

School and work tardiness

[Business](#), [Employment](#)



SCHOOL AND WORK TARDINESS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL WISCONSIN by Barbara Lee Weade A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Training and Development Approved: 4 Semester Credits

_____ Dr. Joseph A. Benkowski,
Research Advisor The Graduate College University of Wisconsin - Stout May, 2004
ii The Graduate College University of Wisconsin Stout Menomonie, WI 54751
ABSTRACT Weade Barbara L. (Writer)(Last Name) (First) (Middle Initial)
SCHOOL AND WORK TARDINESS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL WISCONSIN
Title Training & Development Dev Dr. Joseph Benkowski
May 2004 80 (Graduate Program) (Research Advisor) (Month/Year) (#Pgs)
American Psychological Association, 5th edition Manual Style
Businesses expect employees to arrive at the workplace with basic soft skills which include personal attributes like punctuality. The purpose of this research study was to examine the relationship between school and work tardiness in high school students in rural central Wisconsin. The literature review covered tardiness and absences in the work and school environment, school failure and its relationship to school tardiness and absenteeism, school interventions to change deviant behavior, students= insights about deviant school behavior, the home influence on school tardiness and absences, and the effect of work on school behavior and iii performance. The research showed that working students are significantly different than their fellow students. Working students are more punctual at school classes, have fewer unexcused school absences, and have higher Grade Point Averages (GPA). The hypothesis that working students will exhibit the same tardiness pattern

at work as well as at school was strongly supported. That is, students who were punctual at school were also punctual at work while students who were tardy at school were also tardy at work. Ancillary findings included a correlation between students tardiness and unexcused absences at school, a negative correlation between unexcused school absences and GPA, no significant differences between genders on tardiness and unexcused absences in school, a significantly higher GPA for females than for males, and a significant difference between high school grade levels and their tardiness and unexcused absence behavior. iv TABLE OF

CONTENTS
 Page
 ABSTRACT.....
 ii LIST OF
 TABLES.....
 vii LIST OF
 CHARTS.....
 ix CHAPTER I: RESEARCH PROBLEM AND
 OBJECTIVES..... 1
 Introduction.....
 1 Problem
 Statement.....
 2 Research
 Objectives.....
 ... 2 Significance of the
 Study 3

Limitations of the Study..... 4

Assumptions..... 5

Definitions..... 5

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... 7

Problem Statement..... 7

Tardiness and Absences in the Work Environment..... 7

Tardiness and Absences in the School Environment..... 10

School Interventions to Deviant Behavior..... 11

Students= Insights on Deviant School Behaviors..... 14

Home Influence on School Tardiness and Absences..... 15

Effect of Work on School Behavior..... 16

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS..... 19

Introduction..... 19

Research Design..... 19

Population..... 20

Sample
 21 Employer and Student Worker

Recruitment..... 21 Data Collection

Process..... 22

Intervention

Instrument.....

23 Data Validity and

Reliability..... 24

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS.....

. 26

Introduction
 26

Findings.....

..... 26 CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 53

Introduction.....

..... 53 Problem

Statement
 .. 53 Summary of Study

Procedures..... 53

Conclusions and

Implications..... 56

Recommendations for Further

Analysis..... 60

Recommendations.....
 62

REFERENCES:.....
 67 APPENDIX A: Start-Up Letter to
 Employers..... 73 APPENDIX B:
 Working Student Recruitment
 Letter..... 74 APPENDIX C: Information
 Slip to Students About Study..... 75 vi
 APPENDIX D: Student Consent
 Form..... 76 APPENDIX
 E: Explanation Memo to Parents of Working Students About
 Project..... 77 APPENDIX F: Cash Receipt Verification
 Form..... 78 APPENDIX G:
 Approved Students Memo to
 Employers..... 79 APPENDIX H: Sample
 Employer Letter to Experimental Group - Excellent 80
 APPENDIX I: Sample Employer Letter to Experimental Group -
 Improvement..... 81 APPENDIX J: Sample Employer Letter to
 Experimental Group - Mixed Record..... 82 APPENDIX K: Sample
 Employer Letter to Experimental Group - Disappointment..... 83 IRB
 Approval
 Letter.....
 84 vii LIST OF TABLES TABLE 1 - Classes Tardy of Working & Non-Working
 Students..... 27 TABLE 1A - T-test for Classes
 Tardy of Working & Non-Working Students..... 27 TABLE 2 -

School Unexcused Absences of Working & Non-Working

Students.....	28	TABLE 2A - T-test for Unexcused Absences of Working & Non-Working Students.....	28
TABLE 3 - GPA of Working & Non-Working Students.....	28	TABLE 3A - T-test for GPA of Working & Non-Working Students.....	28
TABLE 4 - Working Students Days Tardy at Work.....	30	TABLE 4A - Working Students Minutes Tardy at Work.....	31
TABLE 5 - Correlation Between Class Tardies and Unexcused Absences.....	32	TABLE 6 - Correlation Between School Unexcused Absences and GPA.....	32
TABLE 7 - Correlation Between Class Tardies and GPA.....	33	TABLE 8 - Tardiness of Students for 4th Quarter of the School Year.....	34
TABLE 8A - T-test for Tardiness of Students for 4th Quarter of the School Year.....	34	TABLE 9 - Absences of Students for 4th Quarter of the School Year.....	35
TABLE 9A - T-test for Absences of Students for 4th Quarter of the School Year.....	35	TABLE 10 - Class Tardies and Gender.....	35
TABLE 10A - T-test for Class Tardies and Gender.....	36	TABLE 11 - School Absences and Gender.....	36
TABLE 11A - T-test for School Absences and Gender.....	36	TABLE 12 - GPA and	

Gender..... 37

TABLE 12A - T-test for GPA and Gender..... 37

TABLE 13 - Class Tardies and Grade Level..... 38

TABLE 13A - ANOVA for Class Tardies and Grade Level..... 38

TABLE 14 - School Unexcused Absences and Grade Level..... 40

TABLE 14A - ANOVA for School unexcused Absences and Grade Level..... 40

TABLE 15 - GPA and Grade Level..... 42

TABLE 15A - ANOVA for GPA and Grade Level..... 42

TABLE 16 - GPA of Working Students by Employer..... 43

TABLE 16A - ANOVA for GPA of Working Students by Employer..... 43

TABLE 17 - School Tardiness of Working Students by Employer..... 44

TABLE 17A - ANOVA for School Tardiness of Working Students by Employer..... 44

TABLE 18 - School Unexcused Absences of Working Students by Employer..... 45

TABLE 18A - ANOVA for School Unexcused Absences of Working Students by Employer.... 46

TABLE 19 - Work Tardiness of Working Students by Employer..... 47

TABLE 19A - ANOVA for Work Tardiness of Working Students by Employer..... 47

TABLE 20 - 4th Quarter School Tardies for Experimental and Control Students..... 48

TABLE 20A - T-Test for

4th Quarter School Tardies for Experimental and Control Students..... 48

TABLE 21 - Days Tardy from Work for Experimental and Control

Students 49 TABLE 21A - T-Test for Days Tardy from Work

for Experimental and Control Students..... 50 TABLE 22 - Minutes Tardy

from Work for Experimental and Control Students 51 TABLE

22A - T-Test for Minutes Tardy from Work for Experimental and Control

Students..... 51 TABLE 23 - GPA for Experimental and Control

Students..... 52 TABLE 23A - T-test for GPA

for Experimental and Control Students..... 52 ix LIST OF

CHARTS CHART 1 - School Tardiness and Grade

Level..... 39 CHART 2 - School

Unexcused Absences and Grade Level.....

41 1 CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE Introduction During

the economic boom times of the late 1990s and early 2000s unemployment

rates were low and many businesses were either unable to fill all of their job

openings or were hiring more people than ever before with marginal skills

and work experience. These entry-level workers did not readily fit into the

traditional job orientation and training regimes employers had used in the

past. As employer frustration mounted, Job Center staff, private employment

agencies, Workforce Development Boards, and the U. S. Department of

Labor began to hear a common theme which ran, " Just send us people who

show up on time every day ready to work and then we'll take care of their

training. " These businesses expected employees to arrive at the workplace

with basic " soft skills" which include punctuality and reliability. These

personal attributes are not specifically taught in primary, secondary or post-

secondary schools. Rather, as children mature into adults, society assumes that they will gradually acquire the habits which lead to job and life success. However, some employers would characterize this assumption as “ wishful thinking” - at least for a segment of the American population. Individuals who are late or absent for work are at great risk of being fired. They develop a poor work history which further inhibits their ability to get a good job. They may well retain the basic personal habits of tardiness and unreliability, making long-term success at any job improbable. People lacking stable, good-paying jobs are unable to support themselves and their families and become increasingly dependent upon public assistance programs or involved with the criminal justice systems. Given the importance of “ soft skills” to life success, further study into the development of these habits seems warranted. 2 The remainder of this chapter will cover the problem statement, objectives, significance and limitations of the study, assumptions, and definitions. Problem Statement This research explores the relationship between school and work tardiness in high school students. School personnel, school boards, parents, and employers who examine this data will have a better understanding of school tardiness, related school deviant behaviors, and punctuality in a work setting. The study population was limited to students attending one rural, central Wisconsin high school over a two month period in 2002. Research Objectives The objectives for this study of tardiness Central Sands High School* students are to determine: 1. If working students, compared to other high school students, a. Are more or less likely to be tardy at school, b. Are more or less likely to have unexcused absences at school, and c. Have higher or lower Grade Point Averages

(GPAs). 2. If high school students working at local employers are similar to each other in terms of: a. Tardiness at work, b. Tardiness at school, c. Unexcused absences at school, and d. GPA. 3. The relationship of school tardiness to work tardiness. 4. If an employer intervention can change the school or work tardiness of its high school employees. 3 5. If school tardiness and unexcused absences are affected by: a. Gender, b. Grade level c. Time of year/term 6. The relationship between: a. School tardiness and unexcused absences, b. School tardiness and GPA, and c. Unexcused absences and GPA.

Significance of the Study In 1996 the United States federal government acted on welfare reform by passing Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - TANF (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, 2003). This law replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Act which had provided economic help to low-income families since it was authorized in 1935 (Britannica, 2003). Unlike AFDC, which provided a monthly payment to parents until their youngest child turned eighteen years old, TANF set a time limit of sixty months for cash assistance. The intent was to break inter-generational dependence on public assistance and provide short-term help to families in need. Parents now must quickly learn to take financial responsibility for their families, and for many the transition has been rough. Low-income adults and young single parents may lack marketable job skills. Nationally only 51% of the TANF recipients between 1999 and 2000 had completed twelve or more years of education, and 19% had gone to school nine years or less (U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2003). Besides lower academic achievement, TANF recipients generally bring poverty class values to a work environment which 4 assumes/presupposes

that people have a middle class work ethic (Payne, DeVol & Smith, 2001). In November of 1997 the national unemployment rate dropped to 4.6%, and by April of 2000 it had fallen even lower to 3.8% - a fortunate situation for the individuals affected by TANF (U. S. Department of Labor, 2003). Lacking a good work history and education, many were still able to enter the mainstream workforce because there was a worker shortage. With the “best” workers already employed, businesses hired more job applicants with marginal skills. Post-secondary institutions, primarily technical colleges in Wisconsin, were positioned to deliver job skills training, but employers found that new employees needed “soft” skills, not technical skills, for these entry level jobs. They wanted workers who showed up on time every day ready to work. Unfortunately, no quick-fix course to teach these life skills is available. Are “soft” work skills - like punctuality and attendance - indeed habits which must be taught by the family and reinforced in students’ educational settings? What responsibility do schools have for students who do not demonstrate these habits? If school tardiness is a predictor of work tardiness, schools can identify students at-risk for potential job failure and develop policies and interventions to reinforce good life and work habits.

Limitations of the Study The limitations of this study are that: 1. The results are limited to the students in one rural central Wisconsin school district. 2. Not all local employers participated in the study. 3. Not all students working at participating employers chose to be in the study. 4. The student population is fairly homogenous. 5. The data collection period from employers was nine weeks. Assumptions 5 1. Participating employers have a precise and accurate system for tracking attendance. 2. Participating

employers will provide attendance information for study subjects to the researcher on a regular basis. 3. Employers expect students to work on days they are scheduled. 4. Employers inform employees about and enforce their tardiness and absence policy. 5. School district staff inform students about and enforce their tardiness and unexcused absence policy. 6. Employers may alter who they hire in the future as a result of information collected during the study. 7. The school district staff, administration, and School Board may change the tardiness or unexcused absence policy or its enforcement and develop intervention strategies in the future as a result of information collected during the study.

Definitions

GPA - Grade Point Average. The cumulative summary of a student's academic performance on a 4.0 scale with 4 = "A" and 0 = "F".

Learning Disability (LD). Decreased functioning in school despite the fact that the student, "... is a) not mentally retarded, b) not emotionally disturbed, c) not impaired in his modalities (e. g. blind, deaf,)), and d) has had an opportunity to learn not hindered by excessive absences, poor teaching, frequent family moves, etc. " (Lavoie, 1990, p.

Tardy/Tardiness. Being late for any measurable length of time past the stated or scheduled start time for work or school. At Central Sands High School, " Students will be considered tardy if they are not in the room when the bell starts to ring" (Central Sands High School Student Handbook, 2001, p. 3).

Truant. In Wisconsin, " A habitual truant means a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of 5 or more days on which school is held during a school semester" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2003).

Unexcused absence. Not attending or showing up for class or work while also not having a valid reason as defined by the

school or employer for the absence, such as illness, funeral, vacation, or approved school activity. At Central Sands High School a student receives an unexcused absence if he/she does not show up for class within ten minutes of the bell ringing. " Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to: 1. shopping, 2. hair/nail appointments, 3. visiting friends, 4. concerts, and 5. vehicle repair" (Central Sands Student Handbook, 2001, p. 3).

7 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE Problem Statement Good work habits - like punctuality and attendance - are important employability traits. This research explores the relationship between school and work tardiness in high school students to determine if school tardiness is a predictor of work tardiness. Tardiness and Absences in the Work Environment Getting and keeping a job are instrumental factors in determining a persons's success in life. Beside the obvious economic benefit to the individual, a job affects self-esteem, helps define social position, reduces the probability of involvement with the criminal justice system, and creates a taxpayer contributing to the local, state and national economy. Given the importance of employment, this study explores two behaviors which are present in a work and school setting. When hiring, human resources managers look for - among other characteristics - dependability in job applicants. Tardiness and absences are indicators of undesirable employee behaviors, and, "... employers may wish to avoid hiring individuals who regularly engage in such behaviors... " (Sackett & Wanek, 1996, p. 815). Once hired, satisfactory attendance on the job and acceptable levels of effort and loyalty become part of the old social contract between employees and employers (Weidenbaum, 1995). Abernathy (1989) cites studies which show that tardiness and absenteeism

are two common reasons for employee terminations. Private business and government entities alike use these measures to discipline and fire employees (Michigan State Department of Civil Service, 2003). The objectivity and relative ease in data collection of tardiness and absenteeism records appeal to human resources departments. 8 Thus work tardiness and absenteeism data is used by business for many reasons such as determining if training had an effect on work habits (Abernathy, 1999) and examining the dimensions of alienation from work (Cummings & Manning, 1977).

Businesses track and analyze the tardiness and absentee rates of their employees to learn about their workforce, similar to taking the pulse to help assess the health of an organism. Employers also watch tardiness and absenteeism rates because they affect profitability. Companies lose productivity if employees are late or missing. Businesses may need to maintain a substitute or “ on-call” list or pay overtime to regular workers to fill gaps left by absent employees. These substitutes may not be as familiar or as skilled at a job, or they may be tired from working extra hours. Their output is less, the product quality lower, and accident rate higher. Yet employers may be reluctant to terminate unreliable workers because turnover affects profits (Hacker, 2003). Time is money to business, and it takes time to hire and train new employees. When unemployment rates are low, employers have fewer applicants from which to choose and no guarantee that the individuals they hire will be “ better” than the ones who were fired. Clearly businesses want to hire the best applicants. “ The antecedents of discharges reside in the hiring and firing systems of an organization. An organization that selects employees carefully need not

discharge as many employees... " (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, Douglas, & Gupta, 1998, p. 4). While tardiness and absenteeism are undesirable traits in the workforce, research is not clear on the relationship of work tardiness to absenteeism. Leigh and Lust (1988) found no correlation between the two behaviors in employed people. Their findings contradict that of Rosse's (1983) study of female hospital employees. Rosse tested five models of employee tardiness, absence, and turnover. An analysis of the results, though failing to provide unequivocal support for any of the five models, did verify the interrelatedness of withdrawal behaviors.... The progression of withdrawal model was most strongly supported, demonstrating a progression from lateness to absence to turnover (p. 1). As originally proposed this study sought to provide insight into the relationship of work tardiness and absenteeism in high school students in rural Wisconsin. If employers expect people to arrive at the workplace on time and on every scheduled day, then it follows that they expect people to have learned these skills before entering the workforce. Secondary education in the United States provides a universal environment where future workers - high school students - can demonstrate the same behaviors of punctuality and attendance. But are school tardiness and absenteeism predictors of these work behaviors? Hotchkiss and Dorsten (1985) hypothesized that deviance in high school - as measured by truancy, tardiness, and cutting classes - would result in deviance on the job and subsequent lower wage and employment outcomes. They were not able to directly measure deviance on the job but found no reduction in hours, wages, or employment for young workers who as high school students had poor school behavior. Research on the direct relationship of school and work

tardiness and absenteeism is limited, perhaps because it seems so intuitively logical that a person would exhibit similar behavior in both environments. One anecdotal account speaks directly to this question. A local businessman who said he was having problems with workers arriving late and calling in sick asked to look at the high school attendance records for some of his current employees. After checking the attendance records, he found that - down to the person - 10 the students who had problems attending class were now the adults having problems attending work (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 50). The purpose of this study is to collect relevant data in order to quantitatively substantiate or refute the connection between work and school punctuality.

Tardiness and Absences in the School Environment

Many researchers have developed checklists of “deviant” school behaviors which are associated with poor school performance. In 1963 a Background Paper on Dropouts and Youth Employment stated that potential dropouts could be described and identified at least five years before they dropped out. Irregular attendance and frequent tardiness were two of the five drop-out indicators. Mizell (1987) included tardiness and excessive absences as part of twenty-one criteria which predict the likelihood of dropping out of school. Stradford (1993) found that tardiness and absences are characteristics of potential 9th and 10th grade at-risk students. Ligon and Jackson (1988) discovered that excessive absences and tardiness constituted the 3rd most common reason for student failure in school. Low attendance and habitual tardiness were among the common characteristics of low-achieving Hispanic high school students (Cuellar, 1992). Estcourt (1986) found that low achievement correlated with chronic absenteeism in high school students. Ediger (1987) included “

cutting classes and frequent tardiness in school" among the indicators of at-risk students with drug and alcohol abuse problems (p. 3). Like businesses, schools collect data on student tardiness and absences to learn about their populations. These behaviors are a barometer indicating the likelihood of student success. Many school interventions to improve student performance use tardiness and absences as indicators of success or failure of the intervention. However, the relationships among tardiness, absences, and grades and dropping-out or 11 school failure are complex. Hotchkiss and Dorsten (1985) conducted a large, longitudinal study which provided part of the data for the High School and Beyond data base. In 1980 the answers of 58, 000 sophomores and seniors generated data for the base year. The researchers did subsequent follow-up surveys in 1982 and 1984. After extensive analysis they found that, " Poor grades stimulate misbehavior and dropping out. Similarly, time spent with friends stimulates misbehavior and dropping out.... The predominant paths in these findings can be reduced to the following parsimonious model" (p. 80). Model of Deviance in High School Misbehavior in School: Tardiness, Cutting Class, Not Prepared Truancy Grades Peers Dropout School Interventions to Change Deviant Behavior Perhaps not knowing about or trusting this model and underestimating the power of grades to predict school behavior, some schools try to tackle the problem of tardiness and absences head-on. Chronically tardy students might get " administrative detention" (Tomczyk, 2000). Schools create policies intended to reduce absences (Malbon & Nuttall, 1982) or create more accurate tracking systems (Hernan, 1991). After learning that one employer found a direct correlation between school and work tardiness (see

page 9 of this paper), St. Pierre (2002) instituted a strict policy for his high school classes in which being tardy directly affected the 12 student's grade for the class. While well-intentioned, this approach seems particularly misguided if the model accurately predicts that lower grades increase deviant behavior, including tardiness. The model suggests that to reduce school deviant behavior educators must focus on their basic mission - to educate youth well. Based upon a National Educational Longitudinal Study in 1988 the U. S. Education Department (1990) issued a call for schools to be transformed into "communities for learning." This survey of 25,000 American eighth graders revealed that, ... such learning communities are seldom found in our schools. Regarding school relationships, data show that by spring of the school year, 35 percent of the eighth grade students said they had not talked with their teacher about coursework during the school year and 65 percent had not discussed their course selections with a school counselor. Concerning learning readiness, teachers said that 20 percent of sampled eighth graders were inattentive; 47 percent of the students said they were bored at least half the time spent in school. Over 10 percent of eighth graders were frequently absent, and a third had been sent to the office for misbehaving. School climate is far from engaging, with a significant percentage of students citing tardiness, absenteeism, cutting class, and class disruption as serious problems (p. 1). Schools which make changes in their delivery of academic instruction may find improvement in school deviant behavior. Cordogan (2001) reported that a suburban Chicago, Illinois high school administrator initiated an interdisciplinary curriculum. A four-year study which tracked 161 discipline-based and 247 interdisciplinary

students found that students in the interdisciplinary program demonstrated more positive behavior such as decreased absences and lower suspension rates. The interdisciplinary students also had higher grade point averages 13 (GPAs) and ACT test scores, and their scores on the Iowa Test of Educational Development were equal to or higher than the discipline-based group. Other schools have made smaller academic changes and have seen positive results. Tardiness decreased when a rural secondary school went to block scheduling (McCoy, 1998). An urban Illinois school reduced tardiness and disruptive behavior in physical education classes by introducing, "... a series of co-operative learning activities to address interpersonal skill development, and creation of physical education portfolios to increase student goal setting and decision making skills" (Anderson & Windeatt, 1995, p. 88). Lazerson et al. (1988) reported a decrease in truancy by junior high learning-disabled (LD) students when they tutored younger LD students. A self-contained dropout prevention class for middle school students with a behavior modification program to teach time management skills resulted in a decrease from an average of fifteen tardies per week to zero tardies for the last three weeks of the program (Johnson, 1995). A pilot project aimed at improving vocational education programs divided sixty 10th grade students with high drop out potential into experimental and control groups. The control group received the traditional vocational programming while the experimental group received intensive, competency-based skills utilizing a new instructional delivery system. The experimental group had academic performance gains and, "... a reduction in truancy, suspensions, tardiness, class cutting, absenteeism and students dropping out of school" (Wilson,

1977, p. 100). School interventions incorporating work have been less successful at reducing deviant school behavior. Back in 1968 the Michigan Department of Research and Development reported on an in-school paid work experience project for fourteen and fifteen year old junior high students. There was no statistically significant change in absences or tardiness or changes in 14 academic grades or citizen marks for the 140 student enrollees over a one year period of participation. Levinson and Felberbaum (1993) studied the Earn and Learn program, a "... work-experience program initiated in 1972 as a school-based, goal-oriented program for at-risk middle school students... " Using a pretest-posttest experimental-control group design they ran two evaluation studies and concluded there were no over differences, "... between Earn and Learn students and control groups for achievement test data, report card grades, tardies, suspensions, and graduation rates" (p. 1). Students' Insights on Deviant School Behaviors Only a few researchers directly question students about the reasons for student tardiness. Damico et al. (1990) found that student perceptions on why they were late for and cut classes included crowded halls, limited opportunities for social interaction, irrelevant course content, and teacher indifference. Having worked with at-risk high school students, Britt (1998) noted, " Students complained about the inconsistency of school rules, especially those related to tardiness and eating in school, and they noted the double standard that allowed teachers to do many things students were not allowed to do" (p. 1). Supporting the latter students' perceptions, Scott (1990) reviewed the literature on school tardiness and found that consistency in dealing with tardiness was the most important

factor in reducing tardiness. Home Influence on School Tardiness and Absences Students are products not only of their school but also of their community, and most especially their home environment. Within one school the family circumstances of the student population can vary greatly. Family stability, economics, and values are all intertwined and have an effect on the children. 15 Family composition appears to have a substantial impact on student performance. Featherstone et al. (1992) studied 530 middle school students and found that, "... students from intact, two-parent families had fewer absences and tardies, higher grade point averages, and fewer negative and more positive teacher behavioral ratings than did those from reconstituted and single-parent families" (p. 1). In the book *Bridges Out of Poverty* (2001) Payne, DeVol and Smith contend that children and adults come to school and the workplace with values they learned at home. The authors postulate that there are certain values associated with the poverty, middle and wealthy classes. Schools and businesses operate with values from the middle class culture. Parents from the poverty class may sanction, condone, and reward attitudes and behaviors which may not reinforce school policies based upon middle class standards. Being poor also increases the likelihood that families are evicted from their homes or may need to move frequently. Single-parent households generally have lower incomes than two parent households. Of necessity, the custodial parent may be at work when the children are getting ready for or coming home from school. All of these factors - values, instability and lack of supervision - can affect students' school attendance and punctuality. The U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (1995) has documented the

relationship of family income and absenteeism. In central-city high schools twelve percent of the students were absent per day; in public high schools with forty percent or more of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch ten percent were absent; and in schools with a lower free and reduced lunch rate seven to eight percent were absent. Lerman (2000) found that high school students from low-income and welfare families do less homework, have much higher rates of expulsion and suspension, and are absent from school more. 16 One intervention used by schools to create a link from the classroom directly to the family is a school-home contact program. Dating back to the early 1970s, these programs, "... send paraprofessional workers who are familiar with the community into the homes of students who show serious problems in attendance, adjustment, or achievement" (Erickson et al., 1972, p. 1). Payne et al. (2001) contend that people from the poverty class value personal relationships and that in order to effectively communicate with low-income parents, school staff need to make a personal connection with them. They stress the importance of listening. Indeed, communication is a major objective of school-home contact programs. Erickson et al. evaluated these programs in twenty schools involving one thousand student subjects, one hundred eighty parents, and forty-eight high school professional staff and found a reduction in absenteeism, class cutting, tardiness, and school dropouts. Effect of Work on School Behavior The literature is unclear about whether working while in high school helps or hurts students academically and behaviorally. Lerman (2000) found that high school students from low-income families are less likely to work than their peers, that deviant school behaviors were only

weakly linked to long work hours, and that working teens have fewer school absences and extensive behavioral or emotional problems. Stern and Briggs (2001) reviewed the literature and found that, “ Previous research shows that secondary students with moderate working hours perform better academically than those with no work or longer hours” (p. 355). After conducting a longitudinal study involving 714 high school students, Hotchkiss (1982) concluded that there was little evidence that the number of hours worked by high school students had a negative impact on tardiness, absenteeism, involvement in extracurricular activities, and grades. In contrast, Price and Phelps (1996) surveyed 229 rural Tennessee high school students 17 and discovered that, “ Working students were more likely to be tardy or absent and to be making poor grades” (p. 1). In this study over half of the employed students worked more than twenty hours per week. Shanahan and Flaherty (2001) indicated that some studies showed, “ Contemporary adolescents spend more time in paid, nonfarm work, which has been linked to illicit drug use, problem behaviors, and reduced educational attainment” (p. 385) and “... high levels of involvement in the workplace increase the likelihood of school dropout” (p. 386). However, they felt this was a simplistic picture of how work affected students and proceeded to do an extensive longitudinal study of 1, 139 high school students on the use of their time. Shanahan and Flaherty found that students fell into different patterns of time use, such as “ Active Workers, ” “ Active Nonworkers, ” and “ High Leisure, ” among others. These patterns change from 9th to 12th grade. Students who work fall into various categories he created: “ Active Workers, ” “ Work, No Extracurricular, ” “ Work/Friends, No

Homework, " " Work/Extracurricular, No Homework" and " Work Full-Time, Chores. " In addition to finding that students with future school plans and higher GPAs were more likely to have time-use patterns which included school extracurricular activities, they also discovered that students involved in only one or just a few domains of activity, like " Work, No Extracurricular" were already in ninth grade considered more at-risk. Students in the " Work/Friends, No Homework" and " Work Full-time, Chores" were also likely to disengage from school. The Work Full-Time, Chores class was strongly associated with poor grades: Students who did poorly in school were much more likely to have begun working full-time by the eleventh grade. Indeed, full-time workers represented about one-third of all dropouts in the eleventh grade and one-half of all dropouts in the twelfth grade (p. 397). The time-use category which was most likely to predict dropping out was " No Work, No 18 Extracurricular. " Sixty-five percent of the students who had dropped out of school by the eleventh grade were in this category. Shanahan and Flaherty concluded that students who were engaged in many activities were likely to be successful in school. They also found that, "... most students who worked were highly engaged in all of the domains of activity assessed" (p. 398). Work in itself is not a predictor of academic and behavior success in school - hence the discrepancies among studies. Rather the student's degree of commitment to multiple activities, including work, is a better indicator of probable high school and post-secondary educational success. 19 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS Introduction While there is a large body of research on work and school tardiness and absenteeism, no study in the literature review examined the direct relationship between school and work tardiness

in high school students. The primary objective of this research is to collect quantitative information to see if school tardiness can predict work tardiness. Secondary objectives are to a) compare the tardiness, absenteeism and GPA records of working students to the general high school student population, b) determine if working students at different employers are similar to each other, c) see if selected demographics influence school tardiness and unexcused absences, d) examine the relationship of school tardiness and unexcused absences in the general high school population, and e) test whether an employer intervention can change the school or work tardiness of high school employees. This chapter will cover the research design, population studied, employer and student worker recruitment, data collection process, intervention instrument, and the data validity and reliability.

Research Design This is an experimental study using control and experimental groups to test one of the objectives. Tardiness, unexcused absence and GPA data from working high school students are compared to the same variables for the remaining high school population. The literature review provided several major longitudinal studies exploring tardiness, unexcused absences, grades and employment in high school students. However, none of them collected actual tardiness data on working high school students from their employers. This study will show the relationship of school tardiness to work tardiness by connecting individual 20 students' punctuality records in their education and employment settings over the same period of time. The control-experimental portion of the study will test whether a mild employer intervention can affect the tardiness behavior of employed students. Information collected on the general high school

population and the subgroup of working students will be analyzed.

Subsequent findings, summary, conclusions and recommendations will be shared with appropriate staff of the school in the study, the school board, the participating employers, and interested parents and students who took part in the study.

Population The population studied was high school students who attend a rural high school in south-central Wisconsin. The school district covers just over 500 square miles and serves slightly more than 2,000 students from four years old through high school. Central Sands County has a year-around population of 18,643. The county's two "twin cities" - Central (population 1,914) and Sands (population 698) are located in the heart of the school district which is also in the center of the county (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). All of the participating businesses are located in Central Sands, as are most businesses in the county. The 645 high school students are a fairly homogenous group who are 94% Caucasian. Around 36% of the 9th - 12th graders receive free or reduced lunches, and around 16% are in special education. The actual number of this high school's students who were working during the study period is unknown. However, the geographical isolation of the majority of students and the concentration of employers in Central Sands results in a majority of working students being employed by only a few employers during the school year.

Sample 21 The researcher contacted five businesses which had the highest concentrations of youth employees in the county and collectively employed the majority of the school students during the winter months. At the time the study started they had a total of forty-eight student employees. One business, which employed four students, decided not to participate because of the manager's health

problems which resulted in time constraints. All forty-four student workers from the remaining four employers received letters inviting them to participate in the study. A total of thirty-one students returned signed consent forms resulting in a 70% participation rate. Employer and Student Worker Recruitment In November of 2001 the researcher made personal visits to each of the five selected employers to explain the purpose of the study, to determine if they had accurate methods for tracking “ punch-in” time, and to ascertain their willingness to collect information and participate in the study if it were approved by the UW Stout Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. At that time all five employers agreed to be part of the study. Following the approval by the Review Board in March 2002 the researcher hand-delivered an instructional letter (Appendix A) to the employers and found that one business needed to remove itself from the study. The researcher gave each of the remaining employers the packet which contained a letter customized to their business which could be copied on company letterhead and signed by the owner or manager. That same week the employers gave this letter (Appendix B) to each student employee along with an information note titled, “??? Questions Youth Might Have About This Information ??? ” (Appendix C), a “ Student Consent Form” (Appendix D), a letter to parents (Appendix E), and a self-addressed, stamped enveloped deliverable to the researcher. Each student would receive \$10 for participating in the study and returning a completed Consent Form. The students would not be asked to do anything during the 22 course of the study beyond giving the researcher permission to collect punctuality and attendance from their workplace and school. As students

returned the Consent Forms, the clerical support staff person at the high school Guidance Office helped out by distributing the \$10 in cash and obtaining a student sign-off on the " Cash Receipt Verification" (Appendix F). After two weeks the researcher took the list of students who had returned Consent Forms back to the employers and made one attempt to contact each of the remaining students by phone. By the beginning of April 2002 thirty-one of the forty-four students (70%) had signed the Consent Form and were part of the study. Data Collection Process On April 6th the researcher delivered a letter to each employer with instructions and the names of the participating students from whom consent was obtained (Appendix G). The employers were asked to provide time records from March 30 - June 7, which was the last week of the school year. The researcher picked up the time records from the business on weekly or bi-weekly trips, depending upon the individual employer's pay period. Each employer had a different process for " clocking in. " One business had an electronic time keeper for which every employee had a code. Another used a special feature of the cash register, and the others used a more traditional time clock for punching in. The human resource staff or managers gave the researcher either hand-written or an electronic print-outs of the students' clocked-in time and also a copy of the students' scheduled time. Time records were kept to the nearest minute. The researcher then converted the scheduled and actual times to military time (one hour = 100 rather than 60) for ease of data analysis and keyed the data into Excel. Each student had an individual record which included the employer, date, scheduled " in" time, actual " in" time, and 23 the scheduled out time. To obtain the school information the researcher worked with the

clerical support staff of the high school guidance office. After the last day of school and using the school database, Skyward, she ran several sets of reports which included the tardiness and unexcused absence records for each of the working students from April 3 - June 5th and also for the entire school year and their cumulative GPAs. She also ran the same tardiness and absence reports for the entire high school student body. The researcher keyed all of this data into Excel, with the school tardiness, unexcused absence, and GPA data tied to the work tardiness data for all of the participating students. For analysis the data was then imported into SPSS. Minitab software was used for follow-up analysis on the results. Intervention Instrument One objective of the study was to determine if a mild employer intervention could change the punctuality of working students either at work or at school. To test this hypothesis the thirty-one students who had signed consent forms were randomly divided into two groups with sixteen in the control group and fifteen in the experimental group. The serial number from a dollar bill was used to enter the random number table with a coin toss to determine horizontal or vertical selection of numbers. The names of the students from all employers were mixed together, arranged in alphabetic order by last name, and assigned a sequential number. The first fifteen numbers on the random number table determined which students were in the experimental group. The intervention was a customized, short letter written by the researcher commenting on a student's school tardiness and unexcused absence record for the previous two weeks. The letter was signed by the employer and given by the employer to the specific experimental group 24 student for whom the letter was written. The letter expressed

either congratulations (excellent punctuality and attendance record - Appendix H), praise for improvement (Appendix I), questioning (Appendix J) or disappointment (Appendix K). To create each letter the researcher obtained the student's school tardiness and unexcused absence information from the school database. The letters were written and delivered every other week during the study period. Each experimental group student received a total of four letters dated April 17, April 28, May 10, and May 23. After the delivery of the first letter on April 17 high school clerical staff and an employer notified the researcher that they had received phone calls on April 19 from three parents who were upset by the customized letter their child had received. All three had received "disappointment" letters. Two of these three students worked for the same employer. This employer did not want to lose these students as employees and their parents as customers and therefore wanted to withdraw from the study. This business employed the greatest number of students, and rather than lose 45% of the participants in the study, the researcher decided to stop sending letters to the experimental group participants employed at this business. This reduced the experimental group to ten, all employed by the other three businesses. The control group therefore increased to twenty-one. Data Validity and Reliability All data for this study is taken from the actual time and attendance work records used for payroll purposes and from the school district's official student database, Skyward, which has specific fields for tardiness and unexcused absences and which calculates GPA by a uniform formula for all students. The data is therefore highly valid. The data from the employer work record is very reliable as all employers used an 25 electronic process initiated by the

individual worker " clocking-in. " Employees are very motivated to punch in on-time or ahead of schedule because their paychecks are dependent upon their clocked hours. The school data is less reliable. While school policy states that students must be counted as tardy if they arrive at class after the bell rings, some teachers implement this policy strictly and others in a lax manner. If a student is absent from class and the school clerical staff has not received a valid reason for the absence - such as illness or funeral - the student will receive an unexcused absence. However, a parent may not yet have called in to explain the student's absence or a teacher may not have given a list of students involved in an approved extracurricular activity to the office staff. These students would initially be coded as " unexcused" but might later be changed to " excused" if the student, parent, or teacher supplies the office staff with new information. While GPAs are dependent upon the students' academic performance, some teachers have rigid grading policies and others are more lenient, allowing extra credit and opportunities to make up missed or late work. Taken as a whole, however, the school data is very reliable. All tardiness, absence and GPA data are recorded on or calculated in an identical manner in the school database. The students' records are a composite of behavior and performance exhibited in six to eight classes per term with a variety of teachers.

26 CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction Businesses expect employees to arrive at the workplace with basic Asoft skills@ which include personal attributes like punctuality. The purpose of this research was to study the development of these Asoft skills@ by examining a) the relationship between school and work tardiness in high school students and b) the differences and similarities between working and

non-working students on school tardiness, unexcused absences and academic achievement - possible precursors of workplace habits and skills. Forty-four student workers were identified. Thirty-one (70%) agreed to participate in the study which would link their records on school and work tardiness, school unexcused absences and academic performance, as measured by their GPA. In addition, the records of these working students were compared with the remaining high school population of 615 on measures of tardiness, unexcused absences and GPA. Throughout the rest of this chapter the various hypotheses to be tested will be listed. For each hypothesis a description of the finding will be followed by a table of the results. Findings Hypothesis 1: Working students are less likely than other high school students to be tardy at school. The research supports the supposition that working students are less likely to be tardy at school than the general student population. On average working students were tardy for 17.03 classes per year while the rest of the student body was tardy for 25.30 classes (Table 1). The punctuality of working students was superior for the entire school year ($t = -2.085, p < .05$) and also for 4th Quarter ($t = -2.739, p < .01$). Levene's Test of Equality of Variances was used 27