

Fall 2017

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Attendance of Detention in Junior High

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December 2017

### Abstract

The purpose of this action research project was to determine if detention is better attended when students are assigned to serve with the person who doled out the punishment compared to a catchall detention location where the student may or may not know the adult(s) working the room. This action research looked at whether a personal relationship with a student had a greater effect on attendance than students having to find a room with a person they may or may not know. Detentions for 20 students were tracked for six weeks. Quantitative data was collected through the results of assigned detentions in a Google spreadsheet. Analysis of the data collected suggests that students are 36.13% more likely to attend detention when asked to serve it with the adult that assigns the detention rather than in a catchall room.

### Attendance of Detention in Junior High

The punitive consequence of after-school detention is a long known practice amongst teachers and administrators in schools across the world. Spending time in detention is not a new concept. Every Hollywood blockbuster involving school seems to mention the practice of detention. However, recently there has been a shift in how schools are using detention, and the effectiveness of detention has come under scrutiny.

At Peet Junior High the use of detention is reserved for a negative consequence for two reasons. First, detention is used for students that misbehave, resulting in that student missing instructional time or interrupting the instructional time of his or her peers. In these instances, detention time is used to recover missed instructional time in a punitive way by taking away some of the student's social time. Second, detention is used for students who have not completed homework due to their own will. This does not include a student that is unable to complete homework because he or she lacks the skills needed to complete the homework. Again, this is a punitive punishment for those that don't do the work. The consequence of not doing work when assigned is that he or she will do the work during time that would otherwise be used socially.

Logistically, detention is assigned daily until 4:00PM Monday through Thursday. There is a once a month exception to this rule, which comes on the evening of our faculty meeting. These meetings are scheduled on the second Monday of every month throughout the school year. Teachers and principals record detentions assigned in a spreadsheet accessible by all building staff.

The purpose of this action research is to look at the rate of attendance of detention assigned to a catchall location versus detention served with the adult doing the assigning. When adolescent students are involved, are relationships a factor in having students pay the

consequence of misbehavior or missing work? Do relationships built with students affect the rate of attendance to detention?

### **Literature Review**

According to Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering's (2003) *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*, "it is probably no exaggeration to say that classroom management has been a primary concern of teachers ever since there have been teachers in classrooms" (p. 4). Along with classroom management comes several decisions in teachers' days about consequences of misbehavior and the option of detention. When it comes to consequences and positive teacher-student relationships, they "would have a profound impact on student behavior" (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003, p. 41). Some very telling evidence comes from the work of Sheets (as cited in Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003), "a study involving 68 high school students, 84 percent said that disciplinary problems occurred could have been avoided by better teacher-students relationships" (p. 42).

James Luiselli, Robert Putnam and Michael Sunderland (2002) researched the idea of positive behavior interventions and the effects on detentions as a whole. The idea was that by implementing a school wide positive intervention system that they would target detentions as a whole, dropping the number of detentions. The results from Luiselli et al. (2002) work state, "In summary, this report suggests that improved student discipline in public schools can be promoted through large-scale intervention that targets the entire student population" (p. 187).

Great research has been done about building relationships with teenagers as means to creating solutions for misbehavior. Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green and Hanna (2010) wrote in *Middle School Journal* that "Current literature on building relationships as a means to manage classrooms includes recommendations such as using gentle interventions, finding time for

bonding, avoiding punishments, and building activities that ensure success for all students” (p. 5). There is great success in having a positive teacher-student relationship in order to solidify strong classroom management, perhaps trickling to other areas such as after school detention time.

Detention is a common practice for schools across the world. Research hailing from Indiana University and University of Nebraska- Lincoln, cited that “traditional disciplinary approaches, such as detention and suspension, have been consistently identified as the most frequently imposed disciplinary reaction to student infraction (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997, p. 295). However, they also noted that “little research has been completed on the disciplinary referrals of students for discipline or inappropriate behavior” (Skiba et al., 1997, p. 295).

According to the academic article titled *A self-management program for disruptive adolescents in the school: A clinical replication analysis*, Brigham, Hopper, Hill, De Armas, and Newsom (1985) focused their research on disruptive behaviors during class resulted with serving detention as a consequence. They conducted research in a school that started an assertive discipline program which assigned after-school detentions for not following the school rules. “The vast majority of the students reduced their level of disruptive behavior after participation,” (Brigham et al., 1985, p. 99) in a school wide detention program.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

This action research project was conducted in a junior high school building consisting of seventh, eighth and ninth grades. This junior high is located in northeast Iowa. The community has six elementary schools, two junior highs, one high school, and one alternative high school. This particular junior high is fed by three of the elementary buildings from the east and south

sides of town. In this study, there are a total of twenty students: nine females and eleven males. The ages of the observed population range from 12 to 16 years old. This particular group's demographics show a population that is 70% white, while the remaining 30% are African-American, Asian, or Pacific Islander. Over 50% are identified as being on free and reduced lunch socio-economic status. Of the twenty students in the population, six receive special education services while the remaining 14 do not receive any special education services nor do they have a 504 plan.

### **Data Collection**

The focus of the action research project was to determine if serving detentions with the assigning adult decreased the amount of skipping of detention within the building. Quantitative data was used to determine if the intervention of serving the first half hour with the assigning adult increased student attendance to detention. Detention can be served in a catchall room Monday through Thursday.

The quantitative data collected came from a shared Google Spreadsheet in which teachers, principals and the at-risk coordinator documented when students were assigned detentions. Students are given detention when they have assignments that are not completed, they are tardy to class, tardy to school, or are disrespectful. Students are required to serve the first half of their detention with the assigning adult, unless they are coaching or have another in-district commitment. After 3:30pm, the student is escorted to the catchall detention room. For those teachers with other after school obligations, their assigned students report directly to this room.

The shared spreadsheet communicates each student that is assigned detention, which adult assigned the consequence, the reason they were given detention, the length to be served,

and if they would be transported at 3:30pm to which of the two catchall-detention rooms they would be delivered. This system of interventions did not start until the week of September 11, 2017. No detention time was available on September 11 or October 9 due to an after school faculty meeting.

After each week, the researcher will access the weekly tab in the Alternative Learning Time (ALT) document to analyze the results. The 20 students' attendance records were tracked in a separate document to record the dates of the detentions, if the detention was served, and whether it was with the assigned adult or in the catchall room.

## **Findings**

### **Data Analysis**

The bias of the researcher neared a non-existent level during the data collection and the time spent in detention for students. The researcher was the instructional technology coach in the building and played no role in the communication of the detentions, spent no time in the intervention after school with students, and reported none of the detentions within the original spreadsheet. The researcher was removed from the use of detention in any type of role other than to analyze the data at the end of the six week recording period.

The quantitative data compiled Monday through Thursday nights for six weeks provided a long list of students spending time in detention after school. It was determined to review the top twenty students with the highest number of detentions to look for a correlation between having a relationship with a student and the rate of attendance to detention. The quantitative data was collected from September 18, through October 19, 2017.

The students' demographics were as shown in Table 1. The top 20 students according to the number of detentions received were represented with six having Individualized Education



Plans (IEPs). Of those six with IEPs, five were male. Eleven of the twenty were males.

Fourteen of the students were white; the other six students represented Pacific Islander, African American and Asian ethnicities.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Student #	IEP	Gender	Race
1	Yes	Male	White
2	Yes	Male	Pacific Islander
3	Yes	Male	White
4	No	Female	White
5	No	Male	White
6	No	Male	White
7	No	Male	White
8	No	Male	White
9	Yes	Male	White
10	No	Female	White
11	No	Female	African-American
12	No	Female	White
13	No	Female	Asian
14	Yes	Female	African-American
15	Yes	Male	White
16	No	Male	White
17	No	Female	White
18	No	Male	African-American
19	No	Female	White
20	No	Female	African-American
Totals	6 with IEP 14 No IEP	11 Male 9 Female	14 White 4 African- American 1 Asian 1 Pacific Islander

The data collected from those serving detention with the assigning adult illustrates that, as a total, 62 detention referrals were made. Table 2 illustrates the data collected from students serving detention with the assigning adult. Within the Table 2 data, eleven of the 62 detentions were not attended and 51 detentions were attended. When totaled, the rate of attendance for these twenty students was 82.26%.

Table 2

*Detentions Served with the Assigning Adult*

Student #	Dates Attended	Total Detentions Served	Dates Skipped	Total Detentions Skipped	Total Detentions Assigned	Rate of Attendance
1	10/5, 10/19	2	10/3	1	3	66.67%
2	9/13, 9/27, 9/28, 10/5, 10/12	5	N/A	0	5	100.00%
3	9/19, 9/25, 9/27, 10/2	4	9/18, 9/21, 10/16	3	7	57.14%
4	9/12, 9/13, 9/25, 9/27, 10/16	5	N/A	0	5	100.00%
5	9/28, 10/23	2	N/A	0	2	100.00%
6	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
7	9/12, 9/18, 9/25	3	9/13	1	4	75.00%
8	10/11, 10/12, 10/16	3	N/A	0	3	100.00%
9	9/26	1	9/25	1	2	50.00%
10	9/12, 9/13, 9/21, 10/4, 10/16	5	N/A	0	5	100.00%
11	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
12	10/2, 10/24	2	9/26, 9/28	2	4	50.00%
13	9/25	1	N/A	0	1	100.00%
14	9/18, 10/4, 10/16	3	9/14, 10/3	2	5	60.00%
15	10/3, 10/4, 10/11, 10/19	4	10/10	1	5	80.00%
16	9/12	1	N/A	0	1	100.00%
17	9/12, 9/13, 9/23, 9/25, 10/10, 10/18, 10/19	7	N/A	0	7	100.00%
18	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
19	10/12	1	N/A	0	1	100.00%
20	9/18, 10/16	2	N/A	0	2	100.00%
Total		51		11	62	82.26%

According to Table 3, when averaged as individuals, these twenty students had a calculated rate of 84.64% of attendance to detention. The maximum rate of 100% was obtained by ten students. The minimum rate of attendance was 50% obtained by two students. For the full table of detention data when serving with the assigning adult, please see Table 2.

Table 3

*Average rate of attendance when served with the assigning adult*

Average Rate of Attendance	84.64%
Minimum Rate of Attendance	50.00%
Maximum Rate of Attendance	100.00%

The quantitative data collected also shows that for those students serving detentions not with the adult that assigned the consequence, the rate of attendance was significantly lower. According to Table 4 below, of the 50 referrals, just over half (26) were not attended by these twenty students. Twenty-four of the referrals were attended in the catchall detention room. When totaled, the rate of attendance for the group was 48.00%.

Table 4

*Detentions Served Without the Assigning Adult*

Student #	Dates Attended	Total Detentions Served	Dates Skipped	Total Detentions Skipped	Total Detentions Assigned	Rate of Attendance
1	9/13, 9/26, 10/18	3	9/25, 10/4, 10/12, 10/17	4	7	42.86%
2	N/A	0	10/11	1	1	0.00%
3	N/A	0	10/14, 10/18	2	2	0.00%
4	10/2	1	10/18	1	2	50.00%
5	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
6	10/2	1	9/12, 9/13	2	3	33.33%
7	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
8	9/20, 10/10	2	9/19	1	3	66.67%
9	9/28, 10/2, 10/16	3	10/5, 10/10, 10/18, 10/19	4	7	42.86%
10	9/27, 10/3, 10/17	3	9/25, 9/26, 10/10, 10/11	4	7	42.86%
11	9/26, 10/16	2	9/21, 9/25, 10/12	3	5	40.00%
12	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
13	10/16	1	10/12	1	2	50.00%
14	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
15	9/13	1	N/A	0	1	100.00%
16	9/18, 10/5, 10/12	3	10/21	1	4	75.00%
17	N/A	0	N/A	0	0	N/A
18	10/2, 10/10	2	10/12	1	3	66.67%
19	10/4	1	N/A	0	1	100.00%
20	10/5	1	10/4	1	2	50.00%
<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>48.00%</b>

According to Table 5, the average rate of attendance was 50.68%. The maximum rate of attendance of 100% was achieved by two students. The minimum rate of 0%, according to Table 5, was obtained by two students.

Table 5

*Average Rate of Attendance when not Served with the Assigning Adult*

Average Rate of Attendance	50.68%
Minimum Rate of Attendance	0.00%
Maximum Rate of Attendance	100.00%

With the use of Table 6, when looking at the difference of attendance rates among all twenty students, eight students could not calculate the difference, as they were never assigned to one type of detention: with the assigning adult or without the assigning adult. Of the remaining twelve students, the maximum rate difference was 100%, as shown in Table 6, earned by Student #2. This rate of difference entails that the student never attended detention when asked to attend in the catchall room. Thus, Student #2 had 100% greater success at attending detention when asked to attend with the assigned adult. The minimum rate difference was -20.00%, meaning Student #15 was 20.00% more likely to serve detention within the catchall room over serving detention with the adult who assigned the detention. When the twelve students were averaged, as a whole, the students were 36.13% more likely to attend detention with the assigning adult than in the catchall room.

Table 6

*Difference between Detentions Served with Assigning Adult and Without the Assigning Adult*

Student #	Rate of attendance to detention with assigning adult	Rate of attendance to detention without assigning adult	Total rate of detention attendance	Difference in rate of attendance to detention between serving with and without the assigning adult
1	66.67%	42.86%	50.00%	23.81%
2	100.00%	0.00%	83.33%	100.00%
3	57.14%	0.00%	44.44%	57.14%
4	100.00%	50.00%	85.71%	50.00%
5	100.00%	N/A	100.00%	N/A
6	N/A	33.33%	33.33%	N/A
7	75.00%	N/A	75.00%	N/A
8	100.00%	66.67%	83.33%	33.33%
9	50.00%	42.86%	44.44%	7.14%
10	100.00%	42.86%	66.67%	57.14%
11	N/A	40.00%	40.00%	N/A
12	50.00%	N/A	50.00%	N/A
13	100.00%	50.00%	66.67%	50.00%
14	60.00%	N/A	60.00%	N/A
15	80.00%	100.00%	83.33%	-20.00%
16	100.00%	75.00%	80.00%	25.00%
17	100.00%	N/A	100.00%	N/A
18	N/A	66.67%	66.67%	N/A
19	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
20	100.00%	50.00%	75.00%	50.00%

Student #10 had the most detention referrals. Student #10 revealed that the rate of difference was 57.14% greater to attend when asked to attend detention with the assigning adult rather than the catchall room. Students #2 and #3 both skipped all detentions received and asked to report to the catchall room. While Student #2 attended all other detentions assigned, Student #3 attended only 57.14% of the detentions assigned to a specific adult after school, and not the catchall room. In both Student #2 and #3's cases, the rate of attendance was significantly higher when asked to attend with the assigning adult. Student #10, with the most referrals, and Student #3 had similar results when rate of difference in attendance came in to play. In the eyes of the

researcher, these three particular students, #2, #3 and #10, show that this intervention of serving detention with the adult assigning detention rather than the catchall room was successful.

## **Discussion**

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Over the course of the six weeks of this study, the findings concluded that detention served with the assigning adult was more successful than in a catchall room. The data shows that of the twelve students that served detentions of both types, on average serving with the assigning adult was 36.13% more successful. It also showed that overall rates of attendance were higher when attending with the assigned adult over the catchall room, by 34.26%.

### **Limitations of Study**

The limitations in the research included relying strictly on all adults in the building properly reporting their use of detentions after school. There was only one data collection method for all detention referred and attended. The researcher should consider other factors influencing the findings of the research project, such as the reasons detention was not attended. Parent requests, doctor appointments or illnesses could be cause for missing detention beyond the students' choice which may have affected the results of this study.

### **Further Study**

Potential for future research exists for more study on the power of relationships and attendance to after school detention. The study leaves room for more research to be completed on detention time being affected by positive relationships. The information gathered in this study was only during the first quarter school, leaving to question the timing of the year. Moreover, this research group was selected strictly due to the repetitive need for after school detention, thus leaving room to study junior high students as a whole and not just those with high detention

referrals. Time range of study and population would both be factors for consideration for additional study.

### **Conclusion**

After accumulating the results of the collected data, the research suggests that detention attendance is affected by the relationship with the student. The quantitative data suggests that students serving detention with an individual that they have as an adult in class currently has an increased effect on attendance for detention over the use of a catchall room with an adult they may or may not know. The data supports the use of detention being served with the adult that assigns the detention over the use of a catchall room. The likelihood that a junior high student would serve the detention is significantly greater when asked to serve with the assigning adult. The average rate of attendance is 36.13% higher when adolescent students are asked to serve the detention as a consequence with the assigning teacher over a catchall room.



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