to the pep rally.</p> <p>They hate me being on them all the time.</p>	

	<p>It goes down once you start suspending.</p> <p>Now what I have started to do is give them one day of ISS at ten and then at eleven they get suspended.</p>	<p>I tell them to come up to school and walk their child's schedule with me.</p> <p>The fact that they know I'm going to be there everyday and I'm going to be on the intercom telling the teachers to lock there doors and be in the lunchroom. You just have to be consistent every day. They know I am going to be there every day expecting them and making them go to class on time.</p>	
Administrator D	<p>We go with the county policy that at the fifth tardy they get a warning letter, at eleven they can get suspended for three days, at fifteen they can be suspended, and at twenty one they can be referred for a tribunal.</p> <p>What we do is we try to notify the parents at tardy number three, number five, and any time after number five.</p> <p>We may do a combination of a parent conference or a letter to the parents to let them know what's going on with the tardies.</p> <p>We do tardy sweeps, pop up tardy sweeps throughout the week, if you get caught in the tardy sweep we</p>	<p>Tardies is one of those things that if you have to work on it year round, that you have to have it consistently enforced that it gets better throughout the year.</p> <p>We use a combination of punishments with incentives.</p> <p>All of our tardy students have to come in through the one entrance in the morning.</p> <p>Making sure that everyone understands how important it is to get to class on time.</p> <p>The three most important things you have to do to be consistent with your tardy policy is number one communication, to all the stakeholders, the students, the parents, the staff as to how you are going to handle tardies. The second most important thing is that once you have collected that</p>	<p>All of the students that do not have any tardies, we bring them into the cafeteria seventh period that afternoon for like a movie and a soda and a popcorn type thing as an incentive to let them know that we do appreciate what they are doing.</p>

	<p>may send you to ISS for that period or call your parents for a conference.</p> <p>We have them wait in ISS during that period and then go to their next class.</p>	<p>information on tardies is that you consistently enforce it and monitor it. And, the third most important things is that you make sure that you are being fair with the policy and understand that as with any policy you have some flexibility with it.</p>	
Administrator E *	<p>The fifth tardy we give three hours of detention and on the eleventh tardy they get five hours of detention and at sixteen we follow through with the county policy with suspension.</p> <p>Teachers consistently are enforcing it</p> <p>An hour of detention for every tardy</p>	<p>The tardy policy is posted in every classroom. So the students are aware of the policy.</p> <p>An orientation is held at the beginning of the year so the students are aware of the consequences of the policy.</p> <p>Administratively, monitoring the halls</p> <p>Making the teacher aware that you are monitoring for their kids as well</p> <p>The fact that the teachers don't have to keep records of it helps</p> <p>Make sure that all the teachers are out in the hallways pushing the kids on to class</p> <p>Remind teachers that move that they are to set a bell so they are not dismissing the kids late to class</p>	

Summary of Administrators' Descriptions of Best Practices

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews with the administrators contributed to the information pertaining to strategies and best practices employed to reduce student tardiness. Positive behavior supports were also detailed. The administrators cited the following strategies, which led to a reduction in student tardiness:

The administrator respondents cited the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by the consistent issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention. They also noted consistency with enforcement by teachers as an effective practice. Parental contact about tardiness was another effective practice noted by all of the administrator respondents as being an effective way to reduce student tardiness. The consistency in following the district tardy policy was another major factor in reducing student tardiness. Even though the administrators made minor adjustments to the consequences and the number of tardies in which consequences were given, they all stated adherence to the district policy.

The majority of the administrators said they gave positive behavior supports and rewards to those students who were consistent with their punctuality to school and to class. Most of the rewards mentioned were in the form of pizza or ice cream parties, free tardy passes, or no tardy pens.

Teachers' Descriptions of Best Practices

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers from the school district. Each teacher was asked questions pertaining to strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness. Table 20 presented responses from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers as it pertained to ways to reduce student tardiness, including special conditions that helped reduce tardiness as well as possible positive behavioral supports.

The three teacher interviewees were teachers from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

Each of the teacher respondents shared various strategies and practices that they believed would reduce student tardiness at their respective school. The following was a summary of the strategies and practices shared by the teacher respondents in which they utilized to reduce student tardiness in their classroom and what they felt would reduce tardiness school wide. The overall subject was what caused a reduction in student tardiness. Each strategy and practice was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the teacher transcripts. The responses were then quantified according to the number of respondents that referred to what caused a reduction in student tardiness throughout their interview. The major themes, which became apparent following the analysis, were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. The subsequent was a synopsis of what the three teacher respondents shared as to strategies and best practices, which resulted in a reduction in student tardiness at their respective schools. Special conditions and possible positive behavior supports were also detailed.

- All of the teacher respondents (100 %) stated that having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class was an effective way at reducing tardiness.
- All of the respondents (100 %) shared that being consistently at your door and telling the students over and over to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell helped reduce tardiness and get the students to class on time. The constant repetition was an important strategy used by the classroom teachers and was stressed several times by all respondents.
- Having the students sign a tardy log was also mentioned by two of the respondents (67 %) as being an effective practice in reducing student tardiness. Even if the student refused to sign the tardy log, it was still effective due to the accountability it manifested with the signature.
- Two of the respondents (66 %) stated that they did not discuss a tardy with a student and would proceed with class even if the student refused to sign the tardy log. The lack of a student/teacher argument when a student was tardy was an important strategy and should be avoided.
- One teacher (33 %) shared that net or clear book bags would help with tardiness issues in a school that did not allow students to carry book bags.
- All of the teachers (100 %) mentioned consequences being issued in the form of turning in tardies, especially during the first few weeks of school as being an effective way to set the tone of the school year and helped reduce tardiness following the consequences.

- Two of the teachers (66 %) mentioned the removal of the warning bell, which was previously used at the school, actually got student to class quicker because it made them more responsible for keeping up with the time themselves.
- One teacher (33 %) mentioned that making the time students had to get from lunch to their next class would help reduce tardiness school wide.
- Two of the teacher respondents (66 %) stated that if a student arrives after the ringing of the tardy bell, they sent them to the administration to get a tardy pass. One teacher did not like the time it wasted for the student to go get the pass but did mentioned that they understood why the administration required this practice.
- One teacher (33 %) noted they marked their attendance on their promethean board where everyone could see that it was being entered and submitted to the administration.
- All of the teacher respondents (100 %) did not approve of the "no tardy parties", the positive behavior support offered at the school, for students that did not any tardies for the semester. They all felt as though getting to class on time was an expectation and should not be rewarded. They also mentioned teacher inconsistency and discrepancies with students who did and did not deserve to go to the parties as being a major issue and cause on contention with students and with other teachers.

Table 20

Teachers' Descriptions of Strategies and Best Practices that Contributed to a Reduction in Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	What causes a reduction in student tardiness?	Special conditions	Positive behavior supports
Teacher A	<p>So, there are a lot of teachers not following the tardy policy. But in mine they know they have to be in the seat when the bell rings otherwise they are tardy whether they are in the room or not.</p> <p>I told them after the first week. Starting Monday, if you are late you will be signing my tardy log and there will be no questions asked if you are not in your seat. That solved the problem for me.</p> <p>Be in that seat by the tardy bell. It's not sliding in the seat. It's not sliding in the classroom. It's you are in that seat ready to go when that tardy bell rings. I think it makes it more effective.</p> <p>Net book bags or clear book bags would help reduced tardiness. You know if they had book bags then there would not be as many tardy issues. The boys, we tend to take their book bags, but the girls we</p>	<p>But, I'm still at my door telling them to get in their seats, get in their seats. If they are not being reminded, they don't care. It comes down to, if the teacher's not there to push them every day, they don't think it's gonna count.</p> <p>Just do it every day.</p> <p>If they are not going to sign the tardy log, I'm not going to argue. I'm like whatever and then I write down the tardy myself and write, student refused to sign.</p> <p>Just standing at the door telling them, you better have a seat, you better have a seat, you better have a seat.</p>	<p>You know when we have the no tardy parties, and you have kids that are going to the party that you know are going to a class late constantly. They get invited to the no tardy part. I have a problem with that.</p>

	don't take their big purses. Clear or net book bags would work.		
Teacher B	Yeah, I had to stress that to the ninth graders that if they are in the room and not in their seat they are tardy. I had a few tardies the first couple of days so I had to explain it the hard way.	<p>They are pretty good about it now, especially taking the tardy bell (warning bell) out. They have to keep time on their own, they don't have a choice.</p> <p>Yeah, sit on top of them, the repeaters for a while.</p> <p>Be in your seat by the tardy bell.</p> <p>So it seems like the lunch one needs to be a little bit longer.</p> <p>Yeah, it's just that repetition (of telling them to be in their seat).</p>	If I'm with you and we are both going to different classes and we were both late that day and she gets to go to the no tardy party.
Teacher C	<p>If they are right at the door, I tell them to sign the tardy log. If it's afterward, they need to show me a pass.</p> <p>If they get to class on time, it's not to get a cup of ice cream. They did it because they knew they were going to be suspended.</p>	<p>And I go over it on the first day when I go over my syllabus, I don't make a big deal or who ha if you are tardy. Sign the tardy log, give me your pass and sit down. I'm not going to ask you where you've been and what you've been doing. I don't have time for that. You're tardy. There is nothing I can do about it at that point and you are tardy. So I just leave it at that. I don't say why are you tardy? Don't you know you are tardy? I don't go through that. It's not worth it to me. So, I just say sign the tardy log. If they are coming in the door as they are running through and</p>	I have a problem with the no tardy party. The problem to me is being to class on time should be an expectation, which is something you don't reward. I fell that something that is expected of the student is something that is a given. It's not; it's just something you do. Yeah, it may be an incentive to make them on time for class, but

		<p>knocking a desk or two. I say, tardy, tardy, tardy. I don't argue with them about signing the tardy log. I'll say if you don't sign the tardy log I'm going to mark you tardy any way. Cause there's this thing about signing the tardy log. I'm like, it does not really matter. It's just a thing.</p> <p>Now that I have my promethean board, see that where it says T. They hate that cause they can see each other's middle name.</p> <p>They know, but I remember my first couple of weeks of school and when they found out that there was no warning bell, they were flying to class and the hall was empty. We were waiting for the tardy bell to ring.</p> <p>It (being in your seat) gets you a little closer to starting class on time and be able to do what you set out to do for that day.</p>	<p>it should be an expectation just like doing your work. You do the work, you get the grade or you get a zero. Why should a student be rewarded for something that is an expectation? Do you get where I'm coming from? Some people don't understand that. Rewards are good but do you always have to give them something for something that should have been done in the first place?</p>
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Summary of Teachers' Descriptions of Best Practices

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews with the teachers added to the information pertaining to strategies and best practices employed to reduce student tardiness. Positive behavior supports were also detailed. The teachers cited the following strategies, which led to a reduction in student tardiness:

The teachers cited having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class was an effective way of reducing tardiness. They also noted being consistently at your door and telling the students, over and over, to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell helped reduce tardiness and get the students to class on time. The constant repetition was an important strategy used by the classroom teachers and was stressed several times by all respondents. Lastly, the teachers mentioned consequences being issued in the form of turning in tardies, especially during the first few weeks of school was an effective way to set the tone of the school year and helped reduce tardiness following the consequences.

The teachers were adamant about not offering positive behavioral supports for punctuality. They did not approve of the “no tardy parties” for students who did not have any tardies for the semester. They all felt as though getting to class on time was an expectation and should not be rewarded. They also shared stories of inconsistency among the staff and cited many instances where the inconsistency led to student resentment and discouragement.

The administrator and teacher respondents were aligned in their ideas of what strategies reduced student tardiness. Both groups felt the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class, and having administrators and teachers visible and in the halls during class changes. Consistently telling the students, over and over, to be in their seats before the ringing of

the tardy bell, having the students sign a tardy log, and removal of the warning bell was also noted as being effective strategies at reducing student tardiness.

Students' Descriptions of Best Practices

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a two five student focus groups from the school district. The students were asked questions pertaining to strategies and best practices that contributed to a reduction in student tardiness. Table 21 presented responses from the semi-structured interviews with the students as it pertained to ways to reduce student tardiness, including special conditions that helped reduce tardiness as well as possible positive behavioral supports.

The ten students selected for the focus group interviews were students from School C. School C, as previously presented, had a student population of 1,365 students and had 18,788 total tardies for school year 2008-2009. This ranked fourth best in getting students to class on time out of the nine high schools participating in the study.

Each of the student respondents shared ideas and reasons they felt would help reduce student tardiness for their school and for themselves. Their ideas and strategies ranged from adding more time in between class changes to stricter enforcement and consequences for those students that stood around, blocked the halls, and caused others to get to class late. The following was a summary of the strategies and best practices shared by the student respondents, which they felt would help alleviate student tardiness at their particular school. The overall subject was what caused a reduction in student tardiness. Each strategy and practice was then coded, which emerged from analysis of the student transcripts. The responses were then quantified according to the number of respondents that referred to what caused a reduction in student tardiness throughout their interview. The major themes, which become apparent following the analysis,

were then shared as major findings from the inquiry. The following was a synopsis of what the ten student respondents shared as to strategies and best practices, which resulted in a reduction in student tardiness at their respective schools. Special conditions and possible positive behavior supports were also detailed.

- Five out of the ten student respondents (50 %) mentioned that consequences had a direct affect on their tardiness. When they knew there were consequences, such as, suspensions, in school suspensions, and detention, for tardiness, they made more of an effort to get to class on time.
- Five of the ten respondents (50 %) believed that if more effort and attention were placed on those students that were standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes, there would be a reduction in tardiness.
- One student (10 %) mentioned that it would be a good idea to have a slow lane and a fast lane to help reduce student tardiness.
- One student respondent (10 %) wanted to be notified after every tardy instead of being notified at five, ten, and fifteen.
- One student (10 %) wanted the policy to be a student is tardy if they are not in the room by the ringing of the tardy bell instead of in the seat.
- Two students (20 %) wanted more help from the guidance department when scheduling their classes for the next year. They wanted their schedule to be arranged as to make it conducive to getting to class on time.
- One student respondent (10 %) desired more understanding with traffic problems in the morning and better control of the traffic guard who would periodically hold them up when they were late to school.

- Two of the ten student respondents (20 %) noted that they wish that the minute warning bell were reinstated. One student (10 %) stated that he felt like the warning bell caused more people to be late because most students would wait around until the minute warning bell rang and then run to class. This caused more congestion school wide. One respondent (10 %) revealed that he would look at the crowd and when the majority of the crowd moved on to class, he would then know it was time to go. it was his own minute warning signal.
- One student (10 %) felt as though an extra bathroom installed in the school would help alleviate student tardiness.
- One student respondent (10 %) thought that book bags would help reduce tardiness.
- Five of the ten student respondents (50 %) wanted recognition for those students who made an effort to have few occurrences or no occurrences of tardiness throughout the school year. They mentioned that free tardy passes or tardy tokens were an excellent positive behavior support and really helped them out when they got in a bind with tardies or needed extra time on specific days. No tardy parties were also mentioned as an excellent way to reinforce punctuality.

Table 21

Students' Descriptions of Strategies and Best Practices that Contributed to a Reduction in Student Tardiness

Stakeholder	What causes a reduction in student tardiness?	Special conditions	Positive behavior supports
Student A	It makes me care cause if I get suspended, whew, moms would not be happy.		
Student B	<p>Maybe add a couple of minutes just so people can at least get to the bathrooms. So if you give us a few more extra minutes to go to the bathroom that might reduce them.</p> <p>For people that maybe care, suspensions, detentions, and in school suspension might make them care a little bit more.</p> <p>I found out that my one in school day sucked. I lost a piece of my soul that day.</p>		
Student C	<p>What happened to the minute bell? I liked the warning bell?</p> <p>Enforcing a little bit more on those people that are standing around.</p> <p>Maybe just enforce the standing around thing stricter</p> <p>I am glad the principal is an enforcer and not somebody that just let's</p>	<p>Maybe be a little more understanding with traffic.</p> <p>The crossing guard will let the buses go but then he won't direct traffic. He just, I know he's there for the school but he's not directing traffic when he's standing there. He used to, but then he stopped. It was helpful. It was like our little stop light.</p> <p>I was watching today this one girl who was just</p>	<p>some random rewards for the people that are actually going to class and seem that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing for hall passes or something like that.</p> <p>I know we do the free tardy thing,</p>

	<p>everything fly off and be chaos.</p>	<p>dancing. Quit playing around and go.</p>	<p>but we don't do it a lot. And I like when we did that because it gave me some time.</p> <p>Maybe we can do some more free tardy passes.</p> <p>We want more of the tardy passes if we deserve it.</p>
Student D	<p>I think the detention thing after fifth period is effective but it's extreme.</p> <p>We see you at five tardies, then eleven. What about the others? Warn us at every tardy or so.</p> <p>You have to be in your seat or you get a tardy. You can be in the room and get a tardy. Can we just be in the room?</p>	<p>Guidance needs to help us out with our schedule.</p> <p>I told the teachers about the conditions of the halls and they are talking about going the back way. Well, that's all fine and good if it's a nice day outside, but if its raining or its cold then that's inclement weather.</p> <p>Maybe we could have the slow lane and the fast lane or something.</p>	<p>There should be something, some recognition for those people who don't get any tardies.</p>
Student E			<p>Free tardy passes, that would work out good.</p>

Student F	<p>Getting rid of the warning bell actually got people to class earlier. With the warning bell, everyone would wait until the last minute then rush to class. They would sit there and relax and talk and then run to class.</p> <p>Give the one hour detention after fifth period to those people who constantly goof off.</p>	<p>I got lucky this year because all of my classes are at the back of the hallway, so I go the back way and my locker's at the back of the hall at the 400 hall. So it makes it easier on me. And, I just go the back way because it's like less people instead of in the main hallway its all crowded and jammed up at the ends of the hall and all like that.</p> <p>Don't let teachers charge you tardies for going to the bathroom.</p>	They have no tardy parties and AB honor roll parties.
Student G	<p>I think cause of consequences. Like me, when I know I have ten tardies, I know I got to go so I won't get that one to get me suspended.</p> <p>I know when I get to ten, then I got to go and I be gone. I shut it down for a while and at least try to hold it down until December when they start over.</p>	<p>Can we bring that minute bell back?</p> <p>The way the crowd moves</p>	<p>Tardy tokens</p> <p>Those AYP cards, I used to use the free tardies on them every week.</p>
Student H		<p>An extra bathroom to use</p> <p>Don't stop at your locker</p> <p>My teacher locked me out. I wasn't late after that.</p>	

Student I	They think about it. They know the tardy. They know all the policies and stuff like that.	If people would just walk like faster I just push them out of the way When I see the hall starting to clear, I go. It's like a warning bell when you see it thin out. It's time to go. You might be a minute or two late and they won't trip. So I'm like I'm just gonna get my stuff and get on to class.	They got the tardy tokens and it came in handy, it really helped them a lot.
Student J	Book bags would help	If they do what they have to do instead of just sitting there and doing things they ain't supposed to be doing things would be easier.	

Summary of Students' Descriptions of Best Practices

The data obtained from the interviews with the students supplemented the information regarding strategies and best practices employed to reduce student tardiness. Positive behavior supports were also detailed. The students cited the following strategies and practices, which led to a reduction in student tardiness:

The major factors, which led to a reduction in student tardiness according to the students were consequences and more attention given to those standing in the hall. The students ardently pointed out that consequences and penalties had a direct affect on their tardiness. They noted suspensions and days spent in the in house suspension program were the most effective deterrents to their continuing tardiness. Several students noted if they were suspended from school, their parents would hold them accountable. Many appeared visibly worried about the idea of what their parents would do if they were suspended. The students also believed if more effort and attention were placed on those students standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes, there would be a reduction in tardiness.

The administrators, teachers, and students were all in agreement concerning the practice of being consistent in the issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention. However, the respondent groups differed in their opinions as to other methods of getting students to class on time. The administrator and teacher respondents were more aligned in their ideas of what strategies reduced student tardiness. Again, they felt the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class, and having administrators and teachers visible and in the halls during class changes. Consistently telling the students, over and over, to be in their seats before the ringing of

the tardy bell, having the students sign a tardy log, and removal of the warning bell was also noted as being effective strategies at reducing student tardiness. The students disagreed with the policy of being in your seat instead of in the room after the ringing of the tardy bell. The students also wanted more help from the guidance department in arranging their schedule as to make it more conducive to getting to class on time, and they wanted more understanding with traffic problems in the morning. Lastly, they students wanted the minute warning bell to be reinstated, and wanted extra bathrooms installed in the school and extra time between class changes.

The administrator and student groups were in agreement when it came to positive behavior supports. Both groups agreed with the “no tardy parties” and the recognition of students with low or no occurrences of tardiness. The teachers disagreed with positive behavior supports and felt as though there should be no reward for an expectation, such as, being punctual.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 4

From the semi-structured interviews with all of the respondent groups, information was gathered according to stakeholders’ views as to what strategies and practices were most effective at reducing student tardiness. The following is a summary of common themes, which emerged from the interviews with all respondent groups.

The consistent issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention was a common strategy and practice agreed upon by all respondent groups. The inconsistent enforcement of the tardy policy was a reason given by teacher and administrator groups as a cause of tardiness. Therefore, more consistency in all facets of dealing with student tardiness would be an expected solution or strategy given by the respondents as to ways to alleviate tardiness.

The groups varied in their views as to other methods of getting students to class on time. Teacher and administrator respondent groups were in agreement and believed the best techniques to reduce student tardiness would be achieved by having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class. They also agreed during class changes, teachers and administrators being visible in the halls, prompting student to get to class on time, greatly reduced student tardiness. The administrators should consistently tell student to get to class and the teachers should tell the students to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell. The two respondent groups also concurred that having the students sign a tardy log, and removal of the warning bell as being successful tactics to reduce student tardiness. The students and teachers wanted more time for both groups to eat lunch and considered allowing students to carry book bags would help reduce tardiness.

Positive behavior supports was a point of divergence and debate among the three respondent groups. The administrator and student respondent groups held positive behavior supports, such as no tardy parties, no tardy pens, and free tardy passes, were a successful way to aid in the reduction of student tardiness. The teacher respondents were steadfast about not rewarding students for promptness because it is an expectation and not an achievement. The teachers believed students should not receive any sort of reward for the expectation of getting to class on time. They felt that getting to class on time is something they should already be doing.

The issue the student respondent groups were passionate and adamant about was other students standing in the halls during class changes blocking others from getting to class on time. The students wanted the administration to concentrate their efforts on individual students standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes. The teacher and administrator presence in the halls, which was listed as a major cause of tardiness when it was a

deficiency, was now a solution to the problem. The adult presence was not only an identified problem in the study, but also a solution to the tardiness problem.

The students did not understand what they could walk into the room after the ringing of the tardy bell instead of being in their seats. The students disagreed with the policy of being in your seat instead of in the room after the ringing of the tardy bell. They felt it was unfair to be in the room and still receive a tardy. The teacher and administrator groups felt as though the “in your seat” policy was a more consistent and more impartial method of enforcing the tardy policy.

Across all groups, the major strategies and practices identified were:

- Consistent issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention
- Students seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class
- Having administrators and teachers visible and in the halls during class changes
- Consistently telling the students to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell
- Having the students sign a tardy log upon entering class tardy.
- Removal of the warning bell
- Longer lunch times
- Allowing students to carry book bags
- Positive behavior supports, such as no tardy parties, no tardy pens, and free tardy passes

- Administration to concentrate more attention to those students standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes

Summary of Major Findings of the Study

The researcher utilized quantitative data attained from the selected Georgia school district's database to report the extent and variance of student tardiness in nine high schools located in one school district. The quantitative data was also used to ascertain the variance of student tardiness across the school as it related to factors, such as, school size, school locale, minority enrollment, socioeconomic status, and gender. The second phase of this study was qualitative and utilized interviews to identify and investigate effective strategies employed to reduce student tardiness and stakeholders' descriptions of conditions of student tardiness at their respective school.

The findings indicated the occurrences of tardiness were extremely widespread and fluctuated from high school to high school. Of the nine high schools in the district participating in the study, two of the schools were considered. School D and School B far exceeded the other schools in relation to the total number of tardy occurrences, the average tardy occurrences per day, the average tardy occurrences per student, the average tardy occurrences per class change, and the percentage attributed by each high school for school year 2008-2009. School D and School B both had the fourth and fifth largest student populations, but ranked first and second based on all tardiness categories.

Of the nine high schools in the district, two of the high schools were considered at addressing tardiness for school year 2008-2009. School F and School E were ranked first and second best, respectively, at according to the total number of tardy occurrences, the average tardy occurrences per day, the average tardy occurrences per student, the average tardy

occurrences per class change, and the percentage attributed by each high school for school year 2008-2009. School F was considered the high school based on having the third largest student population and being ranked second best across all tardiness categories. Schools with large student populations tended to have higher occurrences of student tardiness (Bernstein, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Bailey, 2000).

All of the respondent groups identified factors that caused tardiness. The student factors identified by all of the respondent groups were transportation issues, parental difficulties, waking up late for various reasons, student defiance, student apathy, students socializing in the halls, lockers and problems with lockers, and bathroom facility issues. The school factors identified by all respondent groups were school size, overcrowding, lockers and problems with lockers, and bathroom breaks between class changes. Personnel factors were teacher inconsistency with following the tardy policy, the lack of teacher and administrator presences in the halls during class changes, and lack of parental care and concern.

Regarding demographic factors, the student tardiness data for school year 2008-2009 revealed findings pertaining to school size, school location, socio-economic status, minority enrollment, and gender. The high schools in the school district with the smaller student populations had the lowest number of tardy occurrences and the lowest averages for all tardiness categories. The sub-urban high schools in the district had the highest number of tardy occurrences and the highest average tardy occurrences per student. The urban high schools were second followed by the rural schools. The findings also revealed high schools in the district with percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students that were less than 50 % had a significantly lower number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average tardy occurrence per student than the high schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch

eligible students for school year 2008-2009. High schools in the district with lower minority enrollments had fewer occurrences of tardiness and a lower tardy per student average than high schools with higher minority enrollments for school year 2008-2009. Lastly, the majority of the high schools in the study had a higher total number of tardy occurrences for male students even though six out of the nine high schools had higher female enrollments. High schools in the district, in general, had a higher average tardy per male student than female student for school year 2008-2009. Therefore, males experience more tardy problems, large and suburban schools experience more tardy problems, and schools with high percentages of free-reduced lunch counts and high minority enrollments experience more problems with tardiness.

All of the respondents were in agreement and believed the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by the consistent issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention. However, the respondent groups differed in their opinions as to other methods of getting students to class on time. The administrator and teacher respondents were more aligned in their ideas of what strategies reduced student tardiness. They felt the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class, and having administrators and teachers visible and in the halls during class changes. Consistently telling the students to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell, having the students sign a tardy log, and removal of the warning bell was also noted as being effective strategies at reducing student tardiness. The students and teachers felt as though more time during lunch and allowing students to carry book bags would reduce tardiness. The administrators and the students believed positive behavior supports, such as no tardy parties, were an effective way to reduce tardiness. The teacher respondents were unyielding about not

rewarding students for punctuality because it is an expectation and not an achievement. The students noted the administration should pay more attention to those students who were standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes, making adult presence not only an identified problem in the study, but also a solution to the tardiness problem. The students disagreed with the policy of being in your seat instead of in the room after the ringing of the tardy bell.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Student tardiness has been a consistent quandary for schools around the nation (Staff of Education Week, 2000, p.14). Day in and day out, countless schools across the country are plagued by a major dilemma that no school in the country is immune. The shared problem is in the area of student tardiness. In a 1998 report, *Violence and Discipline Problems in Public Schools: 1996-1997*, forty percent of the surveyed principals cited student tardiness as the “most serious or moderate problem in their schools” (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, ¶ 3). Student tardiness also has significance for schools that reach beyond a negligible classroom disturbance. In a study entitled, *Student Empowerment: Effects on a High School Tardy Policy*, students who were regularly tardy to a particular class were “implying that there are other aspects of their life more important than the class” (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d., p. 23). Students who are tardy miss valuable instructional time, and their defiance to follow the tardy policy affects the entire school culture (Kosakowski, 1998; Shupe, 1998; Williams, 1998; Mallinowski, 2006). Students who comply with the tardy policy have a willingness to learn but are continually interrupted by students who are tardy. Their valuable instructional time is constantly taken from them on a daily basis, and many suffer because of student tardiness (Hegna, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000). A student’s future success or failure is directly related to the attendance and tardiness patterns from their school career (Kosakowski, 1998; Gray, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). The research also presented vast array of strategies aimed at reducing student tardiness at both the elementary and high school levels of education (Duncan, 1991; McMahan, 1997; Killon, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for

Educational Statistics, 1998; Barranger, 1999; Andrews, 2000; Gardner & Thompson, 2000; Devoe et al., 2002; Nevius, 2004; Dinkes et al., 2007).

The researcher, a high school administrator, has had first hand experience with school environments that had both high and low occurrences of student tardiness and has seen how effective implementation of a tardy policy can completely turn a school around. The hope of the researcher was to gain a better understanding of strategies and practices aimed at getting students to school and to class on time. As an administrator, the findings of the study assisted in facilitating safer and more conducive school environments for student learning and higher achievement.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of student tardiness in high schools and understand conditions, including strategies and practices that address tardiness problems. This study employed a mixed-methods approach and utilized the sequential explanatory strategy. Cresswell (2003) states, “the sequential explanatory strategy is the most straight forward of the six major mixed methods approaches and is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data” (p. 215). The first phase of this study was quantitative and descriptive using student tardiness data obtained from the selected Georgia school district’s local database to gather information regarding the overall number of student tardiness occurrences in high schools located within the district. The second phase of this study was qualitative and exploratory utilizing interviews of five administrators, three teachers, and ten students to identify and explore strategies and best practices employed to reduce student tardiness and stakeholders’ descriptions of conditions relative to school environments with low occurrences of student tardiness.

The sample for the first part of the study was a purposeful selection of ten high schools in a selected Georgia school district (Creswell, 2003; Nardi, 2006). Prior to collection of student tardiness data, permission was requested from the selected school district Board of Education and superintendent in order to gain access to high school student tardiness data for all of the district's high schools and to gain access to the administrators, teachers, and students for participation in the study. Once permission was granted, the student tardiness data was collected from the school district's local database and analyzed in order to identify the extent of student tardiness across the school district for one school year. Next, following analysis of the quantitative data, five administrators, three teachers, and ten students were randomly selected for semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. Proper permission forms were distributed and to each participant prior to the interviews.

The interviews were conducted with the five administrators, the three teachers, and ten selected students. The interviews were then transcribed and coded in order to identify general themes and similarities pertaining to student tardiness at each of the participant's individual schools.

A summary of the research was presented in chapter five of this study. The following overarching research question of this study was: What is the extent of student tardiness in high schools and what strategies and best practices are used to alleviate tardiness problems? The following sub-questions will guide the study:

1. To what extent does the student tardiness occur in high schools in Georgia?
2. How do stakeholders at high schools with high and low occurrences of student tardiness describe the conditions that contribute to student tardiness?

3. To what extent does student tardiness vary across high schools in Georgia controlling for school size, school location, socioeconomic level, gender, and ethnicity?
4. What are strategies and best practices, which contribute to reduction in student tardiness?

Discussion of the Findings

Demographics of High Schools and the Student Tardiness Problem

From the analysis of the student tardiness data obtained from the school district's student database, the researcher found variances pertaining to student tardiness across the school district in regards to school size, school location, socioeconomic status, minority enrollment, and gender.

The high schools in the school district with the smaller student populations had the lowest number of tardy occurrences and the lowest averages for all tardiness categories. The findings converge with the research, which established that larger high schools have been less effective at reducing student tardiness than smaller high schools. The National Center for Educational Statistics separated school size into three categories. The categories were small schools, with a student population of less than 300, medium sized schools, with a population of 300 to 999 students, and large schools, with a student population of 1,000 or more students (Bernstein, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Bailey, 2000).

The sub-urban high schools in the district had the highest number of tardy occurrences with 37,470 and the highest average tardy occurrences per student with 31.9. The urban high schools were second followed by the rural schools. The research stated tardiness was perceived to be less of a problem in rural schools than in urban and sub-urban schools (Bernstein, 1990; Butterfield, et al., 1996; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). The findings in the research correlated with the researcher's finding for the

district. However, the research also stated tardiness was perceived to be more of a problem in urban high schools as compared to sub-urban and rural high schools. The findings for the school district in this study diverged from findings in the literature. Two of the sub-urban high schools had the highest occurrences of student tardiness across all tardiness categories. However, these two schools had high enrollments, high minority enrollments, and high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. In alignment with these findings, the research cited high schools with high minority enrollments and high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch as being perceived to have high occurrences of student tardiness (Bernstein, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). Therefore, the three factors of high enrollment, high minority enrollment, and a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch superseded the categorical factor of school locale with respect to overall student tardiness.

The tardy data also revealed high schools in the district with percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students that were less than 50 % had a significantly lower number of tardy occurrences and a significantly lower average tardy occurrence per student than the high schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible students for school year 2008-2009. Again, the research cited high schools with high percentages of free and reduced lunch eligible student populations as being perceived by the surveyed principals and teachers as being a major or serious problem in their schools (Bernstein, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). The researcher, in this study, utilized the actual tardy occurrences, which transpired during the 2008-2009 school year for the XYZ school district. The findings from the empirical data employed in this study verified and supported the findings from the NCES perception studies concerning poverty level and student tardiness.

High schools in the district with lower minority enrollments had fewer occurrences of tardiness and a lower tardy per student average than high schools with higher minority enrollments for school year 2008-2009. This aligned with the research, which cited high schools with high minority enrollments as being perceived as having the highest occurrences of student tardiness (Bernstein, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998). The previous research studies conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics utilized survey data, which provided information regarding teachers and principals' perceptions of problems in their schools. The NCES research found both teachers and principals perceived student tardiness as being a major or serious problem in their respective schools. The researcher utilized the actual tardy occurrences, which transpired during the 2008-2009 school year for the XYZ school district. The findings from the empirical data utilized in this study confirmed and supported the findings from the NCES perception studies concerning minority enrollment and tardiness.

Lastly, the majority of the high schools in the study had a higher total number of tardy occurrences for male students even though six out of the nine high schools had higher female enrollments. High schools in the district in general had a higher average tardy per male student than female student for school 2008-2009. There were no recent studies that examined student tardiness and gender. Therefore, these findings added to the research related to student tardiness. Gender and the relation to student tardiness is a topic which is worthy of continued research and study. From this study, the only findings, which can account for this phenomenon were a few comments from the administrator respondents. Several administrators mentioned a reason for male students getting to class late was from walking their girlfriends to class.

Causes of the High School Tardiness Problem

The interviewed stakeholders described the conditions that contributed to student tardiness. The administrator, teacher, and student groups cited various reasons each believed to be factors of high occurrences of student tardiness. All of the respondent groups identified major causes of tardiness, which fell under three main categories. The categories were school factors, student factors, and personnel factors.

The foremost mentioned school factors cited by all respondent groups were overcrowding, lockers and problems with lockers, and bathroom breaks between class changes. Overcrowding was also cited as a factor which contributed to student tardiness in the research project presented by the *United Students Organization of Roosevelt High School* (2003, p.3). In addition, Damico (1990) cited overcrowding as a major cause of student tardiness in Florida high schools. School districts can assist school leaders with the problem of student tardiness by examining school layouts in order to find ways to help prevent tardiness. Student tardiness should be a major part of the discussion that district level leaders have with school officials and architects when designing new high schools or when renovating existing high schools in their districts.

The major student factors mentioned by all respondent groups were socializing, student apathy and defiance, students standing in the halls blocking others from getting to class, and transportation issues, which caused students to arrive late to school. Staying up late and waking up late was also a cited student factor, which caused students to arrive late to school. High schools can utilize this information by looking at their individual student tardiness data and beginning discussions with their leadership teams and district officials. If tardiness is identified as being a problem during the arrival time to school, then a root cause analysis should be

performed to identify all factors that make up the problem. Next, a team should be developed to further investigate the problem and to develop possible solutions with one possible solution being later start times. The team would develop surveys to gather information regarding stakeholders' views on the issues and thoughts regarding the later start times. Following this process and after viewing all information and data, then school level and district level leaders can make informed decisions regarding the changing of the high school start time.

The findings of student defiance converged with the research where the tardiness of students displayed their disrespect for the authority of the school (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, n.d.; Wenglinsky, 1999; Reis, 2001). High schools should consider gathering information from student council and student organizational groups regarding the student tardiness issue at their schools. The student can provide information pertaining to reason form defiance and possible solutions to the student tardiness problem.

Nelson (1998) referred to transportation problems as the most frequently reported reason for female middle school students to arrive late to school. High schools should communicate often with parents concerning the late arrival of their child to school. In high schools, transportation becomes an issue when students begin driving, which can be classified as a student factor. Late buses causing students to arrive late to school is a school factor. Parents allow their driving eligible students to drive themselves to school. If the parents leave for work before their children do, then tardiness sometime becomes a problem. When high school officials identify the arrival of students, who now drive themselves, as a problem, a simple phone can be utilized to inform the parent and alleviate the problem. Parents may have the students ride the bus and revoke driving privileges. In addition, if late buses become a repeating cause of tardiness, even though the tardy would be excused, then the school officials would call the

district officials in charge of transportation and voice concerns concerning the persistent and continuing instructional interruption.

Nelson (1998) also mentioned staying up late as a reason for student tardiness, which aligned with the findings of this study. Staying up late and waking up late was a cited student factor, which caused students to arrive late to school. Wolfson and Carskadon (2005) revealed information pertaining to high school start times from their study entitled, *A Survey of Factors Influencing High School Start Time*. Other studies revealed attempts by school district to reduce tardiness to school by changing the start time (Wahlstrom, 2002; Wahlstrom, Davison, Choi & Ross, 2001). With the findings of this study revealing a major cause of student tardiness to school to be student waking up late, it would be apparent that school and district officials should review the data for tardiness to the high schools and decide if changing the start time to a later time should be considered. With high school students being on a less rigid, more independent schedule for going to bed and waking up, a later start time may aid high school students in getting up and getting off to school on time. As students get older through high school and into college, they are less likely to take the earliest eight o'clock class let alone get to the class on time.

Teachers may also contribute to tardiness problems through their own policies and value systems. Williams (1998) noted when students knew the teacher did not value or enforce the tardy policy, they realized they could arrive late to the class and not be penalized for being tardy. The inconsistency of the teacher prompted a collapse in the organizational structure of the school (Williams, 1998). The findings from this study correlated with the research. Personnel factors mentioned as causes of student tardiness were lack of teacher and administrator consistency with

enforcing the tardy policy and lack of teacher and administrator presence in the hallways during class changes.

Best Practices to Reduce Student Tardiness

There are several findings that the researcher acquired from the administrator, teacher, and student interviews as to their views relating to what they considered to be effective strategies and practices to reduce student tardiness. Thoughts on special conditions and positive behavior supports were also communicated.

The researcher found all of the respondents in agreement and believed the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by the consistent issuing of consequences, such as, after school detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and Saturday school detention. Duncan (1992) and Killon (1996) identified detention and out of school suspension as the most effective means of reducing student tardiness. Again, the personnel factor, as mentioned previously can be a solution or a cause of the student tardiness problem for a school. For the administration to consistently issue consequences for chronically tardy students, the teachers must consistently enforce the policy in their respective classrooms. If the teachers do not consistently enter the tardy infractions into the school's student information system, keep accurate records, or turn in the tardy referral to the main office, then the entire process breaks down. The entire culture of the school must have the sense of urgency about getting students to class on time. Every staff member must believe in the importance of students being on time for class and on time for learning. The value of instruction must be a part of the culture and belief system of the school and should flow from the principal to all school level leaders, to teachers, to students, and to parents. All stakeholders know the value of being on time.

However, the respondent groups differed in their opinions as to other methods of getting students to class on time. The researcher found the administrator and teacher respondents were more aligned in their ideas of what strategies reduced student tardiness. They felt the best ways to reduce student tardiness would be accomplished by having the students be seated in their seats when the tardy bell rings instead of just in the class, and having administrators and teachers visible and in the halls during class changes. Consistently telling the students over and over to be in their seats before the ringing of the tardy bell, having the students sign a tardy log, and removal of the warning bell was also noted as being effective strategies at reducing student tardiness. Johnson-Gros, Lyons, and Griffin (2008) cited the active supervision plan as an effective strategy to reduce student tardiness. As found in this study, the plan called for teachers and administrators to monitor students in the halls of the school during class changes and to pre-correct behaviors before they escalated into discipline infractions including tardiness. The “in your seat” method mentioned by teachers and administrators in this study were not cited in any of the reviewed studies and added to the research.

The students and teachers felt as though more time during lunch and allowing students to carry book bags would reduce tardiness. The students also wanted more time between class changes. Several studies noted changes in high school start times as being an effective method of reducing student tardiness, but none referred to giving extra time between class changes (Wahlstrom, 2002; Dawson, 2005; Wolfson & Carskadon, 2005). School administrators are often guided by policies as to the length of the school day and instructional time, and perhaps in the spirit of shortening the school day, they have not considered the time needed in class exchange. Administrators, too, in trying to reduce the potential for discipline infractions may not allow enough time for effective class exchange. Teachers who hold students in one class too long

contribute to tardiness problems, and teachers may want to honor class time by not holding students after class that may cause tardiness to the next class. Lunch times and book bags were also not mentioned in any of the reviewed research studies.

The administrators and the students believed positive behavior supports, such as no tardy parties, were an effective way to reduce tardiness. The teacher respondents were adamant about not rewarding students for punctuality because it is an expectation, and not an achievement. However, some students with chronic problems may need extrinsic rewards until they internally are motivated to be on time. The research noted positive behavior supports as those mentioned by the respondents in this study as being an effective way to reduce student tardiness (Mass Insight Education, n.d.. Chaker, 2005).

The students noted the administration should pay more attention to those students that were standing around in the hall talking, or playing in the halls during class changes, and there should be a slow lane and a fast lane in the hallway. They also wanted administrators to notify them after every tardy instead of after every five. The students disagreed with the policy of being in your seat instead of in the room after the ringing of the tardy bell. The students also wanted more help from the guidance department in arranging their schedule as to make it conducive to getting to class on time, and they wanted more understanding with traffic problems in the morning. Lastly, the students wanted the minute warning bell to be reinstated, and wanted extra bathrooms installed in the school and extra time between class changes. The research did not allude to the previously mentioned student strategies aimed at reducing student tardiness. The findings from the student respondents add to the depth of research pertaining to student tardiness.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that of the teacher and administrator groups, none of the respondents in these two factions accepted personal responsibility for the tardiness problems at

his or her school. Several of the students admitted personal responsibility for their tardiness issues. However, the adult respondents never stated that tardiness at his or her school was at any level, their fault. The teacher and administrator groups gave no suggestions as to what they, personally could do better to help alleviate the problem of tardiness.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher's experience, and a review of the literature, there are several conclusions that were drawn from the study.

1. Student tardiness continues to be a problem in high schools in the 21st century.
2. High schools with large student enrollments have the potential to reduce student tardiness by addressing school factors, such as daily schedules with sufficient time for class changes, later start times for the beginning of the school day, administrative and teacher hallway supervision schedules, and closer scrutiny by the guidance counselors when planning a student's schedule.
3. Student, school, and personnel factors account for tardiness problems, all of which are malleable. Especially, the visibility of teachers and administrators is a key factor, which reduces tardiness.
4. School districts may predict which high schools may have the potential for tardiness problems based on an examination of the district's tardy and demographic data related to school size, school locale, minority enrollment, and socio-economic status to ensure systems are in place to help prevent and reduce tardy occurrences.
5. School officials may predict which sub group, males or females, have the potential for tardiness problems by reviewing tardy data pertaining to gender at their school. Root causes can then be determined from discussions with students from each sub-group

concerning tardiness. Solutions and systems can then be set up to help reduce and alleviate tardy occurrences for the specific groups. This may help reduce student tardiness school-wide.

6. Consistent enforcement of the tardy policy by the teachers can be monitored by administrators by visually watching class changes and students entering classes late, and reviewing tardy reports if available from the school's student data information system. Any identified inconsistency may be addressed in discussions with the teacher and in writing. The identified deficient teacher can be frequently monitored to ensure the problem is alleviated and the teacher is consistently enforcing the school's tardy policy.
7. Paperwork and administrative processes may be established to help ensure consequences for chronically tardy students are issued quickly, consistently, and justly.
8. High school officials have the potential to reduce tardiness by ensuring adult supervision in the halls during arrival to school, dismissal from school, and during class changes is the top priority. This preventive practice may help reduce tardiness as well as various other problems, which occur in high schools during these periods.
9. Incongruence among stakeholders' beliefs and practices concerning tardiness may account for tardiness problems.
10. Positive behavior supports may be extrinsic rewards to change tardiness behaviors until punctuality becomes intrinsic.

Implications

The overall goal of this study was to bring more attention to the phenomenon of student tardiness and to explore the extent of student tardiness across one of the largest school districts in the state of Georgia. In addition, with few recent, relevant studies on student tardiness, the

researcher aimed to add to the body of research and to determine strategies and best practices used by high school administrators to reduce student tardiness. The result of this study was to provide practitioners a better understanding of the issue of tardiness from an overview of the problem and to provide a suite of effective solutions to the dilemma for various school settings and student demographics.

One implication from this study is that more attention should be given to the subject of student tardiness when planning and organizing the school structure. The issue of student tardiness is one, which has gone unnoticed by most, but continues to be one of the most prevalent, most disruptive, and most common issues affecting the operation of a high school. High school student tardiness is extensive and varies from school to school dramatically. Based on the findings of this study, in this school district alone for one school calendar year, the amount of student tardiness ranged from one school with well over sixty thousand tardies to a school with just over one thousand. Architects should work closely with school and district leaders to understand locker and hall size issues when designing and renovating schools.

Another implication of this study is that school leaders should look at the practices provided by this study and select a foundational few when planning and organizing their strategies aimed at reducing student tardiness at their respective schools. This study demonstrated from the findings and the review of literature that there are many reasons or excuses for student tardiness and just as many strategies. A plethora of ideas and strategies as to how to combat student tardiness were shared by the respondents throughout this study as to what they felt was the best way to reduce tardiness at a high school. However, by analysis of the tardiness data along with the interviews, several best practices were shared by those administrators who truly facilitated school environments with low occurrences of student

tardiness. Teacher and student respondents also contributed valuable information as to what facilitated environments with low occurrences of student tardiness. School board members, district and school leaders, teachers, parents, and students should identify the reasons of student tardiness in their schools and districts and utilize the identified best practices presented in this study.

Lastly, this study adds to the deficient amount of relevant and recent studies that focus on the issue of student tardiness. This study was the first research that utilized student tardiness figures, analyzed the data extensively, and correlated the statistics to the qualitative information shared from various stakeholders in a high school. This mixed method combination has the implication to drive the beginnings of a more extensive and more in depth review of the student tardiness dilemma in other schools and school districts nation wide.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested for implementing the results of this study:

1. School and district leaders should run reports for the high schools in their districts and examine how extensive student tardiness is in their district. The tardy figures that reported should be compared to the information obtained for the high schools, which participated in this study in accordance with all relevant factors (i.e., school size, locale, minority enrollment, socioeconomic status, and gender).
2. Interviews and focus group interviews should be conducted at the high schools in a district to gather stakeholder information regarding student tardiness at their respective school.
3. The best practices presented in this study should be examined by school and district leaders and employed in schools with high occurrences of student tardiness.

4. Student tardiness data should be reviewed quarterly to determine effectiveness of implemented tardy reducing strategies.

The following are recommendations for further research:

1. The study should be replicated in districts throughout the state for comparison and to gain further information regarding tardiness.
2. The study should be extended and replicated in other levels of education (i.e., elementary, middle, post-secondary).
3. A survey pertaining to student tardiness should be developed in accordance with the information contained in this study for distribution statewide.
4. The student tardiness data should be disaggregated by student demographic indicators, such as, race, socioeconomic status, and gender to determine the correlation among tardiness.

Dissemination

The results of this study will be distributed throughout the participating school district. One requirement of access being granted to the researcher by the superintendent was that all results be shared and circulated among the leaders of the school district. The researcher will develop an executive summary of findings to encourage the district leaders to review the study and to discuss findings in order to identify areas for improvement.

The study will also be disseminated to school districts throughout the state of Georgia upon request. A proposal to the state conferences for administrators will be submitted for presenting findings of the study.

The researcher will disseminate findings from this study by the publishing of several related articles. The findings will aid practitioners in facilitating school environments more

conducive to order and student learning by implementing the best practices suggested by the research.

Ultimately, the goal of the researcher is to have a full text published with the main topic focusing on high school tardiness and ways to reduce student tardiness. The text would be a foundational guide to current and aspiring administrators. The hope of the researcher is to provide a working document that will aid school leaders in facilitating safer school environments and school communities more advantageous for student achievement.

Concluding Thoughts

The researcher set out initially to expose the phenomenon of student tardiness and to bring about a better understanding of the dilemma. Often when the researcher would present and discuss the topic with school leaders, they would respond with disregard and pay no attention to the severity of the issue. This study was successful in aligning with the research, which stated that student tardiness has been reported by high school principals across the nation as the most significant and most frequent problem in their schools. This study was also successful in providing a better understanding of the issue of tardiness from an overview of the problem and providing a suite of solutions to the dilemma for various school settings and student demographics.

The researcher, a current high school administrator, has had first hand experience with student tardiness and struggles daily with the labor of getting students to school and to class on time. The researcher, from experience, feels that school administrators who put a priority on student tardiness will be successful and will ultimately produce safer school environments with higher overall student achievement.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Student Focus Groups

1. What is the tardy policy at your high school?
2. How effective is the tardy policy at your school?
3. How important is the tardiness when thinking of factors affecting your education?
4. Why are you late to school or to class?
5. Why do you go to class on time?
6. Do all teachers follow the tardy policy at your school?
7. If no, then what changes have they made?
8. What techniques or strategies help you get to school and to class on time?
9. What procedures are followed when a student is tardy to school? To class?
10. How does it make you feel when students are late to your class?
11. What is purpose of the tardy policy?
12. Does your school's tardy policy accomplish this purpose?
13. What are some of the main challenges to enforcing the tardy policy?
14. How do you think students feel about the tardy policy at your school?
15. How do you think teachers feel about the tardy policy at your school?
16. How do you think parents feel about the tardy policy at your school?
17. What makes your school effective or ineffective at reducing student tardiness?
18. If you came up with your own tardy policy for your school, what would it say?

Interview Questions for Identified Teachers

1. What is the tardy policy at your high school?
2. How effective is the tardy policy at your school?
3. When a student is late to your class, do you deviate from the tardy policy or following it with fidelity?
4. If yes, what modifications have you made?
5. If no, what techniques or strategies help in enforcing the tardy policy in your class?
6. What procedures are followed when a student is tardy to school? To your class?
7. How does it make you feel when a student is late to your class?
8. What is purpose of the tardy policy?
9. Does your school's tardy policy accomplish this purpose?
10. What are some of the main challenges to enforcing the tardy policy?
11. How do you think students feel about the tardy policy at your school?
12. How do you think teachers feel about the tardy policy at your school?
13. How do you think parents feel about the tardy policy at your school?
14. Why are students late to school or to a particular class?
15. What makes your school effective or ineffective at reducing student tardiness?

Interview Questions for Identified Administrators

1. What is the tardy policy for your high school?
2. How effective is the tardy policy at your school?
3. Have you deviated from the tardy policy stated in the county code of conduct?
4. If yes, what modifications have you made?
5. If no, what techniques or strategies help in enforcing the tardy policy?
6. What procedures are followed when a student is tardy to school? To class?
7. What is purpose of the tardy policy?
8. Does your school's tardy policy accomplish this purpose?
9. What are some of the main challenges to enforcing the tardy policy?
10. How do you think students feel about the tardy policy at your school?
11. How do you think teachers feel about the tardy policy at your school?
12. How do you think parents feel about the tardy policy at your school?
13. Why are students late to school or to a class?
14. What makes your school effective or ineffective at reducing student tardiness?

APPENDIX B
Informed Consent Letter

Jason S. Moore
3614 Westhampton Dr.
Martinez, GA 30907

August 29, 2008

Dear Educator,

My name is Jason Moore, and I am currently a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting research on best practices employed by Georgia high schools administrators to reduce student tardiness. In order to examine effective intervention strategies utilized to reduce student tardiness and to explore stakeholder's descriptions of conditions relative to school environments with low occurrences of student tardiness, semi-structured interviews will be conducted.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to participate in this research. If you agree to participate, you will be contacted by phone in order to set up a time, which is convenient for you to be interviewed. The interview will take approximately an hour and will be conducted on your campus either before or after school hours. No instructional time will be lost or compromised. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not partaking in the study. The responses from the interviews are confidential and participants will not be identified.

If you agree to participate in this study or have any questions pertaining to this study, please contact me, Jason Moore, at 706-836-1196, or e-mail me at mooorej@bellsouth.net. Also, please sign the bottom of this form and return to me by mail at the address listed above or by fax (706) 796-4971. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Barbara Mallory at 912-478-1928. Please contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843 for questions concerning your rights as a research participant.

The overall goal of this study for practitioners and school leaders will be to provide a better understanding of the issue of student tardiness and to provide solutions to the dilemma for various school settings and student demographics. Ultimately, school leaders may be better equipped to facilitate school environments more conducive to learning and student achievement. Thank you for participating in this research giving a small portion of your valuable time to the field of educational leadership.

Sincerely,
Jason S. Moore EdD. Candidate
Georgia Southern University

By signing this document, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant

Date

APPENDIX C
Minor Assent Letter

Jason S. Moore
3614 Westhampton Dr.
Martinez, GA 30907

August 29, 2008

Hello,

My name is Jason Moore, and I am currently a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting research on best practices employed by Georgia high school administrators to reduce student tardiness.

You are being asked to participate in a project that will be used to learn about student tardiness. If you agree to be part of the project, you will be interviewed with a group of your classmates. I will also ask you questions about how you feel about tardiness at your school. It will take 1 hour for the interviews to be completed.

You do not have to take part in the interviews. You can stop whenever you want. If you do not want to answer all of the questions, it is ok. You can go leave the interview, and nothing bad will happen. You can refuse to take part in this project even if your parents say you can.

None of the teachers, principals, or other people at your school will see the answers to the questions that I ask your group. All of the answers that you give me will be kept in a locked cabinet in a room in my office, and only I along with my teacher, Dr. Mallory, and the Richmond County Research Screening Committee will see your answers. We are not going to put your name on the answers that you give us, so no one will be able to know which answers were yours.

If you or your parent/guardian have any questions about this form or the interviews, please call me at 706-836-1196, or my advisor, Dr. Mallory, at 912-478-1928.

Thank you!

Jason S. Moore EdD. Candidate
Georgia Southern University

If you understand the information above and want to take part in the interviews, please sign your name on the line below:

Yes, I will participate in this project: _____

Child's Name: _____

Investigator's Signature : _____

Date : _____

APPENDIX D
Parental Informed Consent

Jason S. Moore
3614 Westhampton Dr.
Martinez, GA 30907

August 29, 2008

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Jason Moore, and I am currently a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a study on best practices employed by Georgia high school administrators to reduce student tardiness at your child's school in the next few weeks. In order to examine effective intervention strategies utilized to reduce student tardiness and to explore stakeholders' descriptions of conditions relative to school environments with low occurrences of student tardiness, semi-structured interviews will be conducted.

If you give permission, your child will have the opportunity to participate in a student focus group. Your child was selected because of his/her chronic tardiness or their punctuality to class or to school. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to gain the student perspective on the phenomenon of student tardiness in a high school. The interviews will take approximately one hour.

Your child does not have to take part in the interviews. They can stop whenever they want during the interview. If they do not want to answer all of the questions, it is ok, and they can leave the interview, with no repercussions. They can also refuse to take part in this project even if you agree to let them participate.

None of the teachers, principals, or other people at your child's school will see the answers to the questions that I ask the group. All of the answers that are given will be kept in a locked cabinet in a room in my office, and only I along with my teacher, Dr. Mallory, and the Richmond County Research Screening Committee will see the answers. We are not going to place names on the answers that are given, so no one will be able to know which answers were your child's.

If you have any questions about this form or the interviews, please call me at 706-836-1196 or my advisor, Dr. Mallory, at 912-478-1928.

If you are giving permission for your child to participate in the experiment, please sign the form below and return it to your child's teacher as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your time.

Jason S. Moore EdD. Candidate
Georgia Southern University

Child's Name: _____
Investigator's Signature : _____

Parent or Guardian's Signature : _____
Date : _____