“Unfashionably Late” Class Work

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Abstract:

How can teachers motivate their students to complete their class work in a timely manner? This inquiry explores specific students who consistently have trouble completing their work in class. What are the underlying causes of incomplete or late work? How can teachers modify this behavior? This inquiry project takes a closer look at these questions and offers strategies for improving timely and successful completion of class work.
**Teaching Context:**

This inquiry project was completed in a self-contained first grade classroom at Ferguson Township Elementary. Ferguson Township Elementary is part of the State College Area School District in central Pennsylvania.

Ferguson Township Elementary is located in a rural area where the majority of the student body and faculty are Caucasian. However, we do embrace other ethnicities and cultures through school-wide monthly diversity assemblies. The socio-economic status of students that attend Ferguson is evenly distributed between lower, middle, and upper class. The faculty, staff, and students work well together to make a strong school community.

My first grade classroom consists of 21 students. Nine of the students are male and twelve are female. Twenty of my students are Caucasian and one is Russian. The student who comes from Russia speaks Russian as her first language, English as her second. Demographically, five of my students are new to the school this year. Two attended Montessori School for kindergarten. One student is from New York City, one is from Arizona, and another moved to my school recently from a rural town in Pennsylvania. Of my 21 students, one comes from a divorced family. One student is visually impaired and is considered legally blind.

Academically, I have a wide range of learners in my classroom. Reading levels are varied. Five students read at an emergent reading level. They attend intensive Title I for one hour every morning. This program is known as Response to Intervention or “RTI.” One student reads at an instructional level and attends Title I for 20 minutes each
afternoon. Twelve students are on grade level with their reading and three students are well above the first grade reading benchmarks.

The class is generally well behaved. However, many students are very vocal and often speak out of turn. They are usually talkative when working in small groups or with partners.

The class has a diverse social makeup. Four students are very quiet. Several students are anxious to conform. Five students are high achievers in most to all subject areas. There are three obvious social leaders in the classroom who have a high influence on others. Four students are easy to get along with but have trouble completing assignments. Most all of the students are eager to help with classroom jobs on a daily basis.

With all of these aspects combined, my first grade classroom is an energetic, unique, and very special place.
Rationale:

What led me to my inquiry?

The clock reaches 8:55am. Some students are reading quietly in the back while others are continuously talking with their neighbors. Those who are talking still have not finished their morning work. I bring the class together and we go over our daily schedule. As we are discussing the upcoming day, half of the students are not paying attention because they are just beginning their morning work that they had twenty minutes to complete.

Next, we head to the back carpet for our greeting and gathering time where we focus on community building activities as well as calendar math. Both of these are very important for social and academic growth. While I start the routine with fourteen of twenty-one students, there are seven still at their seats and I realize that 33% of my first grade class is missing our gathering time. Two are finishing breakfast, one is working with the paraprofessional, and the other four are taking their time as they finish the assignment. I wonder to myself, why is this happening? How might I change it?

My objective is to determine the most effective way for students to complete assigned tasks on time. I will research what helps students become motivated to finish their work while completing it successfully and in a timely fashion. Carless (2006) suggests, “Feedback is central to the development of effective learning” (p. 1). Through this inquiry I hope that by providing some sort of feedback for assignments my students will begin to recognize the importance of handing them in on time.
There are several students in my classroom who continuously fall behind with assignments and fail to finish them in the time given. This results in incomplete tasks as well as students missing morning meeting to finish their work. I knew from Belcher and Macari (1999) that, “Incomplete assignments, partially due to poor organization and time-management skills…along with the possibility that assignments were not meaningful or enjoyable to students,” may result in a lack of motivation on the student end (p. 1). I hope to discover how to motivate my students to finish their work on time as well as find out the underlying causes for this behavior along the way.

I believe that this inquiry will affect my teaching because it will drive me to focus not only on the end result in answering “how to motivate students to complete assigned tasks on time,” but to focus on what is causing the behavior. Eilers, Fox, Welvaert, and Wood (1998) claim, “…missing assignments; late work, incomplete work, or both; [may be the result of] an attitude of indifference on the part of the students” (p. 1). My research and inquiry will provide me with insights as to what strategies I use as a teacher work as motivating tools for my students. It will also help me to realize others that do not. I wonder if an underlying cause of slow work time is a result of how the lesson was taught?

My inquiry will affect my future teaching in that I will be able to use my results in many different classroom contexts. For example, focusing on learning styles and how they affect completion of work as well as any other factors causing incompletion or late completion will help me to better differentiate instruction for learners. Furthermore, Daniels and Arapostathis (2005) claim, “Building relationships with teachers, being interested in school assignments, and feeling competent to perform tasks were mentioned
by the students as influencing their levels of engagement” (p. 2). These are all important ideas I will keep in mind throughout my teaching and my inquiry.

In addition, it will encourage me to concentrate more on types of assessment. It may be possible that the learner would perform in a timely manner if he/she had a different kind of activity to complete or a choice for assessment.

I believe that aside from the main focus question, my inquiry also touches upon many different classroom factors. Gathering data and analyzing findings in a variety of ways will not only help me to become a better teacher now and in the future, but it will allow me to better understand my students and motivate them to finish their work on time. This will, in turn, promote student responsibility for one’s own work and cut down on the amount of extra time spent on past activities. Belcher and Macari (1999) note, “…some students have the potential of having serious work completion problems” (p. 60). This is not a habit that I want my first grade students to fall into. Furthermore, Daniels and Arapostathis (2005) add, “Reluctant learners often begin their patterns of disengagement in the early school years if they do not fit in to the social expectations or are not interested in what the school is teaching” (p. 3).
Wonderings and Questions:

Main Question:

- How can teachers motivate their students to complete their class work in a timely manner?

Sub-Questions:

1. What is causing particular students to work at a very slow pace?
   - Is it a lack of motivation, confusion about the assignment, or some other issue?
   - Does this reoccur with the same students time after time?

2. Is there a specific time of day or subject where this behavior is seen most often?
   - Is it more obvious in the morning or afternoon?

3. Are there specific distractions?
   - Does the seating arrangement have anything to do with this?
   - Does it make a difference with whom the students work in groups or with partners?

4. What is the motivation to complete the assignments and why should students want to turn in their work on time?
   - Is there any reinforcement at home or at school?

5. Is this affecting student learning?
   - Is the work that is turned in late acceptable?
   - Is there confusion about the assignment?
Inquiry Versus Improvement Project:

This inquiry project is based on wonderings concerning specific students constantly turning in late assignments or failing to complete them. I began to realize towards the beginning of the school year that this was happening often with the same students. As the year progressed I did not notice any differences. I started to ask myself why these students were unable to finish their work when given the same amount of time as their peers. Daniels and Arapostathis (2005) stress, “Instead of ignoring and/or giving up on reluctant learners, teachers and researchers alike are beginning to study the phenomenon of disengagement to learn how to help these students reengage in school” (p. 3). This may or may not be a result of my inquiry, but my hopes are to help these students reengage so they are able to complete their work on time.

It began to concern me that this behavior may be caused by a number of different reasons: lack of motivation, disinterest in the topic, a learning disability, or distractions. My next concern was how this might be affecting student learning. But, ultimately, I wonder how to change this behavior by motivating my students so they are able to successfully complete their class work in the time allotted.

This project is a true inquiry because I do not know how my interventions for motivating the students will impact their behavior of handing in their class work on time. I am not sure what the result of this inquiry will be. Will my students begin to turn in their work in a timely fashion? Or, will they continue to take their time and miss certain lessons to finish back work? While I am hoping my intervention has a positive impact, my true goal with this inquiry is to discover how it affects the motivation levels of my students in this specific area.
Inquiry Plan Description:

A timeline of my inquiry can be seen in Appendix A.

Step 1: Student Survey

I began my inquiry by conducting a student survey (see Appendix B.1). I started this way because I was interested in finding out the students’ point of view on the topic of handing in class work. The questions either asked the students to circle an answer that they agreed with, to rate themselves on a number scale, or provide an answer using their own words. The questions focused mainly on how they felt about turning in work on time. Was it important to them? How did it make them feel if they turned in an assignment late? I was also interested in what they saw as reasons why they would turn in late or unfinished work. I left this question to be open-ended.

I asked the students to put their names on the surveys so I would be able to identify the answers from specific students who are consistent in not handing their work in on time. I also stressed the importance of being honest with answers. I told the students that their answers would only be read by me, and that it would help me help them by being truthful with their responses. I was surprised by some student responses. For example, one of these students claimed that she always turns her work in on time, which is untrue. Another student answered that it was important to turn in homework on time, but when asked about class work, she was unsure. Yet another student, who consistently turns his work in on time, claimed that he completed his work in a timely fashion only sometimes. It was very interesting to see how the students viewed their own behavior.
Step 2: Parent Survey

Along with the student survey, I felt it was integral for my research to see how the parents of students in my classroom viewed his/her child in relation to timeliness. Sometimes, behavior in the classroom can be very similar or a direct response from what goes on at home. I sent a letter home to each family describing my inquiry and asked them to answer a questionnaire I had put together. To view the letter see Appendix C and to view the questionnaire see Appendix D.1.

My main interest when the surveys returned was to find out if the students had to be reminded to complete their homework, at what rate they completed it, and if there was any kind of reinforcement. Some responses were exactly what I predicted and others surprised me. For example, the parents of the students who consistently turn in late or incomplete work seem to work at a very fast pace at home. I was not expecting this behavior, as it is completely different at school.

I also found it interesting to read some of the additional comments parents wrote on the questionnaires. Most of them described their children as hard workers who work at a decent speed while producing neat assignments. However, a parent of a student who always hands in her work on time wrote that her daughter has to be coaxed into doing homework before completing it. This child also has no reinforcement system in place for completing her work. Those students who seemed to need fewer reminders to complete his/her homework had a reinforcement system in place.

Step 3: Breaking It Down

I began to realize after the student and parent surveys that I needed to make my
inquiry a bit smaller and more manageable. If I were to collect data for the entire class throughout the inquiry, I would have a lot of information from students who do not seem to share the problem of timeliness that others in my class have. What I decided to do was to break it down into a group of students and focus on those in particular who consistently turn in late work.

I knew exactly who would be in this group, for they were the students who interested me in doing this inquiry in the first place. My inquiry group consisted of four students, three female and one male. These students come from varied backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. Background information on these particular students is as follows:

Student A is a female who is Caucasian and from a middle class family. She attended Ferguson Township Elementary in kindergarten as well. Academically, she is on mark for first grade. She attended Title I for reading instruction throughout the fall and winter, but was exited from the program due to tremendous progress. She is a great math thinker and solves problems using many different strategies. Student A is very energetic and talkative. She is always eager to share her ideas. However, she consistently fails to complete her morning work and other assignments throughout the day. Also, she is always the last child ready to leave for the buses at the end of the day.

Student B is a female who is Caucasian and from a middle class family. She moved to Ferguson Township Elementary this school year from Arizona. She has since made many friends in first grade. She is the youngest student in our classroom and should technically be in kindergarten by age. She loves attention and being in the spotlight, she could be classified as a 6-year old diva. She is very particular about her work and wants
everything to be perfect. The work she hands in is very neat; however, many times it is incomplete or turned in a week after her classmates. She is on grade level for reading and is an average math student. In writing, she often writes about the same topic- princesses or any female fairy tale figure. It is obvious that she spends most of her time on the illustrations and not the writing.

Student C is a male who is also Caucasian. He comes from an upper-middle class family. He is also new to Ferguson Township Elementary this year as he attended Montessori school for kindergarten. There he had many choices in the work he studied and completed. It is obvious that while in kindergarten he spent a lot of time with math and little time with reading and writing. He attends RTI, intensive Title I, for reading instruction every morning for 1 hour. When he arrives he has to be reminded of all our morning routines several times. He often forgets to turn in his homework folder, make his lunch choice, and even do his morning work. He is mostly consumed with eating his breakfast. He spends more than 25 minutes eating his breakfast. During this time he fails to complete his morning work and misses our class gathering.

Student D is a female who is originally from Russia. She speaks Russian as her first language and English as her second. She attends RTI, intensive Title I, for reading instruction every morning for 1 hour. She is often late for school or the last student to arrive. Upon arrival she spends her time slowly picking away at her breakfast while doodling on her morning work. Her tardiness has an impact on her completion of work in the morning. Throughout the school day she often takes her time getting started on assignments and then fails to complete them in the time allotted. She is easily distracted and often adds to it by bringing small toys from home.
By narrowing my research down to four students, I was able then to collect sufficient data on each. I chose three mornings over the span of two weeks to note their work habits in the morning, during mathematics, and throughout our reading stations. This data can be seen in Appendix E.

**Step 4: Making a Plan**

After collecting this data from the inquiry group I realized that the area in which all four of the students had issues handing in incomplete and late work was during our Morning Routine. What also concerned me was that often these students were missing the beginning of our class gathering, which includes community building activities and calendar math.

Initially, I was unsure whether to establish an intervention for this specific group of students or for my entire class. Oginsky (2003) notes, “Theoretically, an increase in a sense of autonomy should be followed by an increase in intrinsic motivation. Items such as an increase in completed assignments…were considered evidence of intrinsic motivation” (p. 10). I decided that I wanted to motivate all of my students with my intervention. I also thought that it would be difficult to reinforce the inquiry group in front of the other students in my class for handing in their work in a timely manner. This is especially because the other students successfully do this on a daily basis. I also thought that the intervention would make a positive impact on all of my students.

The intervention I came up with was originally used for the Morning Routine but quickly became useful in other areas around my classroom. Considering the response to
reinforcement at home, I wanted to try a reinforcement system for being timely and completing work successfully in the classroom.

**Step 5: The Intervention**

The reinforcement system I set in place corresponded with the reinforcement systems that are already set in place in my classroom. If the students completed all tasks listed on the chalkboard in the morning (turn in folder, make lunch choice, morning work) before 8:55am, then they would see me for a “You Did It!” ticket. They wrote their names on the tickets and placed them in my ticket jar on my desk (see Appendix F). At the end of the day I chose three names from the jar. Those three students would then receive a sticker to put on their sticker charts that they have for good behavior. When their sticker chart is full they are able to choose an item from the prize can. Each day we started with an empty jar. If the entire class finished their morning work before 8:55am then they would receive a token for the class token jar. They earn tokens for this jar when they work together as a class to do something such as, walk quietly in the hall, work quietly during book groups, or cooperating well together. When the token jar is full they vote on a special reward (P.J. Day, movie, extra recess, etc.).

**Step 6: Extending the Intervention**

With much success during the morning I quickly realized that this intervention could be used throughout the day during other subjects. The students responded very well to it and continue to show excitement and effort in earning tickets. I tend to use the “You
“Did It!” tickets often during the skills station during our reading centers and also during math time.

In addition, there is a student in my class who earns stickers twice a day if he behaves. If he earns two stickers in a day he receives an extra ticket for the jar. This reinforces his good behavior.

Student A, as mentioned above, was always the last student in line at the end of the day. If she checks her mail, packs her backpack, and gets ready to go outside in a timely fashion, she also earns an extra ticket. She has gone from being the last in line to the first!

Extending the intervention motivated the students to earn more than one ticket per day. They quickly realized that this meant a better chance of getting their names drawn.

**Step 7: Recording the Reinforcement**

Each day, I recorded whose name was drawn from the jar (see Appendix H). I am currently still in this phase of my inquiry and it will continue throughout the year. I am interested in finding how many times the inquiry group’s names are pulled from the jar and how this affects their behavior. My goal is to find out how this type of reinforcement motivates them to complete their work successfully and on time.
Data Collection:

Throughout this inquiry I collected data in a number of ways. First, I conducted a student survey (see Appendix B.1) to gather the students’ ideas and to see how they feel about handing in work on time. I administered the survey at the skills station during our reading centers. I thought this would be more conducive to giving directions and receiving accurate results because the students were in small groups. Also, I wanted to read the questions aloud for the students in order to provide extra reading support and make sure they understood what the questions were asking.

I was interested to find out if they believe handing in their work during school is important or not. For instance, if they did not see it as something that was important, then why should they hand in their work on time? If this was the case, then I knew I would have to stress the importance of the behavior for them in some way.

I was also curious to see how they felt emotionally when they did not hand in their work on time. I gave three options for an answer: happy and sad were given. The third choice was other with a blank line. I was curious to see how many students chose other and filled in the specific emotion they feel.

At the end of the student survey I had an open-ended question. I asked the students what kinds of things would keep them from getting their work done. I asked this question to see if the students were aware of the kinds of distractions around the room. I also thought that perhaps if these work-hindering occurrences were brought to their attention they might be more aware of them throughout the school day. Thus, creating a less distracting classroom environment.
The next form of data I gathered during my inquiry was a parent survey. I sent a letter explaining my inquiry and a questionnaire to every family in each student’s homework folder (see Appendix C and D.1). I felt that gathering information from home was very important in that it may have a direct relation with student behavior in school. I also was interested to see if student behavior at home was at all different from their behavior in a classroom environment.

Information that I was eager to receive was the rate at which parents viewed their children completing their homework. For example, I asked each parent to rate his/her child’s rate at completing homework on a scale of 1-5. I was anxious to see if their rating at home would match my ratings at school.

I also asked if the students had to be reminded to complete their homework. Often, particularly with the inquiry group of students, I have to constantly remind them to complete their schoolwork. I was curious to see if this was different at home. Along with this, I asked if they received any reinforcements for completing their homework. I wondered, too, how this correlated with the students whose parents rated them as working at a fast pace. Furthermore, I thought that perhaps if reinforcements for finishing assignments at home allowed for timely completion that it could work in the classroom as well.

After I narrowed twenty-one students to four, I began collecting specific data of these students’ timeliness throughout different periods of the day in the classroom. I originally jotted down notes on sticky tabs and in a notebook but organized my data in chart form electronically (see Appendix E).
I collected this data for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to see if this behavior was constant across subjects for each of the students throughout the day. I also wanted to see if there was a common subject in which all of the students continued to turn in late work. Lastly, I hoped it would help me pinpoint where the source of the issue was coming from for each of the students. I thought that if I could figure out the cause of the matter it would be easier for me to create an intervention to motivate the students to complete their schoolwork.

After I began my intervention I collected data similarly to that described above on each of the focus students. I observed them as they worked on morning work, mathematics, and reading. I charted their behaviors so I would be able to compare any behavior changes that may have occurred since the intervention began (see Appendix G).

Finally, there is data that I continue to collect. After beginning my intervention I began keeping track of the students whose names were pulled from the ticket jar. I especially am paying close attention to the inquiry group. This data will help me determine whether or not the intervention is motivating the students, and how it is working. It will help me answer the questions: Does it work in only one subject area/time of day? How long will this motivational tool last? I have a list of students and a letter of the alphabet represents each student. The four focus students are A, B, C, and D as they have been throughout the inquiry. Every day I record which students have been pulled from the ticket jar with an X. I pay special attention to the focus students and if I see an increase in their timeliness and motivation the following day, I place a star next to the day that the ticket was pulled (see Appendix H).
**Data Analysis:**

The data that I analyzed first was the student survey. I took a look at each question individually and marked an ‘x’ to represent each student next to the answers provided. I marked the students who were a part of my inquiry group with their student letter in red (A, B, C, D) so their responses would stand out. I paraphrased the responses of the open-ended question and sorted them into categories for organization.

After recording the responses, I went through and found the percentages of how many students chose a particular answer. This provided me with a picture of where the majority of the students stood in their thinking. For example, I found that in response to the question “Is it important to turn in your class work on time?” 13 students answered yes, 1 answered no, and 6 were not sure. Seeing this result as a percent showed me straightforward that most of the students thought it was important. However, it is clear from the pie chart that a good majority of my class was not sure. The numbers near the labels indicate how many students from the inquiry group answered in that way.

![Pie chart showing responses to the question: Is it important to finish your class work on time?](image)

I continued to use this method of graphing with percents for the remainder of the student surveys (see Appendix B.2).
Seeing as this method of data analysis worked well organizationally for the student survey, I decided to use the same process in looking at the results of the parent survey. I created a tally system of ‘x’ marks to represent each student and marked the inquiry group’s parent responses with their student letter in red. This helped me to see where their responses were in comparison to the other parents. Unfortunately, only three out of the four focus students’ parents completed the questionnaire.

After marking the data, I went back and looked at the answers as percents. I used pie charts and bar graphs (see Appendix D.2) to view the results. Again, this allowed me to see the big picture in where most of the responses landed. It was interesting to see where the parents of the focus student’s responses were within the mix. A number next to the label indicates the number of focus students whose parents answered in a particular way.

When I first began collecting data for the inquiry group throughout the day I was using post it notes. I quickly realized that this would not be an organized way to keep track of my data so I created tables on my computer. Each student (A, B, C, D) had his/her own table. Each table had 3 rows (Morning, Math, Reading) and 3 columns indicating which day of the week I was collecting data. I analyzed this by printing it out as a hard copy and looking at the tables next to each other. I used a yellow highlighter for every time work was incomplete. This showed me at a glance how many times a day and in what subject(s) the students were handing in their work late or not finishing it. Any particular subject that was a consistent area for all students was highlighted in pink.

At the bottom of each table I had a section labeled “Problem.” These were the areas in which I felt, based on the observations, were the major sources of the behavior of
handed in late work. I highlighted in blue any problem areas that were the same or similar for all four students. This provided me with an area to begin an intervention. An example of this process:

I analyzed the data of the second round of charting the four students’ work habits in the same way as above. I highlighted in yellow every time a student turned in late work or incomplete work. However, this time around I also highlighted in green every time a student completed his/her work. When I put the two charts for a student side by side I was able to clearly see (based on yellow and green marks) if improvement had been made since the beginning of the intervention. My plan was to continue to highlight a specific area that was an issue to all students as before (Morning Work), however, I was pleased that this time around there was no such common subject. In addition, this area of data analysis changed a bit from before due to the fact that Student D was absent from school for seven of the intervention days. She was absent on all three of the observation days so I do not have data for her and am unable to recognize, due to her absence, what progress she has made.

The data collection that is ongoing, that which is based on the drawings of the ticket jar, is being analyzed day by day. Each student gets a tally mark next to his/her name when his/her ticket is drawn (see Appendix H). I am looking specifically at the four
focus students so they are highlighted. At the same time I am observing daily their behavior in response to my intervention. I am watching to see that if they earn a ticket in the morning, then they are motivated to earn more throughout the day. If they have more tickets in the jar then they are more likely to be drawn.

I look to see if their willingness to complete their work on time increases if their ticket was pulled the day before. If this is the case, then I put a star next to that day. At the end of the year I will have a better picture by counting the number of stars, as they represent increased positive behavior.

Through this ongoing analysis I am curious to see if their behavior will regress back into old habits if their ticket is not drawn for several days in a row. After analyzing what I have now, I have not seen this trend; however, I do see that it is a possibility.
**Claims and Evidence:**

**Claim #1:**

At the first grade level, more students are unsure of the importance of completing class work on time than homework.

**Evidence:**

After completing the student surveys I was shocked to see the number of students who felt completing their homework on time was important in comparison to those who thought completing their class work on time was important. It was clear through my data that many more students felt completing homework was something they had to do. However, when looking at the data for the question about class work, 30% of my students were unsure if it was important or not. Furthermore, 5% said it was not important. The difference can be seen:

Out of 20 students who completed the survey, 65% claimed that it was important to finish class work on time but 95% agreed that it was important to finish homework. Of that 65%, 2 students were part of the inquiry focus group. Of the 95%, all four were a part of those who answered yes.

This claim is one that I was able to make early on during my inquiry. It helped me to see that part of the issue of late and incomplete work in my classroom could be a result
of students not knowing that they should turn in their class work on time. I used this information to help me with my intervention. It provoked me to create something that would make turning in class work meaningful for first grade students.

**Claim #2:**

“You Did It!” tickets work as a motivator for students to complete their work on time (see Appendix F).

**Evidence:**

I am happy to report that this claim is a result of evidence focusing not only on the four inquiry students, but my entire class. During the three-week time period, my mentor and I observed a significant change in behavior, especially during the morning. Students were much more likely to arrive and immediately begin their work in order to earn a ticket before 8:55am. Every student in my classroom has earned at least five tickets over 12 school days.

I charted my focus students’ behavior again, as I did before the intervention. I looked mainly at morning work, reading groups, and mathematics, as before. I wanted these charts to look similar in format as the first ones so they would be easy to compare. From the first charts, 100% of the focus students were showing incomplete and late work during the morning. All four of them continuously failed to complete their work before 8:55am 100% of the time. However, after the intervention, Student A, Student B, and Student C all showed an increase in their behavior by being timely with their assignments and completing their work successfully in class (see Appendix E and G). An example of
this increase in positive behavior can be seen by placing Student A’s charts side by side as follows:

The significant decrease in yellow highlights makes it evident to me that Student A’s behavior in turning in late and incomplete work has obviously decreased since the intervention has begun.

In addition to this, I created a bar graph to show the increase in the students’ progress. The first bar graph shows the number of times she completed her work throughout the day and the number of times she was either late turning it in, or never finished. The second graph portrays the same data; however, it is after the intervention was set in place.

I find it very interesting that in comparing the results, the graphs are reversed. Before the intervention Student A showed late or incomplete work 77% of the time and complete work that was on time 23% of the time. During the intervention Student A’s numbers
reversed showing incomplete and late work only 23% of the time and complete work that was on time 77% of the time. That is a 54% increase in work that was completed on time.

**Claim #3:**

While this system encouraged many students to complete their work on time and earn a ticket, it also allowed for student disappointment if his/her ticket was not drawn.

**Evidence:**

This claim is based mostly on observation from both my mentor and me. Throughout the weeks of my intervention the students were energized and excited at the end of the day for the ticket drawing. Some students had earned more than one ticket for the jar and thought for sure that their name would be pulled. Throughout the day students’ spirits were high and they were motivated to earn tickets. However, I noticed only three smiles as I read the names of those who were drawn. The other eighteen students’ faces were solemn because they had worked hard and not been chosen.

Some of the days students even showed anger. There were a few occasions where students even “booed” if their names were not drawn. There were days when the same student cried over and over if his name was not drawn. He often sobbed, “My name is NEVER going to get picked!” It concerns me that while this intervention is having a positive impact on student timeliness with class work that it is also having a negative effect on our class community.
Claim #4:

The students who began their school day with incomplete or late work were more likely to continue the trend throughout the day.

Evidence:

This claim is based on both data from before I began the intervention and after I began the intervention. This trend can be seen through all of the focus students, but is most apparent through Student C. It is apparent through the data that he was less likely to complete his work on time throughout the day if he failed to do so in the morning.

However, on days where he completed his work in the morning and earned a ticket, he was more likely to continue this work habit throughout school in other subjects.

This is shown through his observation charts. The first chart is before the intervention and the second is during the intervention. It can be seen that in both cases on days where he has incomplete work in the morning he is more likely to have incomplete work throughout the day. This is seen through the first observations on both Day 2 and Day 3. Also, it is seen through the second set of observations on Day 1:

![Observation Chart](image)

Another piece of evidence to support this claim is seen also through Student B’s observation charts. Her work habits were more likely to stay constant throughout the day based on her morning work. This is seen in both Day 1 and Day 3 of the first
observations and Day 1 of the second set of observations. It is clearly seen by looking at
the downward pattern of yellow and green highlighter in the columns:

For more evidence, see Appendix E and G.
Conclusions:

I plan to continue to use the “You Did It!” ticket reinforcement intervention to motivate students to complete their work in the morning as well as throughout the school day. So far it has had positive effects on not only the four students I focused on, but also the entire classroom. Students even motivate each other by reminding their friends to finish their work so they will be able to earn a ticket.

I have found through this inquiry that this intervention worked in multiple subjects and in multiple ways. For example, I began using the tickets in the morning but very quickly realized that they could be used all throughout the day. This motivated students to complete activities during language arts as well as mathematics. Students even began earning tickets for getting ready for the buses quickly at the end of the day.

I believe that this inquiry has introduced the idea of timeliness to my first grade students and has begun to make a difference in my classroom. I perceive timeliness as an important tactic in life- in school and in the real world. By instilling its importance at a young age the students may carry this promptness with them throughout their lives.

Continuing my inquiry will help me see more clearly how this intervention is motivating my students to complete their work on time. By collecting and analyzing more data I will have a bigger picture of the impact, positives, and flaws. Through this I will be able to determine any alterations or additions to the intervention for future use.

I will definitely use the “You Did It!” ticket system in my future teaching. I believe it works well with reinforcement systems that are already established for other things in the classroom as well, which makes it easy to implement at any time in the year. For example, currently when a student’s name is drawn they receive a sticker for their
ongoing sticker chart that they have had since the first day of school. I could also use the tickets for reasons other than timeliness. In future years I hope to find new ways to make this ticket system a fun and exciting motivator for my students.
New Wonderings:

After completing this part of my inquiry I have some new wonderings.

1. How can I change this reinforcement system to motivate my students after the exciting newness of the intervention has worn off?

2. How can I directly reinforce the students on a daily basis who seem to have the same late behavior consistently without leaving the rest of the class out of the loop?

3. How can I sufficiently explain to first graders why it is important to turn in class work as well as homework in on time?

4. Will the new positive behavior decrease if the student’s name is not drawn for several days at a time? How can I tweak this system so it does not become discouraging?

5. How can I use the ticket system as a fun and exciting motivator in future years?
References:


Appendix A: Inquiry Timeline

Week of February 26:
Data collection:
- Student Survey
  --Use smiley faces as a scale
  --Questions:
  ~ Do you finish your work on time? (always, sometimes, never)
  ~ Is it important to finish your work on time? (yes, no, I don’t know)
  ~ How do you feel when you don’t finish your work on time? (happy, sad, I don’t know)
  ~ How important is it to you to finish first? (scale 1-5)
  ~ Written response: What things would make you turn in your work late?
- Send home parent survey \( \rightarrow \) this was done later than planned
  --Questions:
  ~Does your child have to be reminded to complete his/her homework?
  ~At what rate does your child spend doing his/her homework? (scale 1-5) How much time does your child spend doing his/her homework?
  ~Is your child reinforced for completing his/her homework?
  ~Does your child have any other responsibilities at home (i.e. chores)? Is he/she reinforced for completing them?
  ~Any additional comments
- Begin collecting student work samples
  --Work from students who finish on time/those who do not
  --Work from students who do not usually finish on time; work turned in on time vs. work turned in late (is there a difference?)
- Observation
  --When do students become off task? What might cause this?
Read, read, read those books, articles, anything to do with this!

Week of March 5:
Data collection:
- Break inquiry into smaller group- main focus students
- Begin charting their work habits
  --When is their work late? What subjects?
- Begin timing students (how much longer does it take them?) *figure out what areas to time- math? reading? transitions? – note this in chart
Continue reading!
Annotated Bibliography due 3/7
*Week of March 12: SPRING BREAK*

*Week of March 19:*
  - Data collection:
    - Continue charting student work habits
    - Begin analyzing this data for trends - start thinking of interventions
  - Intervention:
    - Begin specific interventions based on data analysis

*Week of March 26 - Inquiry Conference:*
  - Continue data collection throughout intervention
  - Analyze data; collaborate evidence and determine any conclusions
  - Write paper
  - Prepare presentation
Appendix B.1: Student Survey

1. Do you finish your work on time?
   Always  Sometimes  Never

2. Is it important to finish your class work on time?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

3. Is it important to finish your homework on time?
   Yes  No  I don’t know

4. How do you feel when you don’t finish your work on time?
   Happy ☺  Sad ☹  Other__________

5. How important is it to you to finish first?
   Very important 5  4  3  2  1 Not important at all

6. What kinds of things would make you not finish your class work?

   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
Appendix B.2: Student Survey Results

Question 1: Do you finish your work on time?

![Pie chart showing distribution of responses to question 1]

Question 2: Is it important to finish your class work on time?

![Pie chart showing distribution of responses to question 2]

Question 3: Is it important to finish your homework on time?

![Pie chart showing distribution of responses to question 3]
Question 4: How do you feel when you don’t finish your work on time?

![Pie chart showing percentages of feelings when work is not finished on time.

Question 5: How important is it to you to finish first? (Scale 1-5, 1-not important/5-very important)

![Bar chart showing the rate of importance for finishing first.

Question 6: What kinds of things would make you not finish your class work?

![Pie chart showing percentages of reasons for not finishing class work.

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March 21, 2007

Dear Parents,

I would like to begin this brief letter by telling you how much I have enjoyed working with your child at Ferguson Township Elementary School. My experience as a Professional Development School Intern has been very valuable as I enter the teaching profession.

Part of my student teaching practicum involves completing an “inquiry project” in our classroom. The focus of my project is: how to motivate students to complete their class work successfully and in a timely manner.

Attached with this letter is a brief questionnaire about your child’s work at home. If you are able to fill it out and send it back to school I would greatly appreciate your feedback.

If you have any questions, please send a note to school or email me at eag189@psu.edu. Thank you for your help and support!

Sincerely,

Liz Gray
Appendix D.1: Parent Survey

Unless you would prefer to remain anonymous, please fill in the information on the lines below.

Name ________________________________

Child ________________________________

1. How much time does your child spend on homework assignments in an average night?

5 minutes or less  5-10 minutes  10-20 minutes  20 minutes or more

If more than 20 minutes, how long? _________

Does your child usually complete more homework than is assigned? _________

2. How often do you need to remind your child to complete his/her homework assignments?

Never  Once  Twice  Three or more times

3. Does your child receive any positive reinforcements for completing his/her homework?

Yes  No

If yes, please explain. ____________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

4. When does your child usually complete his/her homework?

Immediately after school  Mid-evening  End of the night
5. What is the rate at which your child completes his/her work?

Does not complete work  1   2   3   4   5   Works very quickly

6. Does your child have responsibilities at home (i.e. chores)?

Yes       No

If yes, how often are they completed?

Never       Occasionally       Almost Always       Always

If yes, does your child receive positive reinforcement for completing his/her responsibilities?

Yes       No

If yes, please explain. __________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

If you have any additional comments about your child’s work ethic and completing tasks “on time” at home please provide it below.
Appendix D.2: Parent Survey Results

Question 1: How much time does your child spend on homework assignments in an average night?

![Pie chart showing time spent on homework each night.]

Question 2: How often do you need to remind your child to complete his/her homework assignments?

![Bar chart showing number of reminders given.]

Question 3: Does your child receive any positive reinforcements for completing his/her homework?

![Pie chart showing positive reinforcement for homework completion.]

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Question 4: When does your child usually complete his/her homework?

![Homework Completion Chart]

Question 5: What is the rate at which your child completes his/her work? (Scale 1-5; 1=very slow, 5=very quickly)

![Rate of Homework Completion Chart]

Question 6: Does your child have responsibilities at home (i.e. chores)?

![Household Responsibilities Chart]
Question 7: If yes, does your child receive positive reinforcement for completing his/her responsibilities?
### Appendix E: First Round - Focus Student Observations

#### Work Habits:

**Student A:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning Work</strong></td>
<td>Incomplete- arrived 8:39, worked until 9:00</td>
<td>Incomplete- worked through first 5 minutes of gathering</td>
<td>Complete- arrived 8:35, worked until 9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Block Town- she and partner were 3rd to last being done-off task</td>
<td>Assessment- had to move seat, off task-last to finish</td>
<td>Assessment- worked well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>On task</td>
<td>On task</td>
<td>On task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Problem- behavior/off task**

**Student B:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning Work</strong></td>
<td>Incomplete- arrived 8:30, worked until 9:05</td>
<td>Incomplete- arrived 8:30, worked until 9:10—had to ask her to come to carpet</td>
<td>Incomplete- arrived 8:34, worked until 9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Block Town- last to finish building (no partner)</td>
<td>Assessment- took her 5 minutes longer than other students to complete</td>
<td>Assessment- last to complete, took 3 minutes longer than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>Last to arrive to group</td>
<td>Last to arrive and get things ready-notebook, pencil, etc.</td>
<td>1 page behind others in Discovery Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Problem- slow pace- needs motivation**

**Student C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning Work</strong></td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Incomplete- breakfast, late arriving</td>
<td>Incomplete- breakfast!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Assessment- off task while working-talking to neighbor, complete before time is over</td>
<td>Assessment- flew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Last to arrive, forgot materials</td>
<td>Last to arrive, bathroom- last to finish sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Problem- loss of focus/distractions, lack of motivation? He likes math!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Work</td>
<td><strong>Incomplete</strong>- arrived 8:41, worked until 9:10 (breakfast)</td>
<td><strong>Incomplete</strong>- asked to come to carpet- at 9:15 she asked to finish her breakfast</td>
<td><strong>Incomplete</strong>- arrived 8:44, worked until 9:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Block Town- worked well with partner</td>
<td>Assessment- took her 5 minutes longer than her group- had to move seating</td>
<td>Assessment- worked well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td><strong>Last</strong> to arrive, up and at the bathroom</td>
<td><strong>Last</strong> to arrive, forgot materials needed</td>
<td><strong>Last</strong> to arrive- bathroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem- distractions- needs **motivation**
Appendix F: Tickets and Ticket Jar

“You Did It!” Ticket:

![You Did It! Ticket Image]

Photo of the Ticket Jar:

![Ticket Jar Image]
Appendix G: Second Round - Focus Student Observations

Work Habits:

**Student A:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Work</td>
<td>Complete—nicely done</td>
<td>Complete—arrived late and still finished</td>
<td>Completed work but was late finishing breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Completed assignment</td>
<td>She and partner were off task and failed to complete math game</td>
<td>Completed work—worked much better than previous day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>On task entire time</td>
<td>Forgot materials but worked well</td>
<td>On task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student B:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Work</td>
<td>Incomplete and arrived last on carpet for gathering</td>
<td>Complete and very neat work</td>
<td>Complete—first to finish in group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Last to complete assignment</td>
<td>Completed math game with partner several times</td>
<td>Completed task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>Last to group, forgot her pencil</td>
<td>On task</td>
<td>On task</td>
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**Student C:**

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Work</td>
<td>Incomplete—spent too much time eating breakfast and not enough doing work</td>
<td>Complete and very excited!</td>
<td>Complete and thrilled with himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Off-task and “in his own little world” entire math time</td>
<td>Completed math game with partner</td>
<td>Completed assignment in several ways!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Group</td>
<td>Not focused on work— in bathroom</td>
<td>Forgot materials, did not finish work—spent too much time looking for pencil and glue</td>
<td>On task and finished work very well</td>
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Student D:

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<td>Morning Work</td>
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<td>Reading Group</td>
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### Appendix H: Ticket Results

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