Tardiness in Early Education: Incidence, Predictors, and Consequences (Spring 2011)

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Overview

- Little research on student tardiness in schools
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort, provides data on late school arrivals among children who entered Kindergarten in 1998
In Kindergarten, half of the children were late to school at least once

- Children were tardy 3.5% of the school year (or six days)
- Tardiness ranged between less than 1% (or one day) and 60% (or 108 days)
Children were more often tardy in Kindergarten if they were:

- Hispanic or Black
- Enrolled in full-day programs
- Repeating kindergarten

![Bar chart showing tardiness rates by race, program type, and repeating grade.](chart.png)
Children were more often tardy in Kindergarten if they:

- Received Head Start or non-relative care in the year prior to K
Children who were more often tardy in Kindergarten:

- Were described by teachers at the beginning of K as having socio-emotional difficulties

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Approaches to Learning, Self-Control, Interpersonal Relations, Externalizing Behaviors, Internalizing Behaviors.
Other things being equal, the odds of being chronically late in K were:

- 3.5 times higher is children were Black, when compared to white children
- Almost double if children were Hispanic, when compared to white children
- 40% less if they attended a morning program compared to a full day program
- 50% less if they attended an afternoon program compared to a full day program
Poor and low income children were more often tardy in K:

- Than their middle and upper income peers
Tardiness was related to other maternal and family characteristics:

- Particularly risk exposure

![Bar chart showing tardiness in kindergarten related to various factors such as teen mother, single parent, assistance receipt, large family, food insecurity, and poor maternal health. The bars indicate the percentage of risk for each factor.](chart.png)
Other things being equal, the odds of being chronically late were:

- Tripled if mothers were Black versus white
- Doubled if mothers were Hispanic versus white
- More than doubled (x2.3) if mothers were single parents
- Almost tripled if mothers had become parents as teenagers
Being chronically tardy (≥10%) in Kindergarten increased the odds of being chronically absent.

- x10 chances of being a chronic absentee (≥10%) in Kindergarten.
- x10 chances of being a chronic absentee (≥10%) in 1st Grade.
- x3 chances of being a chronic absentee (≥10%) in 3rd Grade.
- x3 chances of being chronically absent (≥10%) in 5th Grade.
Children who were chronically tardy in K had poor academic performance.
What do we know from research in preschools?

- As part of the Perfectly Punctual Campaign, Learning & Leadership in Families, Inc., has embarked on efforts to collect data

- Site survey of
  - Attendance and absenteeism
  - Professionals’ perspectives
  - Parents’ perspectives

- National Survey of HS professionals
How easy is it to gather attendance and tardiness data in HS programs?

- Attendance and tardiness data are collected everyday by staff in all HS programs but not stored in ways that are easy to use.

- Substantial mobility across programs => to collect accurate data, it is important to understand when children:
  - Join the program
  - Leave the program
  - Are disenrolled because of excessive absence

- Sites may have classes that offer different types of programs:
  - part-day in the morning
  - part-day in the afternoon
  - full-day
  - with early drop-off or late-pick up services
  - To collect accurate data, it is important to know clearly when children are supposed to arrive and leave, and when they actually do
Absenteeism and tardiness seem to be rather common in HS programs

Different groups of children emerge depending on whether and how often they are absent and tardy

- **High Tardiness**
  - Seldom absent, but often late
  - Often absent, and often late when they show up
- **Low Tardiness**
  - Seldom absent and seldom late
  - Often absent, but seldom late when they show up
- **Low Absenteeism**
- **High Absenteeism**
Professionals in one site believe that tardiness is:

- 67% Serious problem
- 20% Not a serious problem
- 13% Neither

Legend:
- Serious problem
- Not a serious problem
- Neither
Nationally, the majority of HS professionals report that 3-6 children in their groups are late every week.

Source: LLF / NHSA survey, March 2009
HS professionals agree that punctuality:

- Creates a positive parent-teacher relationship
- Helps children do better in school
- Is one way parents can support learning
- Helps young children develop friendships
- Is one way parents and teachers can work together
But HS professionals seem to be more permissive towards lateness

- One-quarter to one-third of professionals surveyed feel neutral towards or disagree with the claim that lateness:
  
  - Slows academic progress
  - Makes it harder for the teacher to do job
  - Keeps children from concentrating on learning
  - Makes it hard for children to integrate socially with other children

Bar chart showing the distribution of responses from the survey:

- Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Strongly Agree or Agree
To have or not to have a punctuality policy?

- Staff in centers that have an articulated punctuality policy more often believe that:
  - The Center Director can shape children’s attitudes about punctuality
  - Neighborhood values can potentially shape children’s attitudes about punctuality

- What seems to make a difference is not whether centers have a punctuality policy, but whether or not they use it consistently:
  - Staff report less punctuality problems in centers where the policy is consistently invoked
Professionals see parents as the primary influence on young child’s punctuality.

Source: LLF / NHSA survey, March 2009
Professionals disagree on whether parents understand the punctuality policy.

But 90% parents claim that they understand it.
Parents are divided on whether punctuality at their child’s program is:

- 36% Serious problem
- 24% Not a serious problem
- 39% Neither
Parent attitudes: Punctuality versus Lateness

Source: LLF / Morgan State University Head Start survey, May 2010
In conclusion, tardiness...

- May begin, along with absenteeism, well before children enter formal schooling
- Has serious consequences for early learning and development
- Affects the most vulnerable children
- Elicits different perspectives and practices among professionals and parents
- These perspectives and practices need to be reconciled to provide a sustained and consistent, high quality early education program
For questions

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