Tips & Tricks for Reducing School Tardies

Getting tardiness under control—and/or keeping it under control—is a priority for most schools. A tardiness problem impacts more than just the front desk. However you sign in students who show up late, longer lines and processing times have a compounding impact on instruction time for every student in line.

A part of reducing the impact of tardiness is reducing processing time to lower this impact on instruction time. Hero makes this easy by automating the discipline actions resulting from tardy infractions, and giving you tools like scanners, pass printers (and mobile versions of both) to streamline the process as much as possible.

The other aspect is having a tardiness policy that addresses the root of the problem by holding students accountable, and encouraging consistent improvement. In this whitepaper, we will discuss building an effective tardy management program that improves school climate and reduces tardiness.

Institute A Closed Door Policy

The first step that you can take to reduce tardiness is to institute a closed door policy. This means doors are closed when the bell rings. If you're late, you're late, and you need to get a pass.

A closed door policy accomplishes a few important goals:

• It minimizes classroom interruptions for students who have shown up on time and prepared for class.
• It establishes clear, consistent expectations for students.
• It keeps teachers from having to choose whether or not to spend instruction time reprimanding students who are late.

Once a closed door policy is established, students will quickly learn what is expected from them. From there, you can determine how best to redirect this behavior.

The Progressive Discipline Path

One well-established avenue for managing tardiness is progressive discipline, where incidents are treated first with warnings, eventually escalating to more aggressive disciplinary actions like detention and Saturday school.

A progressive discipline policy that works like this:

• 1st tardy: Warning
• 2nd tardy: More Urgent Warning
• 3rd tardy: Detention
• 4th tardy: Detention
• 5th tardy: Saturday school
• etc.

...will show students that it is not okay to be tardy and will lay out the consequences if they continue to exhibit this behavior. While simple, in most cases, it is very effective.
The Positive Reinforcement Path

The other primary channel through which you can effectively address tardiness is through a strong positive behavior program. The caveat is that the positive reinforcement needs to occur in the context of a positive program where students are engaged and care about the rewards for good behavior. If you're looking for more information about using Hero to power your positive behavior system, learn more here.

Addressing tardiness behavior through positive reinforcement is simple: In the periods where you have a tardiness problem (at least first period), have teachers quickly reward students who showed up to class on time and ready to learn. Again, a closed door policy will make this process easy for the teacher.

Parent Engagement

There can be a lot of reasons a student might be tardy. In fact, your front desk has probably heard them all. Some are legitimate, some don't hold up to scrutiny, but whatever the excuse, it’s a good idea to get parents involved at some point in this process.

With Hero, you have two ways to get parents involved with issues like tardiness:

- Hero can automatically create a parent letter (or email) that is triggered when some action, like a second warning or detention assignment, occurs.

- If your school has rolled out Hero Parent Engagement Tools, you can send push notifications to the Hero parent app whenever a disciplinary action occurs.

With either option, the system gives you the opportunity to bring the parent into the conversation to help get to the root of the problem—a problem they may not have even been aware of otherwise.

Long Term Success In Tardiness Reduction

Most schools will never completely eliminate tardiness, but the good news about tardiness reduction programs is that they tend to pay off quite quickly. Hero schools often see tardiness reduced by 30-80% within the first few months of putting a system in place. In order to maintain this success, it's important to keep the following things in mind:

- You've got to keep doing it. Inconsistency from week to week can weaken the expectations you're setting with your student body and cause tardiness to creep back up.

- Be consistent across classrooms. Just like with other kinds of discipline programs, consistent application across classrooms is important not only for fairness, but also to minimize spikes when schedules change from semester to semester or year to year.

- If you're using progressive disciplinary actions to address tardiness, make sure that you have the resources to handle the detention volume that these programs create. If you find yourself, for example, assigning 100 detentions per week, and only have one detention on Wednesdays that can accommodate 15 students, you'll not only get hopelessly backed up, but the consequence of the behavior you're trying to redirect may resonate less with the student as time elapses between the two.

Have more questions about how this might work at your school, want some tactical tips, or want to hear more about other Hero users getting great results in tardy reduction? Visit our website or contact us to get started.