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A Study of High School Improvement Initiatives and the Impact on School Achievement

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by

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

Educational reform is at the forefront of legislatures and school districts across the United States (Hattie, 2011). To find and employ high school improvement initiatives that lead to improved educational experiences for students, educational leaders must examine in great detail what systems have been successful and then modify the initiatives to fit the characteristics of their particular school districts (Berliner & Glass, 2015). The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of initiatives one Midwestern high school implemented beginning in 2012. The initiatives implemented included the Tardy Sweep policy, Response to Intervention (RtI) program, and a Late Work policy. The data collected were archival and reflected the school years from 2010-2011 through 2015-2016. Using descriptive statistics, the findings demonstrated an improved attendance rate, a decline in discipline referrals, and decreased failure rate with the implementation of these initiatives at one Midwestern high school. The findings of this study provide a compelling argument for the implementation of the three initiatives at other high schools.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Educational reform is at the forefront of legislatures and school districts across the United States (Hattie, 2011). According to Bernhardt (2015):

> When schools gather and analyze their data, so they understand where they are now and why they're getting the results they're getting with current processes, they're able to create their own continuous school improvement plan based on a vision that everyone understands and has committed to. (p. 61)

School improvement programs that work in some places do not work for others and may work with some students but not with others (Berliner & Glass, 2015). How do schools decide on the most appropriate reform programs (Bernhardt, 2013)? With tax dollars and district and staff credibility at stake, it is vital implemented improvement plans are effective (Ehren, Lipson, & Wixson, 2013).

There is no shortage of literature detailing the key role of building administrators as change agents for school improvement. The principal can impact student performance by influencing the goals of the school and setting a clear vision (Brown, 2016). This study included an examination of the efforts of one Midwestern high school to implement programs for school reform and to provide insight into the most effective strategies for school improvement.

Background of the Study

In the fall of the 2012-2013 school year, one Midwestern high school began system reform by making changes in day-to-day operations. These changes, some of which were instructional and ancillary, were chosen by the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leadership Team to improve the culture, climate, and performance of

the school. Some programs were initiated in the fall semester of 2012, while other programs were added over the next four years. Grubb noted the most effective impact of systems change comes from the use of a combination of complex resources in the form of the initiative, professional development toward the initiative, instructional resources for the initiative, and a collaborative principal (as cited in Fullan, 2010a). Similarly, the programs initiated required crucial investments of time and money (Fullan, 2010a). Bernhardt (2013) noted to gauge whether school improvement components have made a difference, educators must evaluate their efforts. This study was focused on gathering descriptive data to examine the implementation of recent programs at one Midwestern high school and student attendance rates, grades, and discipline reports in the four school years from 2012-2016.

The change implemented during the 2012-2013 school year was to establish a fully-integrated Response to Intervention (RtI) program for all students attending one Midwestern high school. The RtI program was designed to address three main areas: attendance, grades, and discipline. Students who were not meeting an acceptable level in any one of those areas were assigned to a RtI tutoring area. The majority of the placements were due to poor grades caused by students not turning in homework on time.

Before the 2012-2013 school year at one Midwestern high school, tardies were tallied by individual teachers who followed discipline guidelines as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Quarterly Policy at One Midwestern High School Prior to Tardy Sweep Policy

Step	Punishment
Step One:	4th tardy – one lunch detention
Step Two:	5th tardy – two lunch detentions
Step Three:	6th tardy – one day in-school suspension
Step Four:	7th tardy – two days in-school suspension
Step Five:	Suspension for additional tardies

Note. Tardies are accumulated by individual teachers each quarter. Under this policy, students enrolled in a seven-period-per-day schedule and could accumulate 21 tardies per quarter without receiving a consequence.

The task of tallying and referring students for excessive tardies was given to individual teachers, which diverted their energy from instruction. Some teachers under this system failed to track tardies, which allowed students to be late for class without consequence.

At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the policy for tardies changed as the Midwestern high school implemented a Tardy Sweep Program. Tardy Sweeps are a way to encourage students to report to class on time by having teachers shut and lock their doors when the tardy bell rings. Students who were in the hallway and were tardy to class were referred by "sweeping" them to the office to receive tardy passes. The tardy pass was the only way a student could then be admitted to class. Before the student

received a tardy pass, the tardy was tallied in the office. When a student reached a sixth tardy, the student was issued a consequence by the administration. The policy is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Quarterly Policy at One Midwestern High School After Implementation of Tardy Sweep Policy

Step	Punishment
Step One:	6th tardy – One lunch detention
Step Two:	7th tardy – Two lunch detentions
Step Three:	8th tardy – One to two days after-school detention or Friday school
Step Four:	9th tardy – Two to three days after -school detention; two days in-school suspension
Step Five:	Each additional tardy – Two days in-school suspension.

Note. Tardies are totaled cumulatively for all classes per quarter. Tardies are tallied cumulatively; therefore, students received a consequence after fewer tardies than with the old policy.

As the Midwestern high school moved through the changes into the RtI system, it was apparent students were not allowed to make up late work for credit for some teachers. As a result, students were assigned to RtI beyond the normal three-week period and in some cases were never able to raise their grades. In response, the Midwestern high school instituted a late work policy which was influenced by the work of Ken O'Connor (2009) and his book, *How to Grade for Learning.* O'Connor (2009) discussed how the

practice of assigning zeros skews the ending result of a student's final grade. O'Connor (2009) wrote:

> Assigning a grade of zero to work that is late, missed, or neglected doesn't accurately depict a student's learning. Is the teacher certain the student has learned absolutely nothing, or is the student assigned the zero as punishment for not displaying the appropriate responsibility? (p. 157)

Marzano (2006) also communicated the problem with giving zeros for work not completed. Marzano (2006) made the point students should never be assigned a zero for not completing assignments. Marzano (2006) further stated:

> One absolute rule within the system presented in this book is that the student should not be assigned a score of zero for not taking a test, not turning in an assignment, or turning it in late. The negative consequences of including a score of zero for failure to take a test or failure to hand in an assignment have been discussed thoroughly… Briefly, though, including in a set of scores a zero that is not a legitimate estimate of a student's true score renders both the power law estimate and the average meaningless. (p. 115)

The late work initiative was not without resistance from some teachers at the Midwestern high school who were concerned about teaching responsibility to students. The teachers were concerned the policy might create a "flood" of classwork at the last minute.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Michael Fullan's (2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) work on systems change. Fullan (2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) has written extensively on developing the resolute motivation to address changes

within a school system. Fullan (as cited in Loose, 2016) made recommendations for strategies to make a difference for those who consider a change.

The resources necessary to implement change are remiss if they do not include administrative support (Fullan, 2010a). When considering consequences of change, stakeholders "can become overwhelmed by the complexity and scope of the study" (Reeves, 2009, p. 85). For this reason, Fullan (2010a) suggested research-based conceptual elements of successful reform. Foremost to these changes is remembering to put relationships first (Fullan, 2010b). In Fullan's (2011a) work, he outlined the importance of administrators as change leaders who should lead through motion leadership. Fullan (2011a) suggested, "Motion Leadership is simply leadership that causes positive movement. It is especially impressive when it causes movement in situations where people are initially skeptical" (p. 60). The following factors lead to whole system reform:

1. Relentlessly focused leadership at the center.
2. A small number of ambitious goals.
3. A positive stance with respect to the sector.
4. A core strategy of capacity building at all three levels (school, district, province).
5. Use of evidence, data, and related research.
6. A non-punitive approach to accountability.
7. Transparency of data regarding outcomes and practices.
8. Learning from success regarding lateral and vertical dissemination and exchanges. (Fullan, 2010a, p. 80)

When combined, these factors are a robust approach to sustainable school system change involving all stakeholders and serve as a conceptual basis for this study (Fullan, 2010a).

Statement of the Problem

The primary investigator designed the study to investigate the effectiveness of RtI, Tardy Sweeps, and a new late work policy to expand upon prior change efforts and to use data from those changes to inform continued improvement in practice. Data from this study will provide contextual evidence for students, parents, staff, administration, community, and other stakeholders. The results may outline clear, simple, and deliberate strategies for future change.

In 2013, Flannery, Fenning, Mcgrath Kato, and Bohanon found tardies, defiance/disrespect, and skip/truancy were the most common types of office discipline referrals in high schools. Clea McNeely found in her research, "When students develop a positive bond with their school, they are more likely to remain academically engaged and less likely to become involved in antisocial behaviors" (as cited by Ramos & Barnett, 2013, p. 36). Ozer and Wright (2012) noted Mitra conducted research which indicated adolescent participation in school reform studies is linked to an enhanced sense of belonging and competence. Currently, there exists limited literature to support effective intervention strategies at the secondary level which improve student academic engagement. This study was designed to provide information to school leaders about the effectiveness of intervention strategies at one Midwestern high school which may guide improvement efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to contribute to the available literature by ascertaining the benefits of systems change initiatives at the high school level and gauging their effectiveness as correlated to failure rates, tardies, attendance rates, and discipline referrals. This study was deemed worthy since, "despite the increasing awareness of evidence-based education research, the effectiveness of interventions to reduce school dropout is rarely examined" (DeWitte & Csillag, 2014, p. 550). Through the use of descriptive analytics, the primary investigator intended to investigate the impact of system efforts to generate information which may guide administrators when implementing efforts to improve the educational experience for high school students. DeWitte and Csillag (2014) shared:

> It can be expected that an improved reporting of truancy allows the school and the parents to detect the problem more easily and to deal with it at an earlier stage. Moreover, improved truancy reporting could signal the importance that society attaches to school attendance. In this sense, truant students are increasingly aware that being a truant is not a free lunch, and that others are looking after them. (p. 550)

Findings from this research may lead to uniform application in other districts with similar demographics or other data.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there a reduction in the number of students who were tardy to class at one Midwestern high school during the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

2. Is there a reduction in the number of students who received discipline referrals at one Midwestern high school during the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

3. Is there a reduction in the failure rate of students after the implementation of a RtI program at one Midwestern high school during the 2012-2013 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012?

4. Is there a reduction in the failure rate for students after the implementation of a late work policy at one Midwestern high school during the 2014-2015 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014?

5. Is there an improvement in attendance rates at one Midwestern high school after the implementation of a new attendance policy for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years when compared to data before implementation during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Average daily attendance (ADA). Average daily attendance is calculated by taking the total regular term hours of attendance (including remedial hours) divided by calendar hours in session plus the summer school ADA (Total number of hours attended in an approved summer school divided by 1,044 hours) (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2012).

Discipline referral rate. The discipline referral rate is the percentage of referrals for negative student behavior in a given period; this period of time may be calculated over days, weeks, months, and years (Schoolwires, 2016).

Four-year graduation rate. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class rounded to the tenth (MODESE, 2012). From the beginning of ninth grade, students who are entering the that grade for the first time form a cohort subsequently "adjusted" by adding any student who transfers into the cohort later during ninth grade and the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during the same period (MODESE, 2012).

Late work policy. A late work policy may be adopted by individual schools to mandate at what percentage and during what time period student assignments can be accepted for credit (O'Connor, 2009).

Response to Intervention (RtI). Response to intervention is an approach used to identify and provide early assistance to students with learning disabilities and to at-risk students through regular evaluation to determine progress, evidence-based teaching methods, and individualized instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Tardy sweeps. Tardy sweeps are a procedure where school staff members patrol school hallways following the tardy bell and move (sweep) students to the office so they may a receive a ticket or slip to be admitted to class (Ponessa, 1995). The process is designed to discourage tardiness and to maximize instructional time for students and teachers (Ponessa, 1995).

Limitations and Assumptions

This study was implemented with the goal of identifying programs which may have a positive impact on secondary schools. The limitations of this study were as follows:

Sample demographics. What barriers exist by only using the data from one Midwestern high school? As in any research study, the findings should be able to be replicated and generalized (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015). By only using one school for the collection of data, the results produced may be limited (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Another limitation of the sample population is that over the years of the study, the students matured behaviorally, socially, and academically (Fraenkel et al., 2015); therefore, some improvements in student performance could be related to the fact they matured as individuals. However, the limitations due to maturation would exist in any study of a student body no matter the sample size (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Another limitation is student data to be analyzed were not disaggregated according to the instructors students had or the sending schools they attended before ninth grade. As Tucker and Stronge (2005) quoted the research of Bill Sanders in their book, *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning:*

> … The results of this study well document that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. In addition, the results show wide variation in effectiveness among teachers. The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor. Effective teachers

> appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms. (p. 63)

Teacher preparation/knowledge of teaching and learning, subject matter knowledge, experience, and the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher licensure are all leading factors in teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Researcher bias. The primary researcher in this study is the high school administrator of the research site at one Midwestern high school. The researcher's role in the development and implementation of the school improvement programs did not allow for a completely bias-free study. As no human participants were used in this study and all data were archival and quantitative, the chance of subjectivity was minimized. Oversight of the research was in place to avoid any possible bias.

Hindsight bias. The primary researcher worked diligently to avoid hindsight bias. Hindsight bias was defined by Pohl and cited in an article by Bârliba and Dafinoiu (2015) as the tendency to "exaggerate post-factum the predictability of already produced events, which, retrospectively considered seem more likely prior to their occurrence" (p. 122). Bârliba and Dafinoiu (2015) used the phrase from Fishhoff to help to understand the term, "I knew it all along" (p. 122). Calvillo (2012) added, "Hindsight bias occurs when outcome knowledge influences judgments of what individuals had known before the outcome or would have known in the absence of outcome knowledge" (p. 891).

Hindsight bias is important to avoid in any study, because as Pezzo (2011) wrote when reviewing Fishhoff's 1975 work, it may align the study to show the evidence produces results that fulfill the preconceived thoughts of the researcher. The researcher in this particular study was careful to use the data to reveal the results of the study of one

Midwestern high school. Measures were taken so the results were analyzed without bias that would self-aggrandize the researcher's efforts to make an improvement to any organization or product (Denning & Dew, 2015). The researcher considered the work of Pezzo (2011), who noted research must not align the facts of the study to have them produce the desired outcome of the researcher. The results of any study must be pursued without seeking a pre-determined result that would show a positive correlation between the investigator's leadership of the initiative studied to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative, whether results were positive or negative (Calvillo, 2012).

Instrumentation. The instrument for this study was the collection of archival data from a Midwestern high school for the school years 2010-2011 through 2015-2016. The data analyzed were the numerical calculations reported to the Missouri Comprehensive Data System. One of the limitations of the use of only this type of data is that it does not represent the emotional impact on the student population and faculty (Fraenkel et al., 2015). To increase the validity of this study, data were compared from groups who experienced school before and after various improvement programs were initiated. For example, attendance rates were compared between class cohorts who attended a Midwestern high school before the Response to Intervention program was launched in 2012-2013 to their rates as they moved through the next several school years.

Contrarily, using existing data sets can provide methodological benefits (Schultz, Hoffman, Reiter-Palmon, 2001). Schultz et al. (2001) noted:

> Using multiple existing data sets is an effective way to reduce, if not overcome, threats to internal validity like experimenter bias. Use of multiple data sets, or purely external data sets, is also a great way to bolster arguments about the

> generalizability of the results of a study. Finally, the convergence of findings from totally different databases collected by different researchers provides strong support for the construct validity of whatever it is you are reporting. (p. 3)

A complete list of potential advantages and disadvantages of using archival data may be found in Figure 1.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Performing Secondary Analysis on Archival Data

Potential advantages	Potential disadvantages
❑ Resources savings	❑ Appropriateness of data
❑ Circumvent data collection woes	❑ Completeness of documentation
❑ A variety of research designs possible	❑ Detecting errors/sources often difficult if not impossible
❑ Usually SPSS or SAS ready	❑ Overall quality of data
❑ Relative ease of data transfer and storage	❑ Stagnation of theory
❑ Use as pilot data/exploratory study	❑ Lure of dustbowl empiricism
❑ Typically much larger and often national samples, as a result, can perform newer and more powerful statistics	❑ Unique statistical skills required
	❑ Illusion of quick and easy research
❑ Availability of longitudinal data	❑ Convincing editors or thesis/dissertation advisors you are not simply duplicating existing research
❑ Availability of international/ cross-cultural data	
❑ Organizations may be more open to using existing data versus collecting new data	❑ Failure of students to develop skills required in planning and conducting data collection

Figure 1. Potential advantages and pitfalls of using archival data. Adapted from "Using Archival Data for I-O Research: Advantages, Pitfalls, Sources, and Examples," by K. S. Schultz, C. C. Hoffman, & R. Reiter-Palmon, 2001, *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist, 42*(3), p. 4. Retrieved from http://www.siop.org/tip/backissues/Jan05/07schultz.aspx

Summary

The choices educators make when working for school improvement are critical to overall school success (Fullan, 2011b). As Berliner and Glass (2015) discovered in their research, a program which delivers results in one school may not transfer well to another school district; therefore, it is important school administrators study and research what

works and what does not for individual schools. Rebecca Thessin (2015) reported schools must move beyond just looking at data and must employ the data to effect school change.

To find and apply high school improvement initiatives that lead to improved educational experiences for students, educational leaders must examine in great detail what systems have been successful and then modify the initiatives to fit the characteristics of their particular school districts (Berliner & Glass, 2015). Several critical areas within Fullan's (2010a) work regarding systems change guided the initiatives implemented at one Midwestern high school. The areas researched include data analysis for school improvement, collaboration within a school, interventions, and culture and climate change and how those areas lead to an improved school with students who score consistently better in various measurable areas.

Chapter Two includes a presentation of existing literature including the contextual and historical research studies surrounding high school collaboration, interventions, and culture and climate. Chapter Three contains the methodology of the study including the setting, population and sample, and instrumentation used to gather information. In Chapter Four are the results and findings of the study. Chapter Five includes discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

McEwan and McEwan (2003) discussed the need to examine school improvement initiatives to ensure the return on funds and energy is worth the cost. Marzano (2006) cautioned high-yield strategies, while proven as effective, do not always work in every school situation. Gewertz (2016) affirmed the difficulty in changing high schools for the better, "Making a U.S. high schools great is a tough nut to crack, and the landscape of the past half-century is littered with failures to prove it" (p. 3). Stringfield, Reynolds, and Schaffer (2012) noted, "The first challenge of change is to ensure that it's desirable, and the second challenge is to make it doable; then the biggest challenge of all is to make it durable and sustainable" (p. 50).

Steinberg (2015) called for a focus on making improvements to adolescents' schooling to rival the attention given to children of ages one to three. High schools, according to Steinberg (2015), must use the opportunity they are given to affect the lives of students in a positive way. Schmoker (2012) stated, "There is indisputable evidence that improvements in schooling have a significant effect on student learning" (p. 71). Schools that have a history of displaying success can foster a drive among students to work toward higher academic achievement (Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2015).

School improvement programs that work in some places do not work in others, and they may work with some students but not with others (Berliner & Glass, 2015). Gewertz (2016) referred to a report from 2013 by the Carnegie Corporation that many New York schools have adopted improvement programs but failed to pair them with other programs which are equally critical to student success. How do educators decide on the most appropriate reform plan for their schools? (Bernhardt, 2013). With tax

dollars, district credibility, and staff credibility at stake, it is important improvement plans are effective (Ehren et al., 2013). Emmett and McGee (2012) agreed pressure is immense for school leaders to implement improvement initiatives for schools that will have a positive effect for all students. Gewertz (2016) called for "national attention to intentional school designs that incorporate ten principles that research has shown to be pivotal in creating high-performing secondary schools, such as having a clear mission and coherent culture and personalizing learning to fit students' needs" (p. 3).

Todd (2014) discussed how in many states administrators are faced with No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top initiatives which compare an individual school's performance against other schools' measurable statistics. James (2013) reported while graduation rates have improved over the last few years, dropout rates are still at an alarming rate. Todd (2014) also alluded to the pressure individual teachers feel from the implementation of initiatives designed to hold schools and individual educators accountable for student performance.

Stringfield et al. (2012) wrote of how important it is for schools to replicate results of improvement:

> The challenges to any improvement effort in organizations as complex as schools are substantial. In general reform efforts in the U.S. and in other countries have been implemented unevenly. If educators are to meet the challenge of leaving no child behind, schools must make changes that deliver the intended results again and again and again. (p. 47)

Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013) wrote, “The improvement of quality education is also an approach to educational change in which the school is at the center of change” (p. 3). Thessin (2015) concurred with this school-centered philosophy by writing:

> A clear school improvement plan that specifically requires the articulation of what school leaders will do to facilitate improvement and how teachers and other staff will be engaged in the improvement process can provide a roadmap to the staff and community about the school’s goals and next steps for improvement. (p. 71)

Marsh, McGee, and Williams (2014) asserted the ability of schools to make positive changes is dependent on the capability of leadership to create an organization that fosters school programs which promote the wellbeing of students and staff.

This study was designed to examine several aspects of school reform in different settings and to highlight the most efficient strategies for school improvement. A study of several improvement initiatives implemented at one Midwestern high school was examined. The impact of those initiatives on that school’s performance was investigated.

Conceptual Framework

As noted in Chapter One, the conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Michael Fullan’s (2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) work on systems change. Fullan’s (2016) components of reform precisely align with the steps to be taken in this study:

1. Relentlessly focused leadership at the center.
2. A small number of ambitious goals.
3. A positive stance with respect to the sector.
4. A core strategy of capacity building at all three levels (school, district, province).

5. Use of evidence, data, and related research.
6. A non-punitive approach to accountability.
7. Transparency of data regarding outcomes and practices.
8. Learning from success regarding lateral and vertical dissemination and exchanges. (p. 3)

When combined, these factors are a robust approach to sustainable school system change that involves all stakeholders and serves as a conceptual basis for this study (Fullan, 2016). Au and Boyd (2013) agreed with many of Fullan's (2016) components of reform, pointing out effective schools have three components: 1) a supportive administration, 2) a key curriculum leader, and 3) a group of educators dedicated to working with each other to lead any improvement initiative. According to Bernhardt (2004), "It takes strong leadership to inspire a shared vision and to ensure its implementation. It also takes a strong leader to ensure the analysis and use of data" (p. 5).

In his review of Fullan's (2011a) book, *Change Leader: Learning to Do What Matters Most*, Perez (2014) listed a seven-part solution to the burden of change leadership as follows: 1) deliberate practice; 2) be resolute; 3) motivate the masses; 4) collaborate to compete; 5) learn confidently; 6) impact; and 7) sustain simplexity. According to Perez (2014), these attributes lay out a formula for success when any leader is entrusted to be an active change agent in an organization.

According to Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2016), the concept of deliberate practice has long been an integral part of athletics, music, and other endeavors where the desired outcome is excellence. Bronkhorst, Meijer, Koster, and Vermunt (2014) agreed with those findings, "Recent insights from research on expert performance conducted in

various domains indicate that deliberate efforts to developing expertise are necessary for expertise development throughout a professional career" (p. 18). According to Coughlan, Williams, McRobert, and Ford (2014), "An activity that is central to learning is deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is designed to improve key aspects of current performance, is challenging, effortful, requires repetition and feedback, and may not be inherently enjoyable or immediately rewarding" (p. 449).

Deliberate practice is an area where there has been a great deal of research when it comes to becoming an expert at any endeavor (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2016). Deliberate practice is an important part of being an educational professional, and according to Bronkhorst et al. (2014), "Recent insights from research on expert performance conducted in various domains indicate that deliberate efforts at developing expertise are necessary for expertise development throughout a professional career" (p. 18). Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2016) wrote of the significance of deliberate practice in pursuing excellence in any organization or endeavor, "Deliberate practice is an unquestionably important predictor of success" (p. 728). Being deliberate in what an organization pursues seems to closely follow the seven-step model which Fullan (2011a) wrote of, and Perez (2014) reviewed. Perez (2014) stated, "Places practice front and center, and then adds six other components of combining resolve, motivation, collaboration, confidence, impact, and simplexity" (p. 100).

Being resolute is necessary for any change leader (Fullan, 2015). Being resolute over a prolonged period, toward the pursuit of excellence, is important (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2016). According to Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2016), "Grit is the tendency to sustain effort and interest toward single pursuit over time" (p. 729). As Perez (2014) reviewed

Fullan's (2011a) work, he referred to "impressive empathy the ability to understand and share feelings of another" (p. 100). When a change occurs, the leader will have to take the measure of how those who serve under him or her are experiencing trepidation, which inevitably causes conflict (Fullan, 2011a). Perez (2014) wrote of what Fullan (2011a) referred to as the ability to resolve conflicts that come up in any organization involved in change. According to Perez (2014), "In the process of adopting change, if this is to occur, disagreements must be resolved with resolution and empathy" (p. 100). The need to receive feedback with compassion and careful thought is critical to an improvement initiative being successful (Fullan, 2015). Goodwin (2015) referred to the ability of a change leader to get all stakeholders moving in the same direction to ensure an improvement initiative is successful.

Fullan's (2015) work is based on receiving feedback and the willingness to listen despite the feedback being painful to the ego. In a review of Fullan's 2015 book, *Freedom to Change: Four Strategies to Put Your Inner Drive into Overdrive*, Loose (2016) quoted, "Feedback can be the key simplifier to make change" (p. 359). According to Fullan (as cited in Loose, 2016), when persons do not listen to feedback, they lose the ability to gain knowledge of their performance. Fullan's thoughts about the problems with feedback are in constant conflict with the needs of all to people to be liked, to like themselves, and to learn (Loose, 2016). Loose (2016) offered some of the benefits of receiving feedback and he quoted from Fullan (2015), "By actively seeking out this feedback and overcoming any self-fears the individual gains the following: Better relationships, Secure self-esteem, being more assured at seeking feedback and feeling better about receiving it, feeling less threatened by one's toughest opponent" (p. 360).

Perez (2014) wrote of Fullan's approach regarding feedback. Being able to receive feedback correctly so it can be utilized for a positive outcome is necessary for any change leader (Perez, 2014). Feedback can help guide motivation for any organization (Perez, 2014). According to Fullan (as cited in Perez, 2014), motivation is the responsibility of any change leader; after listening to feedback from those in the organization, the leader can remove or avoid roadblocks to success that can help an organization achieve new levels of success. Fullan (as cited by Perez, 2014) referred to the increased motivation greater achievement instills in the individuals within an organization. In other words, success breeds success. Success creates a motivation which is known as expectancy (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2016). Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2016) defined expectancy as "the extent to which people believe they will succeed" (p. 729).

Motivation is key to the success of deliberate practice (Bronkhorst et al., 2014). Fullan (2015) noted the internal motivation within an educational organization is more than the external motivators legislative bodies put on schools, such as test scores or other accountability initiatives. In Loose's (2016) book review of Fullan, he referred to Fullan's notion that external measures and management from the top have mired schools in an educational quagmire. Loose (2016) reiterated schools might never be able to remove external accountability, but they can pursue two activities: "The first to invest more in internal accountability activities creating conditions for greater local responsibility at a level of day-to-day practice. The second is setting and projecting clear goals that protect the system when performance is persistently low" (p. 360). Projecting

clear goals helps drive the resolute change leadership Fullan (as cited in Perez, 2014) referred to as key to success.

The ability to adapt is key to continual improvement within any organization (Goodwin, 2015). Goodwin (2015) wrote of the dangers of continually doing the same things the same way. When schools reach a certain level of success or when schools experience a period of lower growth following a string of victories, they sometimes add another program to fill in the perceived shortcomings (Goodwin, 2015). According to Goodwin (2015), "There is a tendency to double down on what they have been doing—tightening the screws to get everyone to follow the same program by layering a second program on top of it" (p. 10). Deliberate practice must be consistently monitored, and feedback must be received and evaluated so the path can change as necessary (Bronkhorst et al., 2014). Deliberate practice is a way of pursuing excellence for any organization (Coughlan et al., 2014). Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2016) quoted Ericsson, Preitula, and Cokley from 2007, "Deliberate practice is not for the faint of heart" (p. 729). It requires, according to Perez (2014), resolve.

Data Analysis

When school districts set out to make improvements in their schools, data analysis is key to determining areas for improvement (Hattie, 2011). Blad (2016) stated, "We need to make sure that our schools' quality is measured in a way that is much more reflective of the hard work that's been done" (p. 16). According to Bernhardt (2015):

> More recently, we've come to the realization that we must focus on improvement strategies that will have a positive effect on all students and teachers. To do this, schools must gather and analyze data that will help them understand where they

> are now as a system; why they're getting the results they're getting; and, if they're not happy with current results, how to get better results for everyone. (p. 56)

Essential questions must be asked of every district: "Where are we now? How did we get here? Where do we want to be? How are we going to get there? Is what we're doing making a difference?" (Bernhardt, 2015, p. 56).

According to Bradshaw, Pas, Debnam, and Johnson (2015), many schools struggle with interpreting data to drive change for the better. It is crucial schools have a plan to guide the improvement of instruction and learning (Bernhardt, 2013). Blad (2016) stated, "The history of accountability systems has been about, What is the thing I need to do to avoid punishment? We are trying to move the conversation to, What am I learning? What strengths do I need to leverage?" (p. 19). Bernhardt (2013) added, "If a school does not have a clear, shared vision, it has as many visions as it has people.

Consequently, the most the school could ever hope for are random acts of improvement" (p. 116). A district or school vision which is based on guiding principles and to which all staff is committed is the key to getting *Focused Acts of Improvement* (see Figure 2) (Bernhardt, 2013). Schools can ensure and efficiently assess teacher-student interactions by using three areas of emotive provision, schoolroom organization, and teaching support, (Allen et al., 2013).

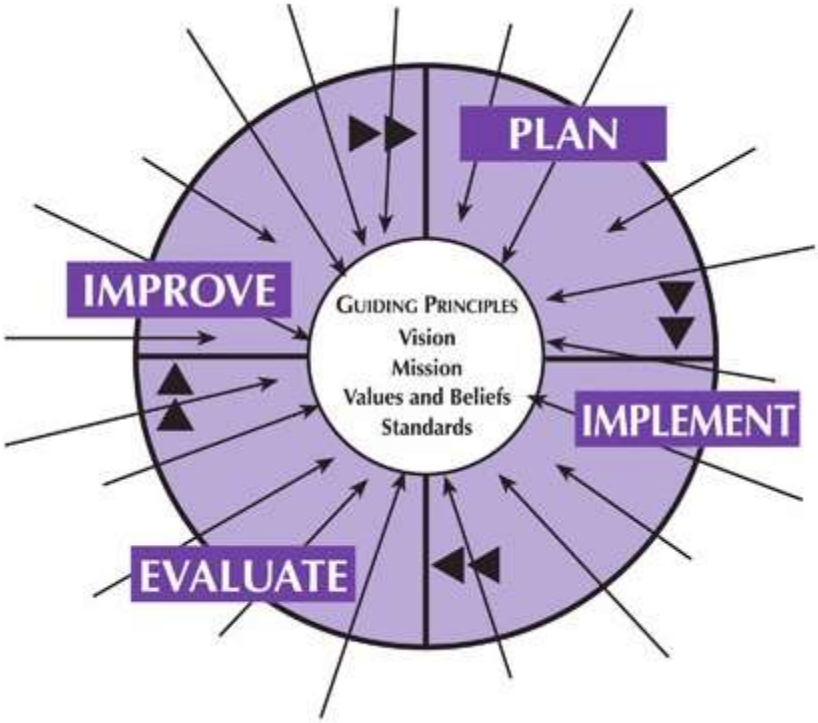

Figure 2. Focused acts of improvement. Adapted from *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement*, by V. Bernhardt, 2013, p. 117. Copyright 2013 by Eye on Education.

The question then becomes: Who should be responsible for analyzing the data (Berliner & Glass, 2015)? Bernhardt (2015) noted, "When schools gather and analyze their data, so they understand where they are now and why they're getting the results they're getting with current processes, they're able to create their own continuous school improvement plan" (p. 61). According to Klein (2015), "State guidelines call for leaders at struggling schools to be carefully reassessed—and even removed—if a school remains among the worst performers for an extended period" (p. 12). Stringfield et al. (2012) discussed the importance of schools accessing real-time data of student performance to make adjustments in the curriculum and the way it is delivered.

Collaboration among all staff for data analysis is necessary for the successful interpretation of the results (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015). Data analysis is key to determining the areas best served by an improvement issue, as "traditional school-based solutions that focus solely on academic instruction, tutoring and remediation support are no longer enough to meet these growing non-academic challenges faced by students today" (Mendenhall, Iachini, & Anderson-Butcher, 2013, p. 225). Stringfield et al. (2012) found data analysis helps foster collaboration among administrators, teachers, and students. As Bernhardt (2015) stated, the question of where schools are now must be asked:

> Research and experience have identified five practices that typically yield improvement: Have a laser-like focus on what kids need to learn. Collaborate on how to teach that content by unpacking standards, mapping curriculum, designing lessons, and constructing assessments that measure whether students master those lessons. Use the results of classrooms and district formative assessments to see which kids got it, and need enrichment, and which ones didn't, and need additional help. Find patterns and data and use them to improve instruction. Build personal relationships so that students trust teachers and so that parents, teachers, and administrators trust one another. (Chenoweth, 2015, p. 17)

The ideas proposed by Chenoweth (2015) seem to parallel Fullan's (2011b) work of enlisting the support of stakeholders in a school system and the importance of making sure educators feel part of a team. Marsh et al. (2014) reported the findings from a study completed by Steinberg et al., who reported the importance of parental support to the existence of quality teacher-student relationships. According to Rycik (2015), "The

demand for standards and accountability provides a rationale for the reform, but it is the willingness of teachers and administrators to embrace change that brings about transformation" (p. 2).

Discipline

Teacher's role. Unruly discipline in the classroom is a problem which continues to grow (Tomal, 2001). The increasing complications of school violence, student shootings, lawsuits, and simple misbehavior have led school officials closely examine renewed discipline policies (Tomal, 2001). According to Miles (2015), "We, as educators and administrators, must win the students' hearts and minds beginning with their first class, keep their hearts and minds won, and nurture personal responsible responsibility by providing rules and consequences for behavior that will be second nature" (p. 54). To gain trust and impart accountability in students will help create better citizens who take responsibility for their actions (Miles, 2015).

The growing problem of school violence and escalating discipline problems seem to be related to one important factor: Schools have become increasingly cautious in dealing with student behavior issues due to the threat of legal action (Tomal, 2001). Tough consequences for disciplinary issues tends to take a backseat to maintaining enrollment, monitoring the reputation of a school, and keeping patrons happy (Miles, 2015). Developing an effective classroom discipline program is an important teacher responsibility (Tomal, 2001). According to Tomal (2001), most teacher discipline styles, "can be considered to be based upon the degree of the teachers enforcing of rules and supporting of students" (p. 39). Tomal (2001) breaks down teacher's disciplinary styles

into, “five primary styles-the enforcer, supporter, abdicator, compromiser, and the negotiator” (p. 40).

On one end of the spectrum is the enforcer, which Tomal (2001) described as the teacher with a high level of enforcement who seeks to assert their position as classroom leader (see Figure 3). In contrast, the abdicator teacher who is uninterested in enforcing rules makes little effort to assert his/her position and shows minimal interest for students (Tomal, 2001). A compromiser is a teacher who is inconsistent in enforcement and follow through (Tomal, 2001). The supporter is friendly and caring towards students but is lacking in follow-through and application of discipline procedures (Tomal, 2001).

The negotiator is seen by Tomal (2001) as the teacher who creates the most productive situation for classroom discipline. The negotiator is supportive of the student while continuing to enforce rules and follow-through with consequences for misbehavior (Tomal, 2001). This would follow the Miles (2015) philosophy of creating an environment where students feel cared for and supported while also providing consequences when students break the rules. Miles (2015) also places lots of emphasis on keeping the student engaged which in turn will lead to better classroom discipline.

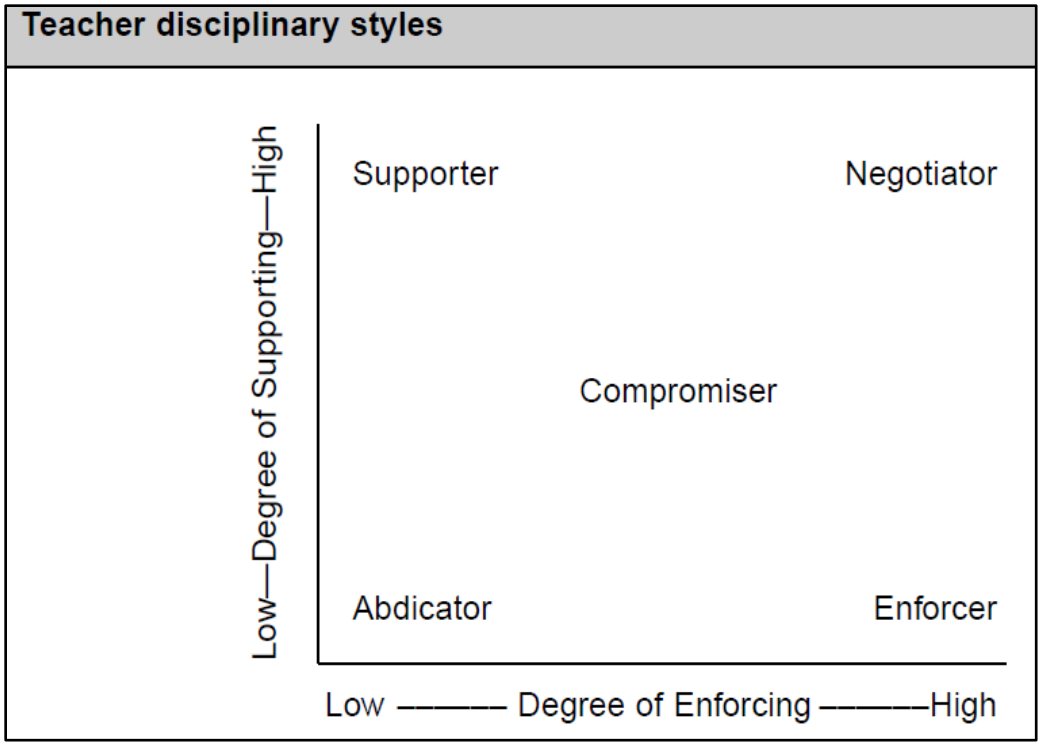

Figure 3. Teacher disciplinary styles (Tomal, 2001, p. 30).

According to Tomal (2001), the use of the negotiator style of management creates a classroom environment that mimics the adult world where these types of negotiations take place every day (see Figure 4). He stated, "Classroom life comprises a complex structure of cognitive and social activities and an interactive process involving the teacher, students, and objects" (Tomal, 2001, p. 44). This type of classroom management helps make the class more relevant by mirroring the real world, which is key to creating a positive classroom environment (Miles, 2015). The negotiator style is the predominantly favored model of classroom management by high school teachers, according to the study done by Tomal (2001).

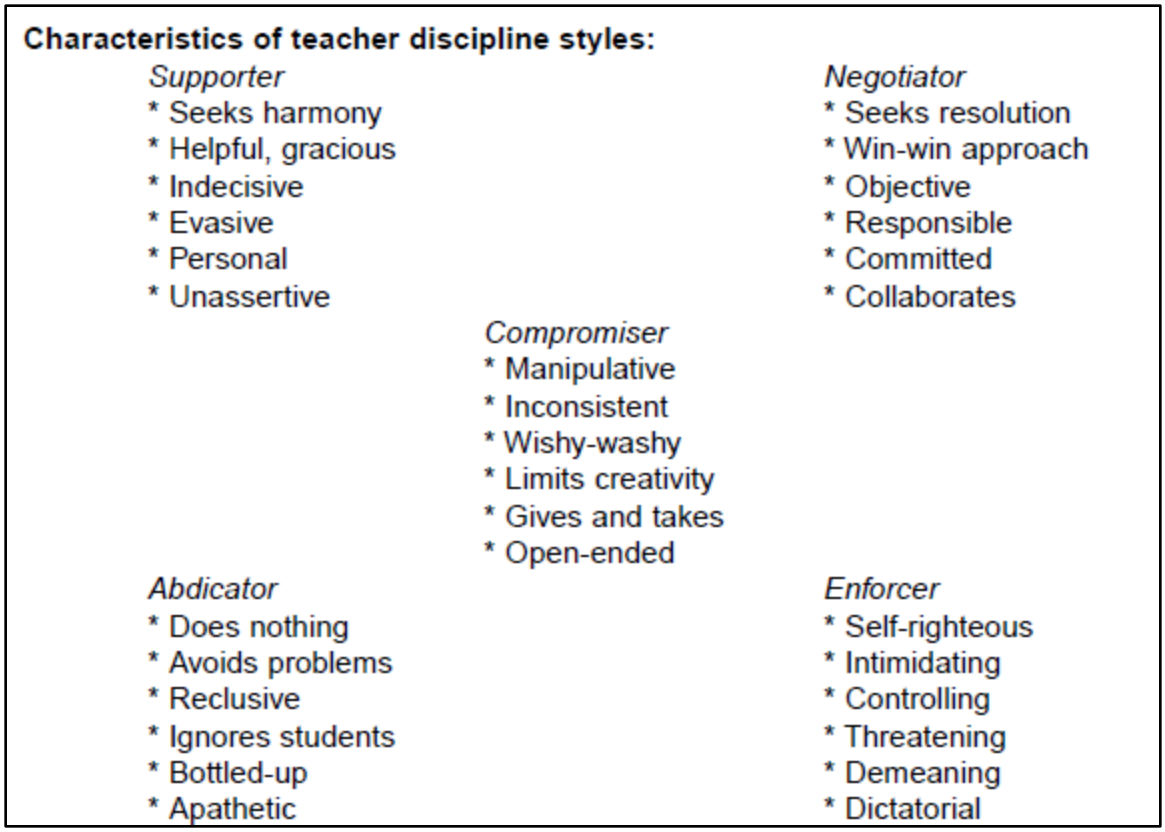

Figure 4. Characteristics of teacher discipline styles (Tomal, 2001, p. 41).

Disruption to the educational process. Perry and Morris (2014) summarized the work of Durkheim regarding the role school discipline plays in the educational process:

> In *Moral Education,* Durkheim ([1925]) 1973) argues school discipline is critical for imparting norms and values in children. However, the moral imperative of school discipline cannot be achieved by punishment per se, but rather by how punishment affirms the legitimacy of just rules. (p. 1070)

Students who attend schools with a positive climate engage in less disruptive behavior (Zolkower & Munk, 2015). Zolkower and Munk (2015) also stated schools with a better culture and climate are closely connected to improved student behavior.

Schools with an expectation level of mutual respect between staff and students have a more conducive environment for student success (Zolkower & Munk, 2015). In response to the tremendous amount of research connecting positive school climate to good school discipline, many schools have begun discipline improvement initiatives (Thompson, 2016). Thompson (2016) warned against creating an adversarial relationship between educators and students:

> The youth of today are not the enemy, but our future. Our commitment to them, their safety and their success is evident by the way we treat, nurture, and respect each child. [W]e need to close the pathway that takes students from schools today and places them in jails tomorrow. (p. 326)

Creating a culture of educators against students is toxic to fulfilling the school's mission of creating a quality educational experience (Thompson, 2016).

School discipline over the last 20 to 30 years is reflective of society's attitude toward misbehavior and criminal activity in the outside world (Perry & Morris, 2014). Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, and Bachman (2008) wrote:

> School disciplinary practices exclude hundreds of thousands of young people in the United States from the educational process each year. School discipline takes a variety of forms, from minor actions like sending students to the principal's office or requiring them to stay after school, to more severe sanctions like suspension and expulsion. (p. 47)

Perry and Morris (2014) reported, "Current school discipline practices are far more invasive and punitive than in past decades, reflecting a growing crime control approach to student misbehavior" (p. 1069). Tobin and Sugai (1999) emphasized the problem of

students with many discipline referrals being at risk of dropping out and creating more delinquent youth, along with the issue of students on long-term suspension being away from school which can contribute to delinquency. As alarming is the fact 19% of high school students with disabilities were suspended from school in 2015 (see Figure 5). Blad (2015) discussed the suspension rate of learning disabled students:

> [These students are suspended at]. . . twice the rate of their counterparts who are not enrolled in special education programs. For each major racial and ethnic group, suspension rates of students with disabilities exceed those of their peers. In both general and special education in secondary schools, black, Latino, and American Indian students have higher suspension rates than white and Asian youths. (p. 13)

Sadly, incarcerated youth with disabilities report they feel more support from adults in lockup than they ever felt from educators in traditional schools (Blad, 2015).

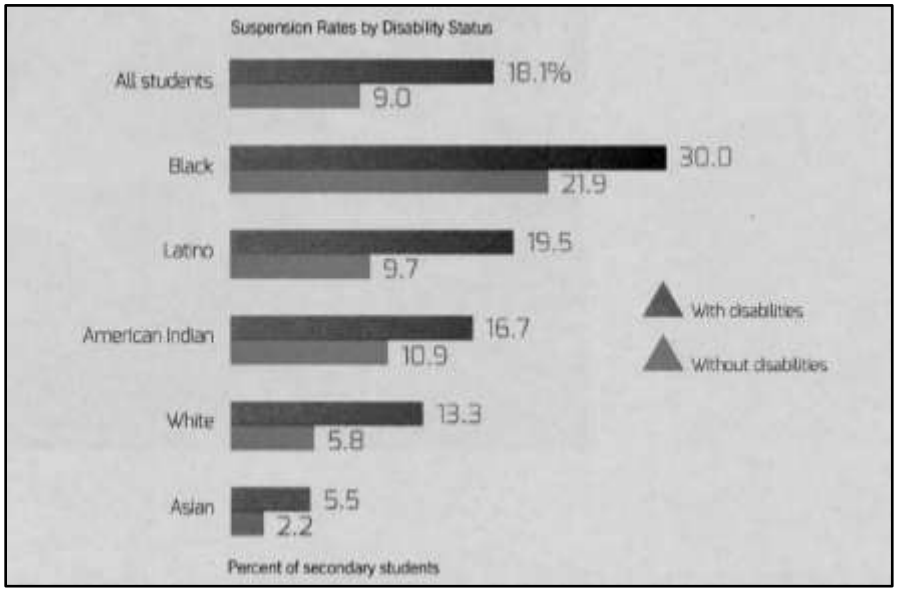

Figure 5. Suspension Patterns. Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project, UCLA, 2015.

Most initiatives over the last 25 to 30 years have reflected a “get tough” discipline mindset (Perry & Morris, 2014, p. 1067). Tobin and Sugai (1999) wrote, “Schools are affected by youth violence and have tightened discipline policies … and increased reliance on security devices and police intervention” (p. 40). This trend to a more punitive approach to school discipline is reflective of the United States justice system over the same period (Perry & Morris, 2014). Educational discipline and judicial systems have emphasized aggressive policies including exclusionary punishment which vary from one-day out-of-school suspensions to complete expulsion from school (Tobin & Sugai, 1999).

Perry and Morris (2014) reported since the 1970s suspension rates have doubled. Wallace et al. (2008) determined:

> Forty-eight percent of public schools (approximately 39,600 schools) took a serious disciplinary action against a student for specific offenses for the 2005-06 school year. Of those disciplinary actions, 74% were suspensions lasting five days or more, five percent were removals with no services (i.e., expulsions), and twenty percent were transfers to specialized schools. (p. 47)

Perry and Morris (2014) added:

> We hypothesize that increasing the use of exclusionary discipline in schools will have adverse effects on non-suspended student achievement above and beyond the overall level of student offending and discipline. This finding would suggest that excessive use of exclusionary discipline creates a culture of control that impedes the success of all students. (p. 1071)

This get-tough, exclusionary trend in discipline policy can lead to long-term consequences for excluded students, namely a possibility of incarceration due to the development of poor behaviors while excluded from school (Perry & Morris, 2014). Maxwell (2014) stated:

> Advocates also have ramped up their use of complaints to officials in the Education Department's office for civil rights, or OCR-using Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964-to push districts to address equity issues that often play out racially, such as the disparate use of out-of-school suspensions against students of color, especially African-American boys, of unequal access to the most rigorous courses in high schools. (p. 19)

According to Thompson (2016), this type of tough discipline has created a system that, in many cases, puts students at odds with school staff and creates academic disengagement among students. Disengagement at younger ages is a predictor of truancy among African-American males, according to Thompson (2016). Paik (2014) referred to the school-to-prison pipeline as being a byproduct of the environment schools create, and stated, "the carceral state has perpetuated a culture of order and control that permeates in the school's classrooms and hallways, turning what should be a learning environment into a space of constant surveillance and monitoring" (p. 1027). Perry and Morris (2014) alluded to one of the consequences of this controlled atmosphere being increased scrutiny even for minimal offenses, as school officials are forced to take a harder stance as behaviors are more apparent.

Thompson (2016) pointed out that these types of zero-tolerance policies among schools have created a "School-to-Prison pipeline" (p. 331). Thompson (2016) defined

this pipeline as “a collection of punitive laws, policies, and practices that push young people—particularly African-American students, male students, students with disabilities, and students from lower socioeconomic statuses—out of school” (p. 331).

Blad (2015) agreed with Thompson (2016) that students with emotional and behavioral disabilities are recurrently directed into what civil rights advocates call the school-to-prison pipeline. Students “are reprimanded or arrested by school-based police officers who may not be aware of their special educational needs” (Blad, 2015, p. 12). Wallace et al. (2008) reported information from the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association from 2001:

> The widespread use of school-based zero tolerance policies, particularly for behaviors that do not physically endanger students and schools, has serious implications for students’ short-term academic performance as well as their long-term social and economic well-being. In particular, suspension and expulsion remove students from the learning environment, potentially increase the amount of time that they spend unsupervised and with other out-of-school youth, and strongly correlate with various negative outcomes including poor academic achievement, grade retention, delinquency, and substance use. (p. 48)

The economic impact of exclusionary discipline was measured in Texas when a study was commissioned to measure the economic impact of suspensions and retentions on the state (Thompson, 2016). The study revealed the following, “School discipline associated with 4,700 grade-retentions cost Texas nearly 41 million each year of additional training. Delays in entering the workforce related to grade retention cost Texas 68 million” (Thompson, 2016, p. 335).

Perry and Morris (2014) reported the views of Arum that school castigation is most effective when it is moderately firm, consistent, and perceived as just by students. This more positive philosophy is more restorative than punitive and is supported by Tobin and Sugai (1999), who put forth the thought effective school discipline is best when it is consistent, fair, and moderately strict. Tobin and Sugai (1999) further cautioned harsh or extreme discipline could create an environment of cynical attitudes among the students toward the authority charged with a school's discipline. Perry and Morris (2014) wrote, "Findings complement a new, critical political realization that an overreaching culture of control destabilizes school communities and fosters anxiety and distrust" (p. 1083).

The discipline of minorities and students with disabilities is an area that has seen an increase in research (Blad, 2015). Discipline seems to be applied at a higher percentage for students who are minorities or classified as disabled (Blad, 2015). Wallace et al. (2008) reported on a 2002 study conducted by Skiba, who discovered in 19 Midwestern middle schools, African-American students were referred to the office with more frequency than white students. The study also revealed the African-American students were referred to the office for more subjective reasons than their white classmates (Wallace et al., 2008).

Thompson (2016) reported that in Missouri a study on discipline revealed the same racial disparity present within the criminal justice and juvenile systems within school discipline referrals. According to Blad (2015), "The United States Department of Education reported, in the 2011-12 school year, thirteen percent of all students with disabilities received an out-of-school suspension, compared with six percent of students

without disabilities" (p. 12). Thompson (2016) referred to expulsion rates of African American students outnumbering the expulsion rates for white students.

Daniel J. Losen (as cited in Blad, 2015), the director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies, published an interview in which he offered this opinion: when exclusionary discipline is applied to students with disabilities, it can cause the emotional or intellectual disabilities to become more pronounced. Blad (2015) further quoted Losen's comments about exclusionary or harsh discipline applied to special needs students: "Those kids more than any others should absolutely be getting all kinds of behavioral supports and services" (p. 12).

These trends of increasingly applied exclusionary or sometimes severe discipline are not exclusive to just the United States (Hecker, Hermenau, Salmen, Teicher, & Elbert, 2016). In other countries, physical punishment is utilized to maintain school discipline and order within the hallways and classrooms (Hecker et al., 2016). According to Hecker et al. (2016), "In many countries worldwide, children are frequently exposed to harsh discipline such as spanking or being beaten with objects like sticks or belts" (p. 1). Hecker et al. (2016) wrote of the many effects of harsh and exclusionary discipline which can be long-term and in some cases can cause permanent, psychological problems.

Shown in Figure 6 are the percentages of the harsh emotional, and physical discipline students from Hecker's (2016) study were exposed to by adult members of their household. To compound the student's corporal exposure, Perry and Morris (2014) reported students who attend schools with harsh discipline feel less safe and do not feel they are cared for or supported as learners.

	% (n)
Physical discipline	
1) Has an adult in your household intentionally pinched, slapped, punched or kicked you?	66 (270)
2) Has an adult in your household spanked you with the palm of his/her hand on your buttocks, arms or legs?	57 (231)
3) Has an adult in your household spanked you with an object such as a strap, belt, stick, tube, broom, wooden spoon?	82 (336)
4) Has an adult in your household hit you so hard that you were injured?	24 (99)
Emotional discipline	
1) Has an adult in your household called you names or said hurtful things (e.g., fat, ugly, stupid)?	41 (169)
2) Has an adult in your household yelled or screamed at you?	82 (336)
3) Has an adult in your household locked you in a dark and narrow place (e.g., basement, closet)?	7 (27)

Figure 6. Hecker et al. (2014) tabulation of study data for students who reported an occurrence of harsh discipline during the children's lifetime (N = 409) (p. 3).

Even with all the compelling data available to show the negative impact of get-tough discipline policies, this still does not show a complete picture of what is taking place. Wallace et al. (2008) wrote:

> The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (20 U.S.C. 7921) permits parents to transfer their students to other schools, if the school which their children attend is determined by state-level definitions to be "persistently dangerous" (Sec. 9532).

> In light of the potential loss of funds and the political cost of being identified as a dangerous school, many schools may underreport their violence and discipline statistics. (p. 59)

Thompson (2016) asserted reported discipline statistics by schools may be incorrect. Sometimes students who perform poorly on standardized tests are suspended or expelled during the test-taking season to improve a school's average score. Blad (2015) also reported many schools engage in "informal removals" usually used for special education students who have limitations on the number of days they may be suspended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Perry and Morris (2014) reported the United States Department of Education put forth a group of guiding principles covering school discipline which advise schools to use removal from school only as a last resort. Many researchers and educators would like to see schools change current discipline policies and punishments (Perry & Morris, 2014). Tobin and Sugai (1999) wrote, "Furthermore punishments such as detention and suspension are inadequate responses because they do not teach positive replacement behaviors" (p. 50). Paik (2014) referred to the problem of exclusionary discipline as creating a "criminalization effect, leading to increased resentment to schools control policies" (p. 1027).

Wallace et al. (2008) also called for the reduction of exclusionary disciplinary practices by stating that if the United States is going to fulfill its educational obligations to all its students, it must reduce the amount of learning lost due to exclusionary discipline. Blad (2015) encouraged educators, "Schools should be concerned not just

with meeting the dictates of federal civil rights law, but they should take every opportunity to prepare all students for the world beyond high school" (p. 12).

The increase in get-tough policies among public schools, along with increased exclusionary discipline, have caused school districts to try to lessen rates of out-of-school suspension (Thompson, 2016). Reduction of exclusionary discipline programs has not been without issues. In Denver, teachers have been the victims of violence by students who would have been removed from school under previous get-tough policies but were allowed to stay in school under a reduction of suspensions initiative begun by the district (Shah, 2013). How may schools balance effective discipline with meeting the needs of students? Data analysis may provide an answer to the issue (Scott, Hirn, & Barber, 2012).

How do schools create an environment with good discipline without making the discipline so overwhelming it causes more harm than help? Many schools have been using programs which seek to mimic Restorative Justice, which "focuses on healing rather than hurting, moral learning, community participation and community caring, respectful dialogue, forgiveness, responsibility, apology, and making amends" (Thompson, 2016, p. 336). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a program widely implemented throughout the nation which parallels restorative justice (Thompson, 2016).

According to Thompson (2016), PBS is the application of behavior analysis to attain socially acceptable behavior modification. Perry and Morris (2014) explained this philosophy is not a new concept, and "Durkheim [1925] 1973) clarified long ago, the foundation of effective discipline lies in the achievement of moral authority based on trust, affirmation, and caring relationships" (p. 1085). Thompson (2016) outlined the

three tiers of the PBS System as, "Tier One consists of primary intervention; Tier Two includes secondary prevention; Tier Three includes tertiary prevention" (p. 337). The prevention phase of the PBS system is the tier one Midwestern high school sought to address with the creation of the Tardy Sweep program.

According to Thompson (2016), the PBS program and Restorative Justice Discipline are very similar and can reciprocate their missions. Blad (2015) reported the Syracuse, New York, School District had implemented the PBS model in an attempt to reduce exclusionary discipline and make improvements in overall building discipline. According to Thompson (2016), "Positive Behavior Support is behaviorally based intervention approach used to improve schools, families, and communities" (p. 336).

Positive Behavior Support is collaborative in its nature, similar to the constitutional approach to school discipline which seeks to create an environment where students and teachers collaborate to create a school culture (Grandmont, 2003). The constitutional approach places emphasis on collaboration between students and teachers (Grandmont, 2003). This collaboration mirrors the PBS system, which seeks to guide school leaders to develop a leadership team (Grandmont, 2003). Thompson (2016) suggested who should be included as members of the team: "The leadership team should be composed of district administrators, school administrators, district PBS trainers, special education programmers, school psychologists, and counselors, students, student and family members" (p. 339). The constitutional approach also emphasizes student responsibility for actions, which lends support to the PBS theory of creating positive responses to bad behavior (Thompson, 2016). The PBS method, the Restorative Justice Method, and the constitutional approach all seek to provide a positive outcome to any

discipline issue (Grandmont, 2003; Thompson, 2016). These methods produce self-management skills for students which are in agreement with modern educational theory (Tobin & Sugai, 1999).

The prescribed PBS data analysis of discipline referrals is an important facet to the program being successful (Scott et al., 2012). Data analysis allows school discipline committees to identify trouble areas and then develop strategies necessary to solve the problems (Thompson, 2016). The analysis of data and input from faculty are what led one Midwestern high school to create the Tardy Sweep program first implemented in 2012.

Schools are recurrently faced with challenges concerning creating a positive school culture in relation to discipline (Zolkower & Munk, 2015). School discipline systems over the last 20 to 30 years have followed a get-tough trend which has been the example provided by juvenile and criminal justice systems (Thompson, 2016). With get-tough discipline policies, unintended consequences have occurred, such as amplified disengagement of students due to an increase in long-term suspensions handed out over the last 30 years (Perry & Morris, 2014). Get-tough policies such as out of school suspension and expulsion have been shown to create more of the same issues educators sought to remove from the school system (Thompson, 2016). Those issues are increased juvenile delinquency, especially among students with disabilities and minorities, which in turn is a contributing factor leading to criminal activity in adulthood (Blad, 2015).

Discipline programs which seek to develop strategies with input from teachers, students, administrators, and parents may prevent discipline issues before they are committed (Thompson, 2016). The analysis of data by a collaborative group of

stakeholders is key to developing a program which makes a positive impact on discipline (Scott et al., 2012). The creation of an effective discipline program is crucial to developing a positive school culture (Zolkower & Munk, 2015).

Collaboration

Shared leadership in the form of collaboration is a leadership style schools need to move toward to best meet the needs of students and to get the desired results for which teachers and students are being held accountable (Wilhelm, 2013). The school library may be considered a "vortex of learning and collaboration" (Bryan, 2014, para 7). Au and Boyd (2013) stated, "Teacher Ownership of any change effort is the key to sustained improvement" (p. 538). Loertscher and Koechlin (2015) described a "learning commons" that provides opportunities for experimentation and failures and where success can be noted and evaluated to make decisions. These decisions can help the stakeholders in charting the course for school improvement (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015). Bouwma-Gearhart, Perry, and Presley (2014) wrote, "Successful collaborations recognize the value of others' expertise and that those involved in postsecondary improvement activities are at different points in their appreciation of interdisciplinary knowledge and work" (p. 42). Todd (2014) discussed the benefits of a collaborative environment and how it united her school community by creating an environment promoting constant feedback and commitment to improvement.

Ehren et al. (2013) stated, "Professionals need to craft the puzzle pieces together to create the kind of picture that suits their school" (p. 453). Swain-Bradway, Pinkney, and Flannery (2015) detailed, "Mobilizing staff participation and managing resources are earmarks of the first two stages of implementation: exploration and adoption and

program implementation. Active involvement by all staff is necessary for implementation" (p. 254). Evans and Cowell (2013) suggested successful research on improvement initiatives reveals the rate of success is directly tied to the commitment of staff to the effort. There are many different strategies for school improvement, those which are opposite in design do agree high school improvement must begin with sharing goals which chart a course for all policies and decision making (Gewertz, 2016).

Ehren et al. (2013) described the process of collaborating with school staff as a far-reaching process involving teachers, support professionals, resource educators, and all members of the staff collaborating respectfully with students and parents to ensure an optimal outcome. Wilhelm (2013) added, "Principals can no longer lead instructional reform alone: the voice and expertise of teachers are essential to improving teaching and learning" (p. 62). The importance of positive interaction between students and teachers is critical to the overall school climate (Marsh et al., 2014):

> Using path modelling, we have demonstrated that students' perceptions of school climate were most strongly predicted by their perceptions of teacher-student relationships. Teacher fairness, helpfulness, encouragement and interest in students were strongly associated with the perception of the school as being fair, not too strict, collaborative, a safe, clean and nice place to be, as well as engendering a sense of emotional attachment to school indicated by liking school, not skipping classes, and finding school interesting. (p. 34)

Fullan (2011a) alluded to the concept of collaborating and sharing leadership as a way to ensure the success of schoolwide improvement programs by situating teachers with the proper energy and expertise in the most productive positions. Stringfield et al. (2012)

wrote of the importance of placing the correct staff members in the best roles to ensure improvement. Stringfield et al. (2012) cautioned administrators to seek out the skill of educators over experience when developing growth strategies.

Todd (2014) discussed the concept of collaboration between teachers and administrators concerning what is taking place in the classroom on a daily basis. According to Todd (2014), this may be accomplished through the use of immediate feedback from the administrator to the teacher following an evaluation. Immediate feedback is coupled with administrators' classroom presence which fosters a sense of partnership between the teacher and the evaluator and creates a greater sense of trust (Todd, 2014).

According to Ramos and Barnett (2013), collaboration is of the utmost importance for school leaders when scheduling professional development options for staff. Au and Boyd (2013) continued by adding teachers need to feel they are valued as professionals in their educational field. To turn around struggling schools, retention of a well-qualified and collaborative staff is crucial to achieving success (Klein, 2015). Wilhelm (2013) reported schools that have shared leadership through Professional Learning Communities offer continuous learning for their teachers, which leads to greater achievement for students. Todd (2014) wrote of the collaboration in her district, "It is invaluable and extremely effective that our teachers feel included in the observation process and also feel that they have control over improving student achievement" (p. 76).

According to Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, and Albritton (2013), "School district stakeholders are invited to have conversations that afford the exchange of thoughts and ideas that promote dialogue, communication, and even heart-to-heart

discussions. Such discourse should be meaningful of significant, purposeful, valuable, and filled with intention" (p. 19). Stringfield et al. (2012) discussed the need for staff to collaborate and to develop agreed-upon goals for their schools. Collaboration among teachers is important to ensure improvement for all students, which leads to higher achievement for schools (Salas-Morera et al., 2013). Collaboration between regular and special educators is fundamental to promote literacy for all students (Thornton, McKissick, Spooner, Ya-Yu, & Anderson, 2015). The environment collaboration creates should cause teachers to have meaningful dialogue about professional development, best practices, interventions, and curriculum, which leads to a better-prepared staff to best serve students (eSchoolNews.com, 2014).

Loertscher and Koechlin (2015) discussed the value of collaboration when it comes to effective school intervention strategies and found teachers must collaboratively prepare through professional development and study of intervention research. Todd (2014) discussed the value of meaningful collaborative dialogue:

> What we have achieved in just over a year has really surprised us. Students and teachers are now used to seeing principals in their classroom, and more professional conversations are taking place. We have a greater sense of collaboration and teamwork, which had been lacking. (p. 76)

A team approach with thoughtful, collaborative, teacher structures is integral when devising meaningful ways to improve practice (Sutton & Shouse, 2016).

Interventions

Class size reduction. A popular intervention strategy many educators employ to decrease failure rate is the reduction of class size (Jacobson, 2008). According to

McEwan and McEwan (2003), “As we all are aware, class size reduction is not cheap; it requires more teachers and more classroom space. So we also need to ask whether its costs are justified by its benefits” (p. 48). According to Hattie, Masters, and Birch (2016), despite the popular notion class size reduction promotes greater academic success, it does little to promote higher student achievement. Evans and Cowell (2013) cited the following, “Effective school improvement refers to planned educational change that enhances student learning outcomes as the school’s capacity for managing change” (p. 233).

RtI. Many schools have implemented a Response to Intervention (RtI) program, even though there is limited research on its effectiveness at the high school level (Samuels, 2009). According to Artiles (2015), “Learning, ability, and culture. These are notions that educational researchers, practitioners and policy makers grapple with” (p. 1). Schools faced with the mandates of No Child Left Behind, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, and other legislative initiatives turned to RtI to provide a way to help students (Meyer & Behar-Horenstein, 2015).

Along with legislative mandates, schools and educators are faced with a student population more and more transient with its set of problems due to differences in educational standards, special education, and curriculum from state-to-state (Artiles, 2015). Response to Intervention offers hope to educators that the performance of all students can be improved using proven strategies, regardless of the demographic differences and challenges of today’s students (Artiles, 2015). The RtI model mimics the medical field’s approach first adopted in the 1950s of classification and prevention designed to avoid illness in patients (Crawford, 2014).

Response to Intervention is a concept founded in a vast amount of educational research over the last 50 years (Crawford, 2014). According to Johnson, Parker, and Farah (2015), "RtI has also become a mechanism for instructional delivery for all students" (p. 226). The RtI model seeks to combine quality instructional practices with collaboration and identification to develop a prescription for student success (Crawford, 2014).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) allows struggling schools to devise their evidence-based plans to increase student achievement (Klein, 2015). Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013) wrote, "Radical changes in society demand revisions to the orientation and the institutional arrangements governing the educational system" (p. 4.). Schools must show growth within a prescribed number of years or face possible takeover by their state educational agencies (Klein, 2015). Some intervention programs are successful in some areas while others are not; a one-solution-will-work-for-all-philosophy to school intervention is not always best (Berliner & Glass, 2015). Engels (2015) pointed out:

> Over the last decade, Response to Intervention (RtI) has fostered a significant shift in daily teaching and learning practices. Identifying students who are at risk and providing them with immediate and intensive instructional support is an undeniably powerful approach. (p. 73)

For RtI to be effective, it takes a coordinated plan of intervention uniting many different educational professionals: teachers, instructional specialists, special educators, and others (Ehren et al., 2013).

The main two goals of RtI are to deliver evidence-based interventions and to use the students' response to those interventions to determine instructional needs (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). According to Turse and Albrecht (2015), who quoted the Council for Exceptional Children, "RTI is a process designed to identify struggling learners early, to provide access to needed interventions, and help identify children with disabilities" (p. 83).

Within RtI, the assessment tools utilized to measure individual student performance are imperative (Crawford, 2014). Without a quality assessment plan, RtI will suffer (Crawford, 2014). Data from quality assessments can be used to modify teacher preparation and practice (Ciullo et al., 2016). Special education eligibility decisions may be a product of these efforts but are not the primary goal (p. 83). Meyer and Behar-Horenstein (2015) stated, "RTI is based on the main premise that all educators can and will collaborate to ensure that students' educational needs are met through prevention and early intervention" (p. 383).

Early intervention is a concept different from the prior method of identifying students with academic deficiencies which, according to Turse and Albrecht (2015), was a failed approach. The RTI model is designed to find disabilities or gaps in concepts students should have previously acquired (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Turse and Albrecht (2015) continued by declaring allowing students to fail is a flawed strategy because students who struggle need help earlier in the educational process (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Artiles (2015) continued to condemn the notion of waiting for student failure by promoting the thought prolonged student struggles create a situation where students are doomed to long-term failure.

Perpetuating struggling students by following the wait-to-fail strategy can result in significant numbers of academically deficient students who tend to exhibit poor behavior as well (Walker et al., 2015). The use of RtI and PBS as an intertwined approach to creating student success may produce positive outcomes (Walker et al., 2015). Teachers may use the RtI collaboration process to evaluate and help with behavioral deficiencies to provide for the proper nurturing of the entire student (Walker et. al., 2015). The creation of better behavior and student achievement can have positive results on the overall school culture (Artiles, 2015).

With all the promise RtI provides, the initiative is still a work in progress and has no universal, standard model (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). The program requires teachers to change their approach to intervention for all students and to collaborate with other faculty members (Meyer & Behar-Horenstein, 2015). Collaboration among fellow educators is much different from the past where teachers worked alone devising student intervention strategies (Meyer & Behar-Horenstein, 2015). The collaborative approach calls on all members of a school's faculty (classroom teachers, administrators, counselors, and special educators) to meet and work with each other to develop a plan for success for each student (Turse & Albrecht, 2015).

Gifted and talented. The comprehensive implementation of RtI throughout the nation after the passage of IDEA in 2006 has allowed not only identification of students who struggle academically but also those who are gifted (Johnson et al., 2015). Gifted students are not dissimilar in their needs to students with disabilities; they need interventions and variations in the content and the way it is delivered (Johnson et al., 2015). Students may have a deficiency in one particular area, but could also be

considered gifted in reading or written expression (Johnson et al., 2015). Other students may exhibit gifted characteristics in multiple areas; once those areas are identified, an educational plan can be developed for individual success (Johnson et al., 2015).

Data collected from the RtI cycle can be used to identify students who qualify for gifted status and to provide them with specialized instruction they require to reach maximum potential (Ciullo et al., 2016). Ciullo et al. (2016) stated, "Observational studies contribute to the information regarding the quality and content of instructional delivery" (p. 44). The identification of gifted students can put them in contact with skilled educators who can properly intervene to ensure the students' success (Johnson et al., 2015). That proper intervention should include specific proven instructional strategies, similar to the intensive targeted interventions designed for students with disabilities (Johnson et al., 2015).

Struggling students. Kuo (2015) wrote, "RtI requires using scientific methods and evidence-based practices to assist struggling students in learning" (p. 647). Cognitive intervention strategies have been a recent trend to improve achievement for students with diagnosed disabilities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Cotton, Baker, & Wilson, 2015). Cotton et al. (2015) cited the work of DeBoo, Prins, and Halpern et al. and described the benefits of cognitive intervention include a longer-term positive impact and increased acceptability among parents rather than medication solutions to problems associated with ADHD. The RtI system has allowed educators to identify developmental disabilities among students in a much timelier fashion through frequent monitoring of student progress (Turse & Albrecht, 2015).

According to Kuo (2015), “The RtI model requires the using of scientific methods and evidence-based practices to assist struggling students with learning” (p. 647).

Kuo (2015) described the three levels of the RtI to ensure struggling students’ success. The three-tier model RtI is divided as follows: Tier 1 students receive modification to instruction and assessment from the regular education teacher; Tier 2 is where the struggling student receives intervention in a small-group format from the regular education teacher and at times instruction from a special education teacher or other educational specialist in a small-group format outside of the regular classroom; and Tier 3 is the level where those students who still struggle with the previously described intervention tiers are placed. In Tier 3, intervention strategies are customized to the learners’ needs and are usually delivered in a one-on-one environment (Kuo, 2015).

This model affords educators a much more efficient system for identification of specific learning disabilities than the fail-first model schools have followed in the past (Turse & Albrecht, 2015). Once struggling learners are identified, educators can apply proven strategies to increase student performance in academic endeavors such as reading (Ciullo et al., 2016). Mathematics skills can also be improved through the use of best practices within the RtI model (Pedrotty Bryant, 2014).

Active supervision. Şen (2016) showed students’ task value, performance-approach goals, and time and study environment management significantly positively correlate with student achievement. The ability of students to self-regulate is necessary for them to plan and prioritize (Bandura as cited in Şen, 2016). Improved self-efficacy and regulation allow students to purposefully choose behaviors such attending class and arriving to class on time (Şen, 2016).

Prior studies have been conducted to find effective ways to reduce student tardiness. Tyre, Feuerborn, and Pierce (2011) found by implementing a school-wide plan to cut tardies, there was a 67% decrease in average daily tardy rates (see *Figure 7*). The Tyre et al. (2011) study revealed following the explicit teaching of expectations, "active supervision during transition times, and consistent implementation of a progressive series of consequences, rates of tardiness declined and remained at lower levels for 17 months (p. 136).

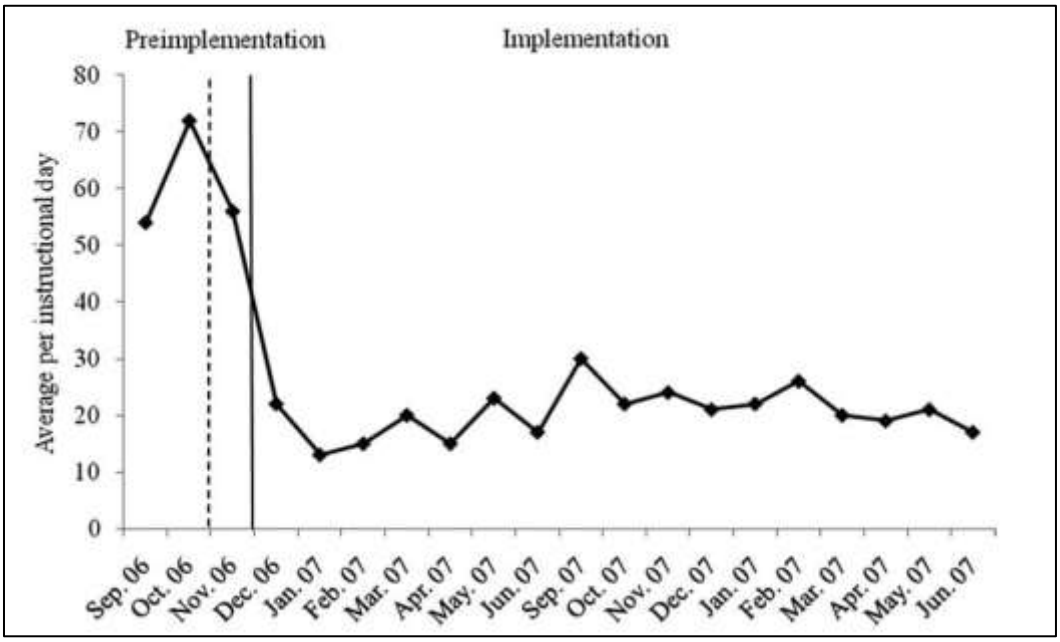

Figure 7. Average number of student tardies per instructional day, per month. Adapted from "Schoolwide Intervention to Reduce Chronic Tardiness at the Middle and High School Levels," by A. Tyre, L. Feuerborn, & J. Pierce, 2011, *Preventing School Failure, 55*(3), p. 136.

Tardy sweeps. Gage, Sugai, Lunde, and DeLoreto (2013) wrote of the need for students to be present in school to properly benefit from school improvement initiatives. Interventions to improve attendance and the amount of time students spend in the

classroom, such as Tardy Sweeps, can result in overall school improvement (Gage et al., 2013). Gage et al. (2013) continued with his theory that increasing instructional time limits a number of students who end up as juvenile delinquents. According to Bernhardt (2015), change must take place in the way a school conducts its daily business to create different results. Ehren et al. (2013) discussed the concept of every staff member "being on board" with new initiatives. System-wide change must involve the entire team with every educator participating in the process taking a leadership role in effecting a total system change (Ehren et al., 2013).

Aside from disciplinary infractions, absenteeism is a severe issue, especially in impoverished districts (Cooper, 2016). According to Cooper (2016), "The vast majority of the nation's school districts struggle with students who are chronically absent, but the problem is especially concentrated in school systems that serve large numbers of poor students, a new analysis of federal data has found" (p. 6). The prevalence of absenteeism is more common with students of poverty (Balfanz, 2016). The problem is such that, "6.5 million U.S. public school students are chronically absent" (Balfanz, 2016, p. 8). According to Chang (as cited in Cooper, 2016), "All the best instruction in schools does not make a difference if students are not there to benefit from it" (p. 6).

Dropout prevention. Students at high risk of school failure require change-focused intervention (Ticuşan, 2016). Moreover, "researchers have shown that truancy positively correlates to school dropout" (DeWitte & Csillag, 2014, p. 550). As with absenteeism, a large number of dropouts are students of poverty from both rural and urban locations (Balfanz, 2016). According to Lavrijsen and Nicaise (2015), "Previous

research has shown that in particular youngsters from disadvantaged families face relatively high risks of school dropout" (p. 295). Morrisey et al. (2017) found:

> When economic resources are scarce, children face challenges at multiple levels that may impact their likelihood of attending school on time or at all, which, in turn, may impact academic success. Children living in low-income families are more likely than their higher-income peers to experience physical, behavioral, and mental health problems; poorer nutrition; and environmental hazards, which can lead to more missed days of school or tardiness. (p. 742)

Similarly, students in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to experience mistreatment (Morrissey et al., 2017).

An astounding example came from Philadelphia, where as many as "one-half of each ninth-grade student cohort fails to complete high school within six years" (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014, p. 110). A variety of tactics has been studied to aid in dropout prevention. Irby of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Mawhinney of the College of New Jersey-Ewing (2014) researched formerly incarcerated adult non-completers to gain insight into the perspectives of at-risk youth. Irby and Mawhinney (2014) employed strategies for addressing the problem which included a "community mobilization approach, a family wraparound approach, a cultural and psychological awareness education approach, and an intensive recruitment approach to offering support to at-risk students" (p. 110). The researchers found students had a general lack of knowledge about what types of services and efforts existed locally to diminish the potential of dropping out (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014).

Family income has a substantial connection to student dropout rate (Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2017). “The achievement gap between children living in low-income families and those in more well-off families begins before kindergarten and widens with age (Morrisey et al., 2017, p. 741). Students who miss class fail to benefit from instruction and social interaction which are indicators for later academic success (Morrisey et al., 2017).

Early school dropout dramatically increases the risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion (Lavrijsen & Nicaise, 2015). The emphasis of dropout research is to identify solutions which may be replicated (Balfanz, 2016). In the literature, there are two main perspectives on why students drop out. The educational life course perspective views school dropout “not as a single event, but rather as the result of a long history of poor academic achievement and disengagement from school” (Lavrijsen & Nicaise, 2015, p. 296). The other perspective is school engagement (Lavrijsen & Nicaise, 2015). According to Lavrijsen and Nicaise (2015), “Students who are more engaged in school activities have been shown to face significantly lower risks of dropout” (p. 296).

To believe education is the great equalizer, school stakeholders must continue to identify reform efforts to narrow the gap which poverty sets in place. These stakeholders include not only school personnel but family and community as well. Educators know “children from low-income families may be likely to miss school or be late more often than higher income children, the consistency of children’s school attendance may account for part of the achievement gap between poor and nonpoor students” (Morrissey et al., 2017, p. 742). This detriment for children from low-income families results in

absenteeism or tardiness because families have diminished time or resources necessary to help children compensate for missed schoolwork, “compared with peers from more advantaged backgrounds” (Morrissey et al., 2017, p. 743).

Culture and Climate

Marsh et al. (2014) declared, “School climate refers to the atmosphere or ethos of a school, and the nature and quality of the interpersonal relationships and communication patterns within the school” (p. 28). School climate is essential to students’ success emotionally, socially, and academically; this is true in the same areas for the staff members of the school (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Johnson, 2014). Bryan et al. (2012) reported, “School bonding is one of the developmental assets that increase student’s ability to overcome life’s challenges and meet academic success” (p. 467). Marsh et al. (2014) wrote of teacher-student relationships being the greatest predictor of a school’s overall climate.

Ehren et al. (2013) noted the importance of staff working together rather than operating as independent educators. Todd (2014) pointed to the importance of conversations between teachers and administrators:

> We know that one of the simplest and most effective ways to build a positive school culture and increase student achievement is to engage teachers and administrators in ongoing conversations about the improvement of professional practices and instructional strategies. (p. 76)

Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013) described how interventions might facilitate collaboration and student help. According to Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013):

> One advantage of RtI that is often noted is the fact that, if done well, it leads educators away from operating within the "silos" of general education, special education, and compensatory education towards a more integrated system of meeting all student's needs. (p. 453)

To ensure school improvement, factors such as positive school culture and climate must be in place (Leece, 2012). The level of relationships among the educators of a school is considered a valuable factor in the school's overall quality (Barth, 1990). If teachers feel the school is a good place to work, then it will be a good place for the students it serves (Barth, 1990).

Ramos and Barnett (2013) wrote of one school that utilized William Daggett's three R's: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships. The philosophy of both Daggett and others aligns with the early teachings of Confucius, who believed moral excellence was achieved through the practice of behavioral dialogues and mutual exchanges of respect among individuals (Black, 2014). Ramos and Barnett (2013) noted, "Although areas for improvement were identified in each of the Three Rs, it was felt by all stakeholders of the school community that the third R–relationships–was going to serve as the primary driving force to affect schoolwide improvement" (p. 34). Mendenhall et al. (2013) warned, "Traditional school-based solutions that focus solely on academic instruction, tutoring, and remediation support are no longer enough to meet these growing nonacademic challenges faced by students today" (p. 225). Bradshaw et al. (2014) found the ability of positive school climate and its ability to keep students on the path to success, "There is a growing body of research documenting an association among a

positive school climate and prosocial motivation, academic motivation, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and altruistic behavior" (p. 593).

According to Bryan et al. (2012), student relationships with the school may be positively affected by a school's extracurricular opportunities and academic enrichment programs. Foran (2015) also pointed out, "The key to success in any program has the right staff. No matter how much research I did to create the best possible program, none of that was as important as finding teachers committed to our mission" (p. 6). This research would seem to provide a scaffold for student support to avoid what Steinberg (2015) reported from 1996, "One-third of all U.S. high schools report that they have little interest in school and get throughout the day by fooling around with their friends" (p. 30). In a 2013 article by Kiriakidis and Demarques, the problem with bullying in schools and suggestions for remediation were addressed. Students need a caring environment and connections to adults and peers (Jong et al., 2014).

Fullan (2011b) suggested four criteria for successful implementation of school reforms based on school climate and culture:

1. Foster intrinsic motivation of teachers and students.
2. Engage educators and students in the continuous improvement of instruction and learning.
3. Inspire collective or teamwork.
4. Affect all teachers and students. (p. 3)

Fullan's (2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) beliefs contain similarities to Hattie et al.'s (2016) work with educational feedback. Hattie (2011) asked three questions concerning where

students are in the educational process, how students are doing at a particular time, and where educators need to take the students next.

The change in culture and climate of a school seeking improvement has several descriptors in Karp's (2013) work, *The Turnaround Test*. Karp (2013) listed student characteristics schools strive to instill through culture and climate: "persistence, self-confidence, and drive to achieve" (p. 55). Marsh et al. (2014) referred to Brookmeyer et al., "Students attending schools with a more positive climate and those feeling connected to their schools engage in less violent behaviors" (p. 28). Culture and climate lead to improved student behavior (Zolkower & Munk, 2015).

Zolkower and Munk (2015), in studying an improving school, cited the behavioral characteristics of students and staff who displayed a positive school culture and climate. The school expected its students and staff to treat each other with respect, which in turn led to greater instructional time, improved appearance of the facility, and stronger emotional bonds between staff and students (Zolkower & Munk, 2015).

According to Marsh et al. (2014), "Research has found that students reporting high levels of school engagement, also reported fewer health compromising behaviors such as physical fighting, substance abuse, suicidal ideation and risky sexual behaviors and more health promoting behaviors including being physically active, healthy eating and engaging in safer sex" (p. 28). Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. (2015) noted, "Although engagement and motivation are theoretically distinct, they are often examined together and inherently linked" (p. 111).

Fullan (2011a) stated districts must find a systematic way to differentiate between accountability versus capacity; individual quality versus group quality; technology versus

instruction; and fragmented versus systemic if real reform efforts are to succeed within a district. Hopson, Schiller, and Lawson (2014) stated, "When students have positive relationships with teachers and school staff, they tend to feel connected to the school, avoid unsafe and disruptive behavior, and perform well academically" (p. 199). Sparks (2013) expressed schools must enlist the local community to ensure children are receiving an education where all their needs are met including not just instruction but mentoring, ancillary needs, and security. Bryan et al. (2012) noted, "The developmental and resiliency frameworks suggest that the factors that influence students' academic performance emergence from a myriad of sources and interactions among multiple contexts (i.e. the family, school, and community)" (p. 475).

Sparks (2013) discussed the benefits of an initiative employed in Syracuse, New York, which sought to create a community-wide effort to better prepare students for post-high school life. Sparks (2013) noted one of the best outcomes of the program was that the city as a whole came together in all areas of civic structure, business, government, schools, and citizenry while becoming more focused on the success of children, which in turn to led to a more viable and fruitful community. Foran (2015) cited community involvement as key to high school student success. Student involvement with local businesses, colleges, and other organizations is vital to improving the chance of accomplishment upon leaving high school (Foran, 2015).

The last 20 years of research have caused school leaders to develop an appreciation for positive school climate and culture due to effects on student and staff motivation, self-esteem, and behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2014). Shaunessy-Dedrick et al. (2015) found, "Student engagement reflects student's behavioral, emotional, and

cognitive involvement in their coursework, which ultimately influences learning as reflected in course grades and other indicators of academic achievement" (p. 111). According to Marsh et al. (2014), "While a school has limited ability to change the home life and personal characteristics of individual students, the school environment is within the school's ability to change" (p. 35).

Summary

For schools to implement successful improvement initiatives, many factors must be considered (Ramos & Barnett, 2013). Factors such as data analysis, collaboration, interventions, and culture and climate must constantly be reviewed to ensure all stakeholders, parents, students, and staff are working in the same direction toward school improvement (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013). Thessin (2015) added, "This process requires that educators move beyond analyzing student data to collecting and employing both teacher and student evidence to inform actions" (pp. 69-70). Figures alone cannot be the sole measure with which schools chart their improvement initiatives; they must also work with teachers and students to identify how to best implement school improvement (Thessin, 2015).

A review of the literature in Chapter Two revealed suggestions for approaching systems change. Literature supports the idea for schools to continue surveying academic policies for effectiveness. In Chapter Three, the methodology for acquiring data is described to address the research questions for this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of intervention programs implemented at one Midwestern high school. The programs selected by the researcher included the Tardy Sweep program implemented at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year; the Response to Intervention initiative which began in all grade levels at the start of the 2012-2013 school year; and the late work policy which was instituted at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Did these programs, which were modeled after those at other successful high schools, have a positive or negative impact on the measurable data for the school?

The concept of school improvement informed the design of this study and had been explored by several educational researchers and leaders who have implemented their versions with success. These concepts were touted by Rick DuFour (2015), Robert Marzano (2006), and Ken O'Connor (2009), as well as other lesser-known educational professionals. The first area investigated by the primary researcher was the Tardy Sweep program.

The Tardy Sweep program was designed to increase student time in the classroom as opposed to time in the hallway. The program was also implemented to reduce discipline referrals and to create a culture that being to class on time is important. The Tardy Sweep utilizes teachers at the beginning of their prep hours to patrol zones of the school. The teachers who have a teaching assignment shut and lock their doors when the tardy bell rings. Students who are in the hallway following the tardy bell are "swept" into the office by the teacher assigned to hallways for that class period. Once in the office, the student is granted an admit slip which allows him or her to be admitted to

class. The tardy is recorded in the office, which takes the responsibility off teachers for keeping track of tardies.

The Response to Intervention (RtI) program was created to provide academic support to students who are struggling with grades, discipline, and attendance. The RtI program is afforded time during the school day; the last 40 minutes of the school day are allotted for students who are struggling in any of the three areas in an assigned tutoring area. If the assignment to RtI is for grade issues, students are assigned to a teacher of the relevant subject area. Student standing is reevaluated every three weeks, and assignments are redone. Students who are not struggling are free to attend athletic practices or may remain in designated areas known are privilege time areas.

The late work policy implemented at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year was developed after researching the work of Marzano (2006) and O'Connor (2009). The late work policy was coordinated with the RtI program. Teachers were not allowed to issue a zero for missing or incomplete assignments for a period that coincided with the end of the next RtI cycle. The late work policy was designed to make RtI more valuable to students. In some cases, before this policy, students were asked to complete homework, but they would not get credit while assigned to a RtI tutoring area. After implementation of the policy, assignments not turned in on time were accepted for a minimum score of 50% of the original grade. The exact percentage was left to the discretion of the teacher. Students have through the next RtI cycle to turn in late work. Once the semester has ended, no late work is accepted (Schoolwires, 2016, p. 23).

Did these three programs work? Even though they were grounded in educational research and were well-intentioned, did they deliver results? The investigator analyzed

data to determine whether the programs produced positive results for the Midwestern high school.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The primary investigator wished to investigate the effectiveness of three programs implemented during his tenure as principal of a Midwestern high school. Those programs included Response to Intervention, Tardy Sweeps, and a new late work policy. It was the intent of the researcher to expand upon prior change efforts and to use data from those changes to inform continued improvement in practice. Data from this study provided contextual evidence for students, parents, staff, administration, community, and other stakeholders and helped outline clear, simple, and deliberate strategies for future change.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the available literature by ascertaining the benefits of systems change initiatives at the high school level and by gauging their effectiveness as correlated to students' standardized test scores, attendance rates, and discipline referrals. The primary investigator hoped to generate information to guide administrators in implementing high school improvement efforts to improve the educational experience for high school students.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there a reduction in the number of students who were tardy to class at one Midwestern high school during the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

2. Is there a reduction in the number of students who received discipline referrals at one Midwestern high school during the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

3. Is there a reduction in the failure rate of students after the implementation of a RtI program at one Midwestern high school during the 2012-2013 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012?

4. Is there a reduction in the failure rate for students after the implementation of a late work policy at one Midwestern high school during the 2014-2015 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014?

5. Is there an improvement in attendance rates at one Midwestern high school after the implementation of a new attendance policy for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years when compared to data before implementation during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years?

Research Design

The research for this study involved quantitative methods. In quantitative studies, the investigator collects and calculates data and reports the information in the form of scores (Fraenkel et al., 2015). This study involved descriptive methods and procedures used to examine student data before and after the implementation of high school improvement programs.

The research drew from variables on each subject of the census population. A major reason this design was chosen for this study was to facilitate an explanation for

whether particular variables (policies) are related to motivation for attendance and learning.

Ethical Considerations

All data reviewed in this study were archival, and no surveys were utilized; therefore, human coercion was not a concern. A third party extracted all archival data, which required no human participants. All identifiable characters from the data were removed to ensure the secondary archival data were anonymous.

The data were collected and stored in a secure location under lock and key and will be kept for three years after completion of the study. The data will also be stored digitally and protected by the primary investigator's username and password.

Additional safeguards were used to ensure anonymity:

1. When discussing identifiable statistics, such as student enrollment, free/reduced price meals percentages, or the percentage of distinct subgroups of individuals, approximations or slight modifications were used.

2. Data codes or pseudonyms were assigned to lessen the possibility of identifying participants.

3. To reduce the possibility of a conflict of interest between the researcher (who may be a supervisor/administrator) and participants (subordinates/faculty), specific procedures were set in place, such as a third-party who distributed/collected data and expunged identifying data.

Population and Sample

A population may be studied using one of two approaches: taking a census or selecting a sample (Fraenkel et al., 2015). For this study, the primary investigator used a census to examine all attendance rates, discipline referrals, failure rates, and the number of students tardy before and after systems change initiatives were implemented at one Midwestern high school. Fraenkel et al. (2015) described a census as a technique which "tries to look at the entire population" (p. 103). For this study, the complete enumeration of enrollees for the years studied was utilized.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation is the process of preparing to collect data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Instrumentation includes where, when, and who collects the data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). For this study, the primary investigator used archival data required for annual public school reporting to the MODESE Comprehensive Data System. According to Schultz et al. (2001), "Archival data are any data collected before the beginning of the research study" (p. 1). These data are readily available and served as quantifiable evidence for statistical analysis to derive whether changes exist before and after programs were implemented in one Midwestern high school.

Data Collection

Permission for extracting data was secured from the school district's central administration office. (see Appendix A) No data were collected until Lindenwood University approved the IRB (see Appendix B). A third-party examiner retrieved all data applicable to the survey questions from school years 2010-2016 including data for failure

rates, tardy referrals, discipline referrals, and attendance. Data accessed in no way contained any identifiable markers.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data. The researcher chose data with the intention of remaining relevant to the scope of the study. Descriptive statistics is the term given to the analysis of data that help describe, show, or summarize information in a meaningful way so patterns might emerge from the data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). An adequate sample size added validity to the study.

Summary

This chapter included the methods and procedures that were followed to provide information about the effectiveness of three improvement initiatives at a Midwest high school. The three initiatives, Tardy Sweeps, RtI, and a late work policy, were described, as were the intended outcomes of each. The problem and purpose of the study were discussed. The research questions were listed, as well as the design of the research study and use of quantitative methods.

The ethical considerations, which were minimal, were discussed in this chapter. Data security was outlined, as well as protection of identifiable information by the researcher and a third-party investigator. Finally, the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis of data were described. Data are discussed in Chapter Four and findings are revealed in Chapter Five, along with recommendations for further studies.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Educators are faced with a daunting task of continuous improvement; school funding, district resources, teacher morale, and community support for the local school district are all at risk at being lost if an educational improvement initiative fails (Ehren et al., 2013). It is important whatever new initiative a school adopts is based on research and is afforded a chance for success and proper support by the administration (Fullan, 2010a). The purpose of the study was to provide school districts with additional research which may guide school leader methodology toward school improvement. According to Bernhardt (2013):

> When schools use a framework for continuous school improvement along with comprehensive data analysis, they understand how they are getting their results—what is working, and what is not working. They know the structures to have in place for continuous school improvement. (p. 3)

Findings from this study will be shared with Missouri high school administrators to provide evidence for whole-system improvement.

Data for this study were collected from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website under the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP 5) Measurement (MODESE, 2014). These data are publicly available and allow school districts to make comparisons to other districts within the state. District and the school-level information are gathered and secured on this site.

Statistics on attendance, discipline, and performance on state assessments can be found online in the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS) Portal. Other data

were collected through one Midwestern high school's student information system which houses information on attendance, discipline referrals, and other required measurable statistics.

Data analyzed in this study included the following indicators: student tardy rates, yearly discipline referral rates, student failure rates, and student attendance rates. These data were selected based on the emphasis put on the statistical requirements of the MSIP 5 data measurement which focuses on student achievement, failure rate, attendance, and discipline rates. These allow for a measurable analysis of school and student performance over a period of several years beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

According to Bernhardt (2013), "Continuous school improvement uses evaluation to review where the school is on multiple sources of data" (p. 158). The findings from the study will help delineate how one Midwestern high school got to where it is now, as well as to provide data to inform "which programs and processes are working and not working, and how to ensure the attainment of the school goals using the most effective processes and programs" (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 158).

Analysis of Research

The researcher utilized archival MCSD data and district student information system data to analyze the research questions which follow.

Research question one. Is there a reduction in the number of students who are tardy to class at one Midwestern high school in the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

Tardy Sweep data were collected from the school district's files over a period of five years beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the year prior to implementation of

Tardy Sweeps. The Tardy Sweep data were organized by years from 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Documentation of Tardies

School Year	Number of Discipline Referrals for Tardies
2011-2012	2805
2012-2013	2450
2013-2014**	885
2014-2015	893
2015-2016	403

Note. Data from this table include tardies from before and after the implementation of a Tardy Sweep Policy at one Midwestern high school. **For the school year 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school lost 27 days of instruction due to inclement weather.

As seen in the data, the number of discipline referrals due to tardies documented from the 2012-2013 group was lower than the number of discipline referrals due to tardies recorded from the 2011-2012 group. Tardies declined by 2402 over a four-year period after implementation of the new Tardy Sweep Program.

Research question two. Is there a reduction in the number of students who received discipline referrals at one Midwestern high school in the 2011-2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in the school year 2012-2013?

The data analyzed for this question included the number of discipline referrals students received before and after a Tardy Sweep Policy. Discipline referrals are tracked every year at one Midwestern high school on the student information system and may be seen in Table 4. The Response to Intervention (RtI) program was implemented during the 2012-2013 school year with an important facet being the discipline component. Students with a discipline referral requiring a consequence of in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension were put in tutoring/study hall for the next three-week progress report period. Discipline referral data were collected from the school district's student information system for the 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years.

Table 4

Documentation of Discipline Referrals

School Year	Number of Referrals
2011-2012	2805
2012-2013	2450
2013-2014**	1488
2014-2015	1771
2015-2016	1684

Note. Data from this table include data from before and after the implementation of a Tardy Sweep Policy at one Midwestern high school. **For the school year 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school lost 27 days of instruction due to inclement weather.

One Midwestern high school experienced a decline in discipline referrals from the 2011-2012 through the 2015-2016 school year.

Research question three. Is there a reduction in the failure rate of students after the implementation of a RtI program at one Midwestern high school during the 2012-2013 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012?

The data analyzed for this question included the failure rates for all students at one Midwestern high school. Before the 2012-2013 school year, there was no RtI program at one Midwestern high school. The RtI program assigned students who were in academic difficulty to a tutoring assignment with a teacher in the content area where the

students were having trouble. Students were identified if their grades in any class included a "D" or "F" for any three-week progress report period.

Table 5

Documentation of Failure Rates After the Implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI)

School Year	Number of Student Failures
2010-2011*	441
2011-2012*	309
2012-2013	233
2013-2014**	184
2014-2015	119
2015- 2016	100

Note. Data from this table include failure data from before and after the implementation of a Response to Intervention (RtI) Program at one Midwestern high school. *School before the RtI program implementation. **For the school year 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school lost 27 days of instruction due to inclement weather.

Research question four. Is there a reduction in the failure rate for students after the implementation of a late work policy at one Midwestern high school during the 2014-2015 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014?

One Midwestern high school implemented a late work policy for the 2014-2015 school year. The policy limited how much a teacher could discount a student's assignment if it were not turned in on time.

Table 6

Documentation of Cumulative Number of F's received after Implementation of New Late Work Policy

School Year	Total Number of Student F's
2010-2011	441
2011-2012	309
2012-2013	233
2013-2014**	184
2014-2015***	119
2015-2016	100

Note. Data from this table include failure data from before and after the implementation of a Late Work Policy at one Midwestern high school. **For the school year 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school lost 27 days of instruction due to inclement weather. *** First year of the Late Work Policy.

The RtI program began to show effects, and the trend over the years shows positive results. The number of F's by all students cumulatively for the fall or spring semester decreased by 341. This number reflects that one student may have received up to 7 F's in one school year and does not represent the number of students receiving a failing grade.

Research question five. Is there an improvement in the attendance rate at one Midwestern high school after the implementation of a new attendance policy for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years when compared to data before implementation during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years?

Attendance data were analyzed to determine the percentage of students' average daily attendance. Data were analyzed by averaging how many students under the current school enrollment were present over the entirety of a school year. The RtI program implemented at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year possessed an attendance component (see Table 7). Students who were suffering from poor attendance were assigned to a RtI tutoring area to work on any missing work from chronic absenteeism.

Table 7

Documentation of Attendance Rates After Implementation of a New Attendance Policy

School Year	Attendance Rate
2011-2012	93.33
2012-2013	93.82
2013-2014**	94.10
2014-2015	94.12
2015-2016	94.96

Note. Data from this table includes attendance data from before and after the implementation of a New Attendance Policy at one Midwestern high school. **For the school year 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school missed 27 days of instruction for inclement weather.

During the 2013-2014 school year, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted a measure known as the 90 of 90 measurement, which meant 90% of all students enrolled during the school year must be present 90% of the time. One Midwestern high school displayed progress in meeting the requirements of this new standard. The data are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Documentation of Attendance Rates Reported to the MODESE in Compliance with MSIP 5 (90% of the Students Present 90% of the Time)

School Year	Attendance Rate
2013-2014**	82.3
2014-2015	83.6
2015-2016	86.0

Note. Data from this table include attendance data after the implementation of a new state-mandated 90/90 attendance policy at one Midwestern high school. **For the schoolyear 2013-2014, one Midwestern high school missed 27 days of instruction for inclement weather.

Summary

Analyses of data were presented in Chapter Four. Tables representing the descriptive statistics were displayed. The primary investigator sought to research the effectiveness of several school improvement initiatives at one Midwestern high school over a four-year period. These improvement initiatives were a change in attendance policy, tardy sweeps, RtI, and a late work policy.

The attempt to discover whether these efforts were effective revealed the attendance rate improved. After implementation of the tardy sweeps policy, the incidence of referrals for tardies dropped, thereby increasing student seat time in each class. The RtI program contributed to lessening the number of discipline referrals, failure rate, and contributed to an increased attendance rate. The late work policy showed a positive impact by reducing the failure rate.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the complete study. The research questions are discussed, along with the overview of the analysis of data. Conclusions are made based on the outcomes of the study and the data analysis. Deficiencies in the research are identified and addressed. Recommendations for future studies and additional research are discussed. Chapter Five also includes implications for school improvement, addressing the areas of this study concerning the transition process and middle school readiness.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

The issues of attendance, discipline and student failure are always at the forefront for every school district. Aspiring school leaders must put into place programs and policies which can successfully address these issues if they wish for schools to be places of success for students. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the available literature by determining the benefits of systems change initiatives at the high school level and gauging their effectiveness as correlated to failure rates, tardies, attendance rates, and discipline referrals. The information generated may direct administrators in implementing high school improvement efforts which can improve the educational experience for high school students.

The predictor variables for this study were tardy sweeps, RtI, and a late work policy. The criterion variables were attendance rate, tardies, discipline referrals, and failure rate.

Five research questions served as the foundation for this study:

1. Is there a reduction in the number of students who are tardy to class at one Midwestern High School in the 2011- 2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in school year 2012-2013?

2. Is there a reduction in the number of students who received discipline referrals at one Midwestern High School in the 2011- 2012 school year as compared to data after implementation of the Tardy Sweep policy in school year 2012-2013?

3. Is there a reduction in the failure rate of students after the implementation of a RtI program implemented at one Midwestern High School during the 2012-13 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-11 and 2011-12?

4. Is there a reduction in the failure rate for students after the implementation of a late work policy at one Midwestern High School during the 2014-15 school year when compared to the failure rate data from school years 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14?

5. Is there an improvement in the attendance rate at one Midwestern High School after the implementation of a new attendance policy for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-15, and 2015-2016 school years when compared to data before implementation during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years?

The primary investigator reviewed relevant literature aligned to each of the five research questions: 1) tardies, 2) discipline referrals, 3) RtI, 4) academic failure, and 5) attendance.

Findings

Data are presented over a period of three to five years and reveal the steady increase in performance since the implementation of the programs and policies studied.

Tardies. There was a dramatic decrease in tardies with 1,516 in 2011-2012 and only 842 during the entire 2015-2016 school year. According to a national survey, approximately 50% of problem behaviors resulting in discipline referrals occur in non-classroom settings (e.g., hallway, cafeteria) (Johnson-Gros, Lyons, & Griffin, 2008). Tyre et al. (2011) found, “When many students are tardy at the secondary level, teachers must continually restart instruction or delay beginning instructional periods throughout the school day” (p. 132). The Tardy Sweep intervention seems to be one way in which administrators may curb unattended student misbehavior while increasing student time-on-task for classroom learning.

When students are chronically late, it suggests expectations related to punctuality are unclear, and consequences for tardiness are not useful (Tyre et al., 2011). One Midwestern high school modified a faulty system of collecting tardies which depended on teachers tabulating and housing tardy data independently. The main deficit in this arrangement was teachers had to sacrifice instructional time to classify tardies and to make referrals to the office. Because of this methodology, teachers often failed to refer students, which resulted in students being routinely late to class with no consequences for their actions. The failure to refer students affected the building's overall culture, many students, found it unimportant to be at class on time, and countless minutes of instructional time were lost.

Discipline referrals. As mentioned in Chapter Four, an important side of the RtI program was the discipline component. There were 2,805 discipline referrals in 2011-2012 and only 1,684 for the 2015-2016 school year. This is an average decline of 1,000 referrals for tardies based upon the data collected by the primary investigator. A combination of fewer tardies and a structured RtI program held students accountable for time missed from class. Being in class lessened the likelihood of unattended students and misbehavior.

A positive classroom climate is essential for students' learning achievement and motivation (Bradshaw et al., 2014). Taking responsibility for breaking the rules is a central theme in student development (Karp & Sacks, 2014). According to Karp and Sacks (2014), "Many student conduct violations have their roots in students' ability to listen, cooperate, and communicate (p. 159). In a student conduct context, classroom competence would include the capacity to hear others and to express remorse for

misbehavior (Karp & Sacks, 2014). Research has shown students do appreciate clarity, structure, and rules if these are imposed in a reasonable manner (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein as cited in Jong et al., 2014).

RtI. The failure rate declined from 864 in 2010-2011 to 100 during the 2015-2016 school year. This decrease means 764 fewer students received failing grades in the five years of data used for the study.

Response to Intervention is a program to serve students who do not always qualify for special education services—to keep kids from "falling through the cracks" (Engels, 2015). The program also seeks to create opportunities for an intervention for students before the student failing a course (Ehren et al., 2013). At one Midwestern high school, the RtI program has three measurable areas that drive the placement of students within the program: academics, attendance, and discipline. The academic criteria for placement are as follows:

Students with a "D" or "F" will be identified as requiring level one, two or three tutoring by a team consisting of teachers, counselors, and administrators. Levels one and two students will be in a study hall corresponding to the class(es) in which there is a "D" or "F." Level three students with consistent "D" or "F" grades in math and/or English will be placed in small group intensive tutoring in those subjects (One Midwestern High School Handbook 2016-17, 2016, p. 30). Students then are receiving remediation over concepts prior to failing courses for the semester.

The discipline component of RtI seeks to reward students who make a choice to follow the rules of the school by allowing those students to participate in privilege time activities where they can choose from several options of how to spend their time.

Determination of how students are assigned to RtI for discipline is as follows, "Students who have received a discipline referral requiring ISS or OSS placement or attendance issues (ex. truancy, excessive absences) will be assigned to a study hall" (One Midwestern High School Handbook 2016-17, 2016, p. 30). This follows the educational philosophy of Positive Behavior Support (PBS), that students will make better choices regarding their behavior if they are rewarded for those positive choices. Students who have received a discipline referral requiring ISS or OSS placement or who have attendance issues (ex. truancy, excessive absences) are assigned to a study hall.

Student failure. The late work policy which was implemented during the 2014-2015 school year showed an immediate positive influence on failing grades given to students. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, there were 395 F grades received in the fall and 469 F grades earned in the spring semester, for a total of 864 failing grades given during the 2010-2011 school year. During the 2011-2012 school year, there were 285 Fs received in the fall, and 381 Fs earned in the spring semester, for a total of 666 failing grades given during the 2011-2012 school year.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, a total of 156 Fs were given in the fall, and 203 Fs were given in the spring semester. The average for the 2013-2014 school year was 359 Fs. The failure rate continued to decline over the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. During the 2014-2015 school year, the failure rate for the fall semester was 106 Fs, and the spring was 90 Fs for a total of 196 failing grades. In the fall of 2015-2016, the failure rate was 48 Fs, with 52 Fs in the spring semester for a total of 100 failing grades. The failure rate for one Midwestern high school declined from 864 to 100 failing grades from the 2010-2011 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. During the

four years previous to the program being implemented, the average was 602.75 for the number of Fs given. The average number of Fs after the policy was implemented declined to 148 over a two-year period.

The consequences for student failure are many. Students who fail a class are faced with the reality of repeating the course, which can mean increased class sizes (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014). Students who must repeat a course, frequently have a poor attitude and feel they cannot be successful, which in turn can lower the classroom morale and create a poor learning environment for all students (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014). Students who fall behind in coursework have an increased chance of dropping out of high school (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014). This increase of dropping out can have a negative impact on the community which seeks to support the local school district while the district attempts to satisfy the needs of the community (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014).

Attendance. Once the RtI program was implemented with the attendance program component, the average daily attendance went from 93.33 for the 2011-2012 school year to 94.96 during the 2015-2016 school year (see Figure 8). During the 2012-2013 school year, the attendance rate was 93.82, in 2013-2014 it was 94.10, and during the 2014-2015 school year, it was calculated at 94.12.

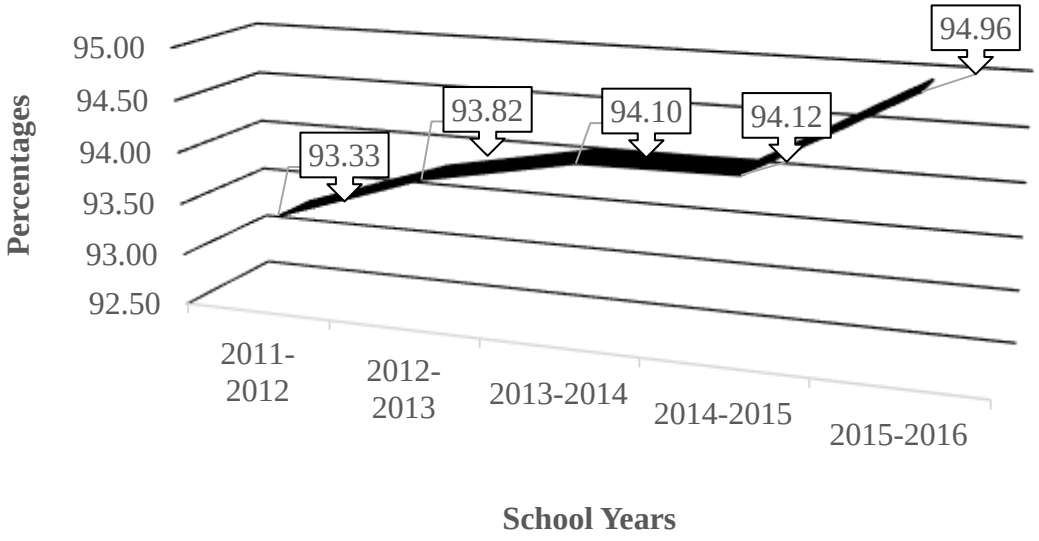

Figure 8. Attendance data for one Midwestern high school for school years 2011-2012 through 2015-2016.

The attendance program also showed positive results over a three-year period with the MODESE (2014) MSIP 5 data reported as 82.3% for the 2013-2014 school year and 83.6% for the 2014-2015 school year (see Figure 9). During the 2015-2016 school year, it was reported as 86.8%.

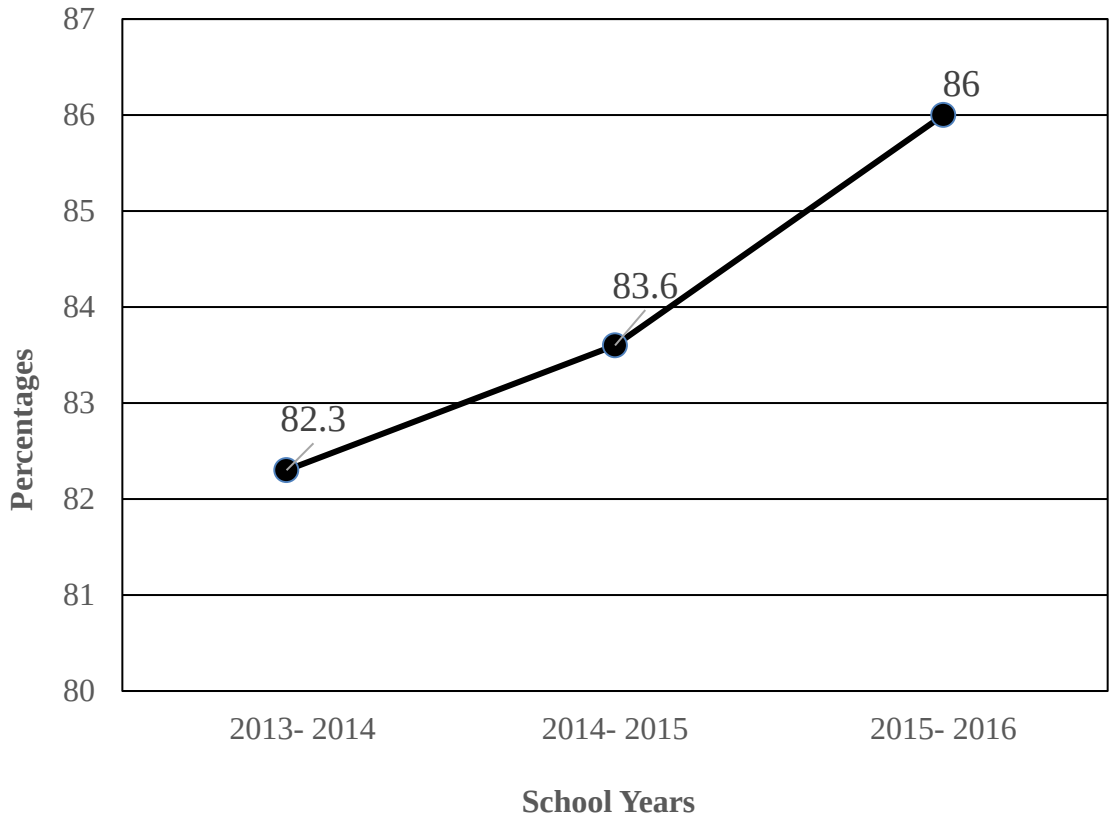

Figure 9. MODESE 90% attendance requirement for one Midwestern high school for school years 2013-2014 through 2015-2016.

Conclusions

These data, once analyzed by the researcher, help to affirm the initiatives begun during the 2012-2013 school year have managed to raise one Midwestern high school's performance. The results were immediate. The failure rate, the number of tardies, and number of discipline referrals at one Midwestern high school declined dramatically. Thus, instructional time was increased. Included in Figure 10 are the trend line data for the 2011-2012 through the 2015-2016 school year.

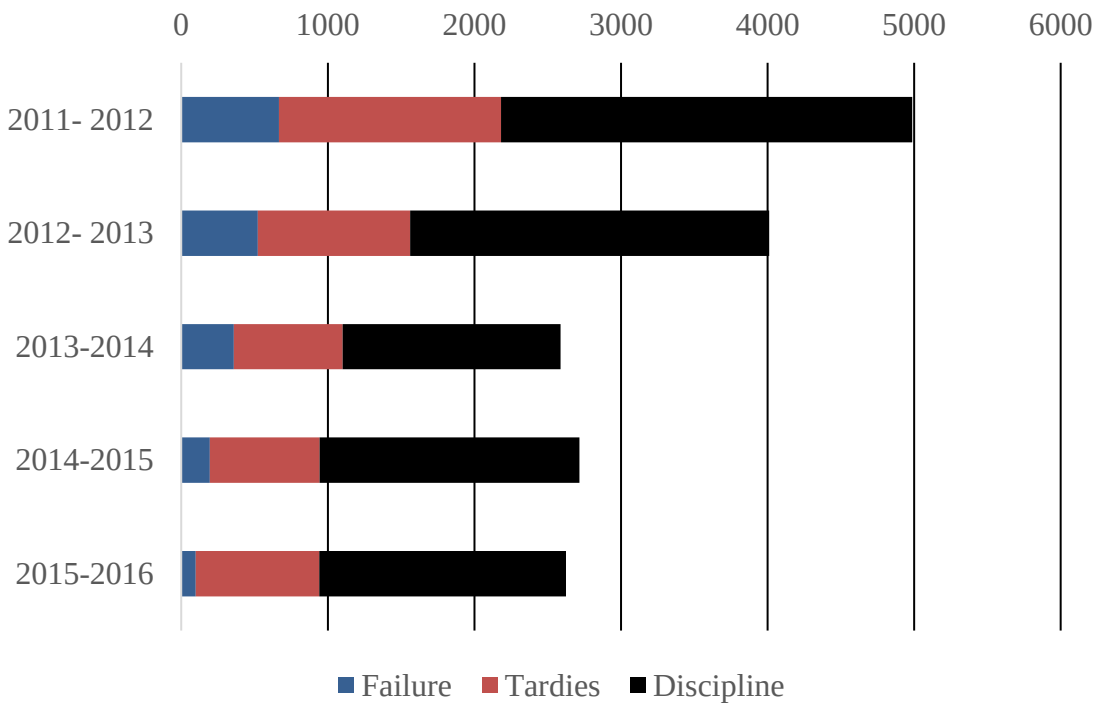

Figure 10. Trend line data revealed a decrease in a number of student failures, tardies, and discipline referrals for 2010-2016.

Implications for Practice

School leaders are cognizant of the effects associated with the relationship between truancy and dropout (DeWitte & Csillag, 2014). DeWitte and Csillag (2014) observed truancy and tardies positively correlate to early dropout rates. Moreover, their "results indicate the improved truancy reporting significantly reduces school dropout by five percentage points" (DeWitte & Csillag, 2014, p. 549). The following are recommendations for high schools examining improvement initiatives which may create an immediate impact on school culture and student learning based on the findings of this study:

1. High schools should implement a tardy sweep program to increase instructional time and eliminate discipline problems.
2. High schools should implement a Response to Intervention program at all grade levels with three components: academics, behavior, and attendance.
3. High schools should implement a late work policy to encourage students to complete work.
4. Schools should analyze attendance rate, failure rate, discipline referrals, and tardy rate to determine adjustments that should be made to intervention programs.
5. High schools should gather perceptual data using surveys, interviews, and focus groups to establish the effectiveness of the initiatives.

The Midwestern high school in this study had a significant poverty rate and limited diversity. Recommended research would be to expand the described efforts in other high schools with diverse populations and different socio-economic characteristics. As with this study, a longitudinal cohort examination of other high schools is suggested. In contrast, results could be compared longitudinally to show how each initiative affects different groups of students.

Further study of specific grade levels may show whether there is a particular age for students at which programs yield the greatest improvements. Comparison of the effectiveness of the programs on males and female students could be used to develop different aspects for each subgroup. Another variation may be to compare the results of disaggregated data to determine if the results can be replicated cross-culturally.

Results could then be used to inform programs for future success. The use of perceptual data could offer a triangulation opportunity among the views of teachers,

students, parents, and patrons concerning the effectiveness of initiatives on school culture and achievement. Data in a mixed-methods study may allow the researcher to determine if correlations or differences exist among subgroups.

The following questions may serve as a springboard for research: 1) Were tardy sweeps more effective with students from low or high socioeconomic backgrounds? 2) Which subgroup showed the most improvement from the implementation of the RtI program? 3) Did the ninth-grade level show the most impact when examining the attendance program?

The initiatives for this study lend themselves to an abundant catalyst for future research. More importantly, these efforts, while showing promise, could be improved by modifying them to develop a prescription for success for each subgroup. Goodwin (2015) wrote of schools having the willingness to adapt when faced with minor pauses to progress. The key for all schools is to analyze data to drive the improvement process (Hattie, 2011).

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study, when combined with existing literature, are encouraging and warrant further research efforts. The use of perceptual data addendum could strengthen results through triangulation of the data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). As described by Fraenkel et al. (2015), "The triangulation design uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to study the same phenomenon to determine if the two converge upon a single understanding of the research problem investigated" (p. 559). Bernhardt (2013) wrote, "Perceptions data are important to continuous school improvement because they can tell us what students, staff, and parents are thinking about the learning

organization, and answer the continuous school improvement question, how we do business" (p. 42).

Ehren et al. (2013) referred to the importance of support and input from all stakeholders. As previously stated by Foran (2015), the community must be involved in the school for it to be successful. This would include providing a voice to their impressions of the school's reality (Bernhardt, 2013). The underlying rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative data is "the strengths of the two methods will complement each other and offset each method's respective weaknesses (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 559).

Bernhardt (2013) discussed how perceptual data might help a school leader guide any school improvement initiative. Perceptual data could be an integral part of future studies through the use of interviews and surveys of all stakeholders. Bernhardt (2013) wrote of the value of the data, "Staff values and beliefs, most often assessed through questionnaire, tell a staff if vision needs to be created or revisited, if team building or specific professional learning is necessary, and if there is enough cohesiveness to implement change" (p. 43). This helps to reinforce Fullan's (2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b) theory of a school leader leading with the ability to identify with staff feelings, as Perez (2014) referred to in his book review. Bernhardt (2013) also recommended, "interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and self-assessment tools" (p. 43).

In future studies, the researcher who implements the strategies Bernhardt (2013) suggested could gain more information to assess the effectiveness of the improvement initiative. According to Bernhardt (2013), "Interviews with individuals allow for an in-depth understanding of topics and content" (p. 43). The use of focus groups may enable

the researcher to measure the effectiveness of initiatives on the entire population (Bernhardt, 2013). Qualitative data also allow a school leader to adjust in the improvement initiative when faced with the problems and difficulties which inevitably will appear (Goodwin, 2015).

According to Bernhardt (2013), the use of questionnaires is a good way to allow stakeholders to answer questions anonymously. The questionnaire may be replicated over time to see if the program of improvement is effective (Bernhardt, 2013). Bernhardt (2013) also indicated all perceptual data collected must be reviewed so the change leader may take action. This would allow the researcher to determine whether perceptions of stakeholders evolve over time after experiencing the adjustments to policy or procedure that have been introduced (Bernhardt, 2013).

The use of perceptual data could help future researchers determine if the aforementioned improvement initiatives, tardy sweeps, RtI, and a late work policy, could show similar promise in schools with different demographics. The use of disaggregated data from properly constructed interview questions, focus groups, and surveys could allow the researcher to identify with which subgroups each initiative was effective. Berliner and Glass (2015) asserted some programs work in some schools and some do not, which might have to do with the demographics of a particular school and community. The use of perceptual data may help steer the direction of future school improvement initiatives.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would recommend implementation of similar programs within other high schools with the caveat of adding perceptual data collection to evaluate the programs. Following similar execution and

follow-up using perceptual data and collection tools may allow administrators to analyze the effectiveness of comparable programs in their schools. These perceptual tools should be tracked to measure the success of the improvement initiative over a period of time (Bernhardt, 2013).

Summary

This study was conducted to examine the impact of building initiatives introduced at one Midwestern high school. The predictor variables were tardy sweeps, RtI time, and a late work policy. The aim of this study was to measure the success or failure of the new policies and initiatives. The criterion variables for measuring the effectiveness of the efforts were attendance rate, tardies, discipline referrals, and failure rate. The hope of the researcher was to provide a practical suggestion to problems school administrators encounter every year.

There was a noticeable drop in discipline referrals from 1,516 in the 2011-2012 school year to 842 in the 2015-2016 school year. By lessening the occurrence of tardies through the tardy sweep program, one Midwestern high school increased instructional time and decreased student discipline referrals. The program also allowed teachers to focus on teaching instead of tallying and keeping track of tardies.

The RtI program consisted of three components, one being the area of discipline. Once the RtI program was implemented at one Midwestern high school, the school experienced a significant drop in discipline referrals from the 2011-2012 total of 2,805 to a total of 1,684 in 2015-2016. This dramatic drop in referrals demonstrated the value of the RtI program and its positive effect on discipline at one Midwestern high school.

The RtI program showed further promise by indicating a positive effect on one Midwestern high school's failure rate. The failure rate declined from 864 students receiving at least one failing grade during the 2010-2011 school year to 100 during the 2015-2016 school year. This decrease in students failing at least one course can have a positive impact on a school by lessening the number courses students repeat and helping with overall school culture.

Over a period of several years, the attendance rate of one Midwestern high school increased from 93.33% in 2011-2012 to 94.96% in 2015-2016. The MSIP 90 of 90 measure also showed improvement over a three-year period from a measurement of 82.3% in 2013-2014 to an 86% frequency in 2015-2016

The positive benefits of the initiatives begun at one Midwestern high school have shown positive results in attendance rate, tardies, discipline rate, and failure rate. It is the desire of the researcher for other schools to implement these programs and measure to see if they offer the similar results. Further research may include perceptual data derived from the use of surveys and interviews of the student's population, staff, and various other stakeholders throughout the district. Disaggregation of data concerning student's socioeconomic backgrounds, race, and gender may also offer greater insight into how these initiatives may prove more effective for various districts regardless of their geographic location or population.

Gewertz (2016) noted, "It's the idea that making all schools great is a good goal, but making them great the same way isn't" (p. 4). It is the hope of the primary researcher schools will expand upon these programs to improve schools for all students. Hattie (2016), schools should investigate the "current impact of a particular teacher,

school, or system leader on the outcomes that are sought for the learners for whom they are responsible" (p. 3).

Schools must be willing to effectively utilize historical data to guide them in sufficient improvement initiatives (Fullan, 2015). The results as published in this study indicate a compelling link between the implementation of a few practices, such as tardy sweeps, RtI, attendance policies, as well as a late work policy, with an improvement in school performance.

Appendix A

[redacted]

[redacted] Public Schools
[redacted]

August 21, 2016

Dear Lindenwood University IRB:

On behalf of [redacted] Schools, I am writing to grant permission for Jack Randolph, an Ed.D. candidate at Lindenwood University, to conduct his research titled, "A Study of High School Improvement Initiatives". I understand that a third party in our district will extract and remove all identifiers from archival data for Mr. Randolph at [redacted] High School upon approval from the Lindenwood IRB Committee. We are happy to participate in this study and contribute to this important research.

Appendix B

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE:	October 3, 2016
TO:	Jack Randolph
FROM:	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[949433-1] A Study of High School Improvement Initiatives
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category # *1*

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please send them to IRB@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

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Vita

Jack Lowell Randolph was born in Denton, Texas, on December 4, 1967 to Sidney Arthur Randolph and Glenda Lowell-Randolph. His father, Sidney, was an auditor for the United States Government. Jack's mother, Glenda, was a high school social studies teacher at Lake Dallas High School where he graduated in 1986.

Jack attended Southwest Baptist University on a football scholarship and earned varsity letters for four years. He graduated in 1991 and was awarded the Dr. James Sells Spirit Award for excellence in academics. Jack began his career in education at Stockton R-1 School District in 1991 where he taught humanities and coached football, track, basketball, and weightlifting.

In 1996, Jack moved into school administration as assistant middle school principal at Knob Noster School District before moving to Marshfield R-1 Schools where he became head football coach and Marshfield Junior High School Assistant Principal. Mr. Randolph became head football coach for West Plains High School in 2010, Dean of Students in 2011, and High School Principal in 2012. Under his tutelage, West Plains was named a top 25 high school in Missouri by *U.S. News and World Report* for performance for 2015.

Jack earned his Masters of Science in school administration in 1999 from Southwest Baptist University. Jack then earned a Specialist Degree in School Superintendency from Southwest Baptist University in 2009.

Jack has been married to his wife, Jennifer, a kindergarten special education teacher, for 25 years. They have two children, Lindsay and Landry.