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## Throwing away the Late Work Penalty

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Throwing away the Late Work Penalty

A Quantitative Research Methods Proposal

By

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ED 603

Methods of Research

Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introduction**

Some of the greatest challenges of being a teacher are to find a perfect grading system to implement and trying to come up with a fair and equitable late work policy (Dueck, 2014; Knight & Cooper, 2019). There are several benefits and drawbacks teachers must consider while drafting a late work policy that works well for their classroom. Some teachers make policies on late work with no room for forgiveness, such as policies that do not accept late work at all, or ones that cost students a great deal of points on an assignment. Other teachers have no policy against late work and accept any assignment at any time.

Teachers usually have their reasons for implementing specific policies, for example, when students can turn in late work without penalty, it can create a backlog of work for the instructor to go through and grade (Bosch, 2020). When students fall behind in class and are trying to complete missing work, they often do not put in the necessary effort to understand the new information and to complete current laboratory work, because they tend to focus on missing work rather than current work (Bosch, 2020). This can result in missed learning opportunities and lower test scores (Dueck, 2014). On the other hand, when students can turn in late work without penalty, it gives them a chance to learn the information without rushing to complete the assignment before the deadline. It may also provide the needed motivation for students who would otherwise fail the course, to complete the missing work (Knight and Cooper, 2019). During this study, the researcher will be investigating the impact of allowing students to turn in

late work with no penalty and will particularly focus on the number of missing assignments that students have at the end of a quarter.

### **Brief Literature Review**

Implementing a fair and equitable grading system is often the responsibility of the classroom teacher. However, grades cannot be fair and equitable if teachers grade behaviors instead of their knowledge and application of the content standards (Wormeli, 2005). It is hard to point the blame at teachers on this issue because many teachers do not fully understand how to make grading fair and equitable, and many do not even realize that they are grading behaviors (Wormeli, 2005). The grading of behaviors can be intentional or unintentional. For instance, a teacher might fail a student on an assignment because they decided not to complete it. Another teacher might fail a student on that same assignment, even if it was fully complete, on the grounds that it was handed in late (Dueck, 2014). The literature details many instances of this kind of unintentional and intentional grading of behaviors, and ultimately calls for an end to draconian style late work policies.

One study focused on punitive grading policies and how they affected students (Wormeli, 2005). The researcher emphasized that not allowing students to turn in late work does not teach them accountability. The researcher discouraged grading based on a student's behavior and warned of the future consequences for the child that it could have, including not getting admitted into certain colleges, or not being eligible for scholarships. Another study agreed with Wormeli's (2005) findings and added "the number of grading penalties a student incurs has little effect on his or her future homework behavior," (Dueck, 2014). Dueck (2014), argues that punitive

grading penalties do not work because they do not teach accountability, and because there are many more reasons students do not turn in work other than simply being lazy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For too long, teachers have been grading student behaviors instead of student mastery of standards (Dueck, 2014; Knight & Cooper, 2019). Some of the graded behaviors include effort, work completion, work timeliness, attendance, class participation, compliance with rules and expectations (Knight and Cooper, 2019). If students are graded based on their behaviors instead of content standards, then there is no way to ensure that students have met the expectations that have been placed upon them. Furthermore, when students are graded based on behaviors, many stakeholders inside and outside of the school (e.g., employers, military, and college recruiters, etc...) cannot accurately predict how a potential candidate may perform in their institution (college, basic training, customer service, etc...) (Dueck, 2014). This type of grading also could lead to students not being admitted to college, or a student not scoring a job.

In this study, the researcher will focus on the effects of implementing a penalty-free late work policy. Specifically, the researcher will search for correlations between a late work policy that allows students to turn in late assignments with no penalty, and the number of missing assignments that students have by the end of the quarter. The researcher will also be looking for correlations between implementing a no-penalty late work policy and student's average grades.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of implementing a no point deduction policy for late work, and to particularly focus on the effects this has on the number of missing assignments students have at the end of a quarter, and the effects it has on their average grades.

Too many students are punished with low grades due to the simple behavior of not turning in an assignment on time. Consequences of these policies reach far beyond high school, and into the realms of colleges and employment opportunities. If this study finds a positive impact on student learning and achievement, then it may encourage other teachers to implement similar penalty-free late work policies.

### **Research Question(s)**

How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?

### **Definition of Variables**

The following are the variables of study:

- **Independent Variable:** The independent variable for this study will be to implement a penalty-free late-work policy in my classroom.
- **Dependent Variable:** The dependent variable for this study is the number of late assignments submitted at the end of the quarter.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is important to the researcher because it could influence other teachers to take a more sensitive approach to grading assignments and may encourage them to get rid of or reduce penalties for late work. This would benefit students of all ages, as well as adults--since adults had to go through the education system at some point. All students should have access to a fair and equitable education, and certain behaviors on one particular day should not be on record



forever (grades), and they certainly should not dictate what happens to a child's future. Many teachers realize the benefits and challenges of implementing a fair and equitable grading system, however, a lot of teachers refuse to try it.

## **Research Ethics**

**Permission and IRB Approval.** In order to conduct this study, the researcher will seek MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study will be sought from the school district where the research project will take place (See Appendix X and X).

**Informed Consent.** Protection of human subjects participating in research will be assured. Participant minors will be informed of the purpose of the study via the Method of Assent (See Appendix X) that the researcher will read to participants before the beginning of the study. Participants will be aware that this study is conducted as part of the researcher's master's degree Program and that it will benefit her teaching practice. Informed consent means that the parents of participants have been fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent is sought and that parents understand and agree, in writing, to their child participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality will be protected through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) without the utilization of any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time will be outlined both, verbally and in writing.

## **Limitations**

There are several possible limitations to this study. This study will be conducted with a small sample size of ~30 students, over a short period of time--i.e. two academic quarters. The sample is predetermined by the school (in terms of the classes the researcher was assigned to teach at the beginning of the year), and only focuses on the limited subject area of biology, as the students in the sample are biology students and the researcher only teaches biology. This study also cannot account for students who are absent on a regular basis, or events that take place in the personal lives of students, that may impact the researchers results.

## **Conclusions**

The researcher believes that this study will encourage teachers to modify their late work acceptance policies. The researcher hopes that eventually there will be no penalty for submitting late work, and that schools will shift to standards-based grading, in order to ensure that grades are being given out fairly and equitably. The researcher also hopes to encourage other teachers not to grade students based on how they behave in a classroom. In the next chapter, the researcher will examine literature regarding late work penalties, and the effects they have on students. The researcher will also lay out a theoretical framework that supports the relevance of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The dilemma of how teachers should handle late work has been around since the beginning of public education (Knight & Cooper, 2019). In this chapter, the researcher describes the late work dilemma, and the implications of lowering grades based on the timeliness of assignment completion and the effects it has on student learning, accountability, and life after high school. Purposes for grading, reasons for late work, penalties for late work, and consequences of not accepting late work are all described. There are several studies that have examined the effects of implementing penalties for late work that are summarized in this literature review.

#### Background on Late Work Penalties

For as long as teachers have been assigning homework, there have been problems with getting students to complete their assignments on time. Over the years, educators have implemented numerous late work policies to encourage students to turn in their assignments in a timely manner. Policies such as taking a few points off for a late assignment, all the way up to draconian policies where an educator will not consider giving late work a grade have been implemented, with little to no success (Bosch, 2020). Several studies have been conducted about how educators handle late work, and the implications that those policies have on students in the present and in the future.

A study conducted by the *National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Bulletin* examined the effects that standards-based grading had on student success (Knight & Cooper, 2019). The study found that allowing students to make multiple attempts at completing

an assignment and allowing for flexible due dates without a late penalty, resulted in fewer missing assignments at the end of the term, and an overall better understanding of the content standards. The study also found that many educators use late work penalties as a punishment to teach accountability, not realizing that students often do not perceive these “punishments” as motivational forces to complete work on time and they certainly do not help them with their mastery of the standards, nor do they teach accountability (Knight & Cooper, 2019).

### **The Purpose for Grading**

To fully understand the effects that punitive late-work policies have on students; it is important to examine the purpose for grading in the first place. Multiple studies attempt to identify the purpose for grading. One thing that all the studies have found is that there is more than one purpose for grading. To be transparent with all stakeholders, schools should clearly define their purpose for grading (Feldman & Reeves, 2020). When schools do this, it makes admissions to colleges fairer, access to scholarships and grants more equitable, and allows employers to know what to expect from graduates of a particular school—in terms of what grades they have earned.

According to Anderson (2018), there are three possible reasons for grading; one, to motivate students to put more effort into their academics, two, to give teachers critical information about how students are learning and how they can improve their instruction, and three, to communicate important student-related information to a variety of audiences, from potential employers to college admission reps. In a study performed in Canada that examined the purpose for grading, DeLuca (et al., 2017) found similar results, with the additional purposes of accountability and sorting. Many educators use grades to teach students about accountability, and many institutions (colleges, employers, prep schools, and high schools) use grades to sort

students into various groups. For example, some students could be promoted to the next grade level based on their grades, while others may be held back. Some students may earn a scholarship or get accepted into a good school because of their “good” grades, while other students who did not perform as well may not get those same opportunities.

Knight and Cooper (2019) found that while purposes for grading may be well intended, many policies are missing the mark, for example, schools may use grades to determine whether a student has met the required academic standards or not, but there are many non-academic components to grades that educators also target, such as class participation, compliance with the rules and expectations, attendance, work completion, and work timeliness. Knight and Cooper (2019) argue that behaviors and academics should be treated separately, because they are two separate things. Classroom behavior does not dictate mastery of standards, and mastery of standards does not control classroom behavior.

Many additional studies, such as (Dueck, 2014; Boleslavsk & Cotton, 2015; Castro, et al., 2020; Bosch, 2020). have found that grades are often a measure of student behavior, and not based solely on mastery of concepts. For example, if a student does not participate in class, they may earn a low mark for the day. If a student was having a rough day, and that was the reason for them not participating in a classroom activity, the gradebook may reflect that the student did not meet the standards—however, it would not consider other factors (such as the student having a bad day), thus, misrepresenting to stakeholders (employers, college admission reps, etc.) what the student is academically capable of.

Using grading to manage student behaviors also does not take into consideration that students’ minds are still developing, and neglects the fact that students often act out of impulse, because they cannot fully understand the long-term implications of their actions (Dueck, 2014).

For example, should a student who can show mastery of a concept on an exam, fail an assignment because they want to play outside with their friends instead of staying indoors and completing homework? When behaviors are factored into grades, grades become inaccurate and an unreliable measure of student academic learning (Feldman and Reeves, 2020).

According to Wormeli (2005), “letting the low grade do our teaching is an abdication of our responsibilities as educators,” (p.17). In other words, if our purpose for grading is punitive in nature, we are not teaching students to be accountable or responsible. Feedback and assessment are the best ways to teach accountability to students. Using grades to punish students for behavior should be avoided at all costs (Knight and Cooper, 2019).

### **Reasons for Late Work**

Several studies have identified reasons why students may turn in their assignments after the due date. Many students lack time management and organizational skills (Mastrianni, 2015). With students having up to seven classes to manage their time around (inside and outside of school), it can be easy to forget when due dates are. It is also very easy for students to get overwhelmed with the workload that is given to them, and to keep track of late work policies that vary from teacher to teacher (Santelli et al., 2020).

At the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, many schools reverted to remote learning. This put technology into the hands of a lot of students who would have not had access to it before. Santelli (et al., 2020) argues that since more students have access to technology, more students will be distracted by the technology, and thus, more assignments will be turned in late. The argument that an increase to the access of technology by students is contributing to more late work is also backed up by Mastrianni (2015), who described how students with access

to technology are becoming more addicted to it, thus putting in less of an effort on schoolwork, and more of an effort into using their cellphones.

Mastrianni (2015) claimed that another reason for students turning in late work is due to procrastination. Santelli (et al., 2020) agreed that procrastination does account for many late assignments, and poor test performance, however, cautioned educators to be careful when generalizing students to be procrastinators, noting that they should consider the stressors put onto students—such as multiple courses, differing due dates for assignments, different late work policies between instructors, and stressors in their homes. Educators may be quick to label students as lazy or as procrastinators for not turning in work on time, while failing to realize that their course is only a small part of a student’s busy day.

### **Penalties for Late Work**

Many educators enforce penalties on students when they submit late work, and their reasons for enforcing penalties vary. Many educators think that accepting late work is unfair to other students who have completed their work on time (Santelli et al., 2020) and (Bosch, 2020). Others feel that accepting late work puts an undue burden on faculty, who may have to go back and grade something that they thought they were finished grading weeks ago, adding more work onto their already busy schedules. It should be noted that some school districts mandate late work penalties, whether the faculty agree with them or not.

Some of the most common late work policies are those in which points are deducted based on the amount of time an assignment is submitted late. Some examples of late work policies include the 10/24 policy and the one-point-per-hour policy. With the 10/24 policy, assignment grades are assessed a 10-point penalty for each 24-hour period they are submitted late (Bosch, 2020). The problem with the 10/24 policy is that it assesses the same penalty on

students regardless of if they are one minute late to submit an assignment, or 23 hours late to submit an assignment. Bosch (2020) argues that a more fair and equitable late work policy is the one-point-per-hour policy, because most students who submit late assignments submit them only a few minutes or a few hours late, not several days late. When he surveyed students at his school, Bosch (2020) discovered that students perceived the one-point-per-hour policy to be fairer than the 10/24 policy.

Some educators do not think that students should be penalized for late work. Dueck (2014), argues that punitive late work policies are not effective because they are measuring a behavior (turning in an assignment late), versus measuring academic standards. Walstad and Miller (2016) also agrees that students should not be penalized for late work. They argue that the discretion that educators have in accepting late work can be helpful to some students, but very harmful to others. On the other hand, there are several educators who use the “old school” method, and do not accept late work whatsoever. According to Santelli (2020), most kids perceive no late work acceptance policies as unfair. It is easy to see how students could get confused when they go from teacher to teacher, and all their teachers have different late work acceptance policies.

### **Consequences of not Accepting Late Work**

“A grade is more than a number, it is a quality of life,” (Anderson, 2018). Anderson (2018) argues that modern grades are built off earlier grading systems that were based on ranking students instead of rating them. This is part of the reason why there are so many educators that have differing late work acceptance policies. Many of these policies were built with the mindset of ranking students, not rating them based on their knowledge of the academic standards. And with these antiquated policies still in use today, come the consequences associated with them.



Grades are still used to sort students. Some students will be accepted into college based on their “good” grades, while others will be turned away based on their “bad” grades. Having better grades may mean a better quality of life to some students, and that is why it is important to ensure that grades are based solely on standards, and not on behaviors (Feldman and Reeves, 2020).

Castro (et al., 2020) acknowledged that there is no perfect solution for the late work dilemma. Castro (et al., 2020) did mention how during the Covid-19 Pandemic, that in the state of California, a “do no harm” policy was used when it came to grading work. Teachers were not allowed to take points off assignments for late work, because students were forced to stay at home, and not everyone had access to the same resources. Castro (et al., 2020) argued that a similar policy should be put into place after the Pandemic, to replace antiquated late work policies. Knight & Cooper (2019) and Dueck (2014), argue that late work penalties are a thing of the past, and that students should be graded on what they know—not on the behavior of turning in an assignment on time. Feldman and Reeves (2020) also argued that late homework should not negatively affect a student’s grade, instead, grades should be based off of what a student can achieve in class during the school day. This way, equity is insured, and everyone is on a level playing field.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research conducted by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci in 1977 led to the Self-Determination Theory. This theory suggests that in order to grow and develop psychologically, humans need to feel a sense of autonomy, gain a sense of competence, and have a connection with, or belong to a group of other people (Patrick & Williams, 2012). When teachers take away points, or don’t accept late work, solely due to the fact that it is late, then students who have a

low sense of self-determination may not complete future assignments because they are stuck in a self-destructive positive feedback loop because they feel they may have lost control of the situation. They realize that even if they try hard on an assignment, they will not achieve full success because they will incur a late penalty. Thus, they may elect not to complete an assignment. Students lose interest in completing work that they know they won't be able to finish on time because of outside factors and end up not completing the assignment because they do not feel like they have control of the situation, and they certainly do not have hope that they will succeed on the assignment.

### **Research Question**

How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?

### **Conclusions**

There is no perfect way to address the late work dilemma. In each school, there are many educators with many differing opinions as to how late work should be handled. One thing is clear; however, schools should have an explicit purpose for grading—and grading policies should be consistent from teacher to teacher. In the next chapter, the researcher will be exploring how implementing a penalty-free late work policy will affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter. If there is a decrease in missing assignments and an increase in overall grades after implementing such a policy, that might be enough evidence to prove that getting rid of late work penalties is more positive than negative.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This study was conducted to examine the relationships between getting rid of late work penalties and the effects it would have on student grade percentages and the number of missing assignments students have at the end of a quarter. According to Castro et al. (2020), many teachers implement harsh late work grading penalties that focus on punishing the behavior (turning in late work) instead of focusing on a students' mastery of the content. While there are several ways of handling late work, this study takes a more "radical" approach and examines what might happen to student grades and the amount of missing work if no late work penalties are implemented for a grading quarter. In other words, how does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?

#### **Research Question**

How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?

#### **Research Design**

This study uses a quantitative research design to collect numerical data on the number of missing assignments students have before and after the implementation of a penalty-free late work policy. Data is also collected on student grade percentages before and after the implementation of a penalty-free late work policy. The researcher will not be participating in class to get a grade, but he will observe the effects this new policy has on his students. The researcher chose this design because it is the best way to determine the effects of a penalty-free late work policy.

## **Setting**

The setting for this study was a high school biology classroom located in a beach town in Southeast Florida. The population of the county of where the school is located was over 159,000 individuals in the year 2020, and the school itself has nearly 2,000 students--which is considered medium by Florida Standards. The main industries in the town are marine (fishing, fish products, water sports, recreation, etc...) and tourism and hospitality. According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), this high school serves students from an economically advantaged area, where the median household income was over \$65,000, and the graduation rate of the high school students is over 95%. This high school has consistently earned an "A" school rating over the years. According to the FLDOE, the school scores the lowest on the diversity index; where 71% of students are white, 16% are Hispanic, and 7% are African American. Most students are not eligible for free and reduced lunches; however it is available for those who qualify.

## **Participants**

Participants from this study were 55 students from two of the researchers' biology classes during the 2022-2023 school year. One class was the researcher's period 2 class, and the other was the researchers period 5 class. All students participating were between the ages of 15 and 17. The demographics of the classes are 58% male and 41.8% female. The ethnicities of the students are as follows; 63.6% Caucasian, 27.2% Hispanic, and 9% African American. 21.8% of the participants receive special education services, and 7% of the students receive high intensity ELL support.

## **Sampling**

The participants were selected based on convenience. Participants selected were chosen because they were already in the researcher's classroom, and they were all being taught the same subject. The research's other classes were electives so they could not easily be added to the study.

## **Instrumentation**

The instrument used to collect data was the researchers Focus Gradebook Software. Student data was analyzed using Focus during quarter 2 of the academic year, and once again in quarter 3 of the academic year after the no-penalty late work grading policy was implemented, for the purpose of comparison. The researcher also used a notebook to keep track of numbers of missing assignments at different intervals throughout quarter 3, in order to keep track of any possible early insights into the new policy.

## **Data Collection.**

To collect data, the researcher will keep all grades and missing assignment statuses updated on the Focus grading software. The researcher will also make notes of the turn in date of late assignments for all 55 students and will continually monitor the gradebook for accuracy. Gradebook data collection will stop on the last day of quarter 3.

## **Data Analysis.**

To analyze the data, the researcher examined the grade percentages and number of missing assignments of all 55 students in quarters 2 and 3 of the 2022-2023 academic year. The researcher will compare data from both quarters and look for any significant correlations between the two.

### Research Question and System Alignment.

How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?

Table 3.1.

#### Research Question(s) Alignment

1 Research Paradigm	2 Research Design	3 Research Question	4 Variables	5 Instrument(s)	6 Source(s) and expected Sample Size	7 Data Analysis
Quantitative	Correlation	How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?	DV: The number of late assignments submitted at the end of the quarter.  IV: Implementing a penalty-free late work policy	Focus Grading Software.  Research Notebook	High School Biology Classroom.  Sample Size: 55 students in total between my two on-level biology courses.	At the end of quarter 3, grades will be compared between quarter 2 and quarter 3. The researcher will look for any correlations of the number of missing assignments between the two quarters that are being compared.

## **Procedures**

The researcher is the classroom teacher in this study. The researcher will record the number of missing assignments between all 55 students during quarter 2 of the 2022-2023 school year. The researcher will then implement a penalty-free late work policy for all of quarter 3. At the end of quarter 3, the researcher will compare the number of missing assignments in quarter 3 to the number of missing assignments in quarter 2, between all 55 students. The researcher will then determine if there was any effect on missing assignments, based on the new penalty-free late work policy.

## **Ethical Considerations**

All students participating in this study were under the age of 18, and therefore were given informed consent letters to take home to be signed by their parents/guardians. Students were informed that they can stop participating in the study at any time. Students and their guardians were ensured that all students' names will remain anonymous. There should be no need for work samples since the researcher is pulling grades directly from the gradebook, but if there was a need for work samples, any student names would be blurred out.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter focused on the methodology of the research completed on eliminating late-work penalties in the classroom. The results of this research will be reviewed in the next chapter.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### Chapter 4

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of implementing a no point deduction policy for late work, and to particularly focus on the effects this has on the number of missing assignments students have at the end of a quarter, and the effects it has on their average grades. Many teachers deduct points for late work, which could possibly deter students from trying to complete late assignments at all. The researcher would like to determine if policies that deduct points from late work should be a thing of the past, or if they still hold some value in today's society.

#### **Data Collection**

To collect data for this study, the researcher used the Focus gradebook software and examined the grade averages and number of missing assignments at the end of two academic quarters. During the first quarter, the researcher deducted half of the point value on assignments that were turned in late, which was the standard procedure at the school. During the second quarter of the experiment, the researcher instituted a policy that would allow students to turn in work as late as they wanted to, with no point deduction.

#### **Results**

***RQ 1: How does implementing a penalty-free late work policy affect the number of missing assignments at the end of the quarter?***

Table 1 shows the number of missing assignments that each student in the researcher's first period biology class had at the end of academic quarter two and academic quarter three, before and after the penalty-free late work policy went into place. Table 1 also shows the average



percentage at the end of both quarters for each student, before and after the penalty-free late work policy went into place. The researcher felt that it was important to include both the number of missing assignments and the average percentage that each student earned in class, in order to paint a complete picture of student performance. Data table 1 also shows the percent grade change between both academic quarters and the average number of missing assignments at the end of both quarters.

**Table 1**

*Period 1 Quarter Two and Three Academic Data*

Student	Q2. Missing Assignments	Q3. Missing Assignments	Q2 Grade %	Q3 Grade %	% Grade Change
1	0	0	94	92	-2
2	0	2	81	95	14
3	6	0	92	93	1
4	1	0	96	95	-1
5	1	1	93	96	3
6	1	1	90	94	4
7	1	0	92	90	-2
8	2	1	88	85	-3
9	7	6	65	73	8
10	1	0	92	91	-1
11	4	0	91	93	2
12	6	2	65	75	10
13	7	2	68	75	7
14	3	0	87	88	1
15	1	0	82	79	-3
16	8	4	79	83	4
17	1	1	91	96	5
18	1	2	95	90	-5
19	5	0	81	75	-6
20	0	0	92	97	5
21	0	0	91	94	3
22	0	0	94	98	4
Average	2.54	1	86.3181	88.5	2.2

Table 2 shows the number of missing assignments that each student in the researcher's second period biology class had at the end of academic quarter two and academic quarter three, before and after the penalty-free late work policy went into place. Table 2 also shows the average percentage at the end of both quarters for each student, before and after the penalty-free late work policy went into place. Data table 2 also shows the percent grade change between both academic quarters and the average number of missing assignments at the end of both quarters.

**Table 2**

*Period 2 Quarter Two and Three Academic Data*

Student	Q2. Missing Assignments	Q3. Missing Assignments	Q2 Grade %	Q3 Grade %	% Grade Change
1	13	16	46	41	-5
2	4	3	75	73	-2
3	2	4	71	72	1
4	6	0	70	60	-10
5	5	2	68	76	-8
6	0	1	80	83	3
7	5	6	73	60	-13
8	6	3	63	61	-2
9	3	5	52	61	9
10	15	17	56	27	-29
11	3	1	83	79	-4
12	7	6	66	62	-4
13	8	13	72	54	-18
14	10	9	46	53	7
15	8	12	70	48	-22
16	3	4	74	78	4
17	9	5	76	71	-5
18	16	16	43	45	2
19	6	7	73	55	-18
20	6	4	76	70	-6
21	4	5	61	60	-1
Average	6.62	6.62	66.38	61.38	-5

## **Data Analysis**

The results of the study varied widely between the two experimental groups of students. Both classes received the same instruction during the observed academic quarters in this study. Both classes were moving through the content at a similar pace, and both classes were assigned 25 assignments during each quarter. In the gradebook, unit tests were worth 50% of the cumulative grade, quizzes and labs were worth 30%, and homework / classwork was worth 20%. There were an equal number of tests in both quarters, all with equal point values. Even though several controls existed in this experiment between the classes, the researcher believes it is worth breaking down both classes individually, since there is such a difference between the classes in the results.

### **Period 1 Data Analysis**

The results from the researcher's period one class generally supports the idea that when there is no penalty for late work, students will perform better academically. The average grade earned during quarter two while the penalty was still in place was 86.3%. After the penalty was removed, the average grade at the end of quarter three was 88.5%, an increase of 2.2%. Each student had, on average, 2.5 missing assignments during the second quarter. At the end of the third quarter, the average dropped to 1 missing assignment.

Two students showed an increase of more than 10% between quarter two and three. Overall, 14 students showed a gain in their grade between quarter two and three, and eight students showed a decline. It is worth noting that none of the eight students who showed an academic decline during this time period fell by more than a letter grade. Similarly, only two students who showed an academic gain, actually gained more than one letter grade. It should also

be noted that most of the students in this experimental group did not finish quarter two with many missing assignments.

One idea for the rise in academic performance and drop in number of missing assignments between the two quarters could be because the school that the researchers' students go to, splits up students by ability level. All of the students in this experimental group were 9th graders and were high academic achievers. These students generally understand the importance of education, and many of them have their eyes set on attending college. The students know that if they want to go to a good college, they need to perform well in high school, and the extra time they were given to work on assignments could have allowed them to complete them, at a pace more conducive to the student's ability and schedule.

There are several possible reasons why students performed better during quarter three than quarter two. For example, many of the students in this group come from wealthy families, and supportive homes. Education is valued, and pressure is placed on students to perform well academically. Many of the kids in this group have above average time management skills, and all of the students use a planner to keep track of their assignments. More than a quarter of the students in this group are school choice students, meaning that they need to do well academically to stay enrolled in this district.

### **Period 2 Data Analysis**

The results from the researchers' period two class do not support the idea that when there is no penalty for late work, students will perform better academically. The average grade of the entire class earned during quarter two while the late work penalty was still in place was 66.3%. After the penalty was removed, the average grade at the end of quarter three was 61.3%, a decrease of 5%. Each student had, on average, 6.6 missing assignments during the second

quarter. At the end of the third quarter, the average remained unchanged, at 6.6 missing assignments.

Of the 21 students in the researchers' class, only six showed academic gains between the two quarters. 15 students showed a drop in their grade averages, and of those 15, six showed an academic decrease of 10% or more--which is a whole letter grade. It should be noted that the majority of students in this group ended quarter two with several missing assignments, and that there was not a meaningful difference in the number of missing assignments at the end of quarter three.

The students in this group are all 10th graders, who are academically behind many of their peers in other classes. Many of the students in this group are on IEPs for learning disabilities, and many of the students in this group do not come from as wealthy backgrounds as some of their peers in other classes do, and many are lacking an academic support structure at home. Many of these students come from blue collar families, and many of the families do not place the same level of importance on education as some other families.

A possible reason for the decline in performance of this experimental group could be that they are not as good at organizing and planning their time as their peers in the researchers' period one class. Many of the students did not start working on their assignments until after they were due. It did not take long before several of the students started falling behind on work. For example, there were several instances during this study where the researcher observed students working on past due assignments, while they were supposed to be working on current assignments. This created a positive feedback loop for the students, where the number of their missing assignments was rising, and their overall class grades were plummeting. Several of the students did not make full use of the new (no point deduction for late work) policy and ended up

with more missing work at the end of quarter three than the end of quarter two. Many of the students seemed to get so overwhelmed with work that they stopped trying to complete it, despite the extra time given. This was not observed in the period one experimental group.

## **Conclusion**

The data collected for this study shows two dramatically different results. The first period group of students, who were academically higher achievers, showed an overall gain in performance. They had higher grade averages with the no point deduction for late work policy than without it. They also had fewer missing assignments on average, than they did with the old policy. This seems to show that when there is no late work penalty, academic achievement is higher. The second period group of students showed completely different results. The majority of the second period group had more missing assignments with the new policy, and they had the same amount of missing work over both quarters. The variation in results between the two student groups--especially in class grades-- makes the researcher wonder if the no penalty for late work policy hurt students more than it helped them. More research is needed on this topic to make conclusive results.

## Chapter 5

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study was conducted to determine the effects on student achievement, of removing penalties for late assignments. Many teachers deduct points from students for work that is turned in late. While usually these point deduction policies are put into place for sincere reasons, many educators who use them face criticism for punishing student behaviors in the gradebook (turning in late assignments), instead of purely measuring student academic achievement. This study showed that among academically high achieving students, a no point deduction for late work policy may be effective. However, in lower academically achieving classes, this type of policy could potentially lower achievement. More research is needed to determine the effects of getting rid of the late work penalty.

#### **Action Plan**

This study showed that there is a good possibility that having a no point deduction late assignment policy could benefit high achieving students. It would allow them to complete assignments at their own pace since many students lead busy lives with extracurriculars. This policy would allow students to take their time on assignments, and to process the material better. The researcher plans to keep this policy in place with his higher achieving classes.

This study also showed that there is a real possibility that not having a late assignment penalty in place for lower-performing classes could cause more harm than good. The researcher plans to implement a new version of the late work penalty into his lower-performing classes. This policy would be drastically different from the previous policy of an automatic 50% deduction for late assignments. The researcher will let his students in lower-performing classes turn in late work with no deduction, up until the end of the current academic unit. If late work is

turned in after the unit, it will still be accepted for 70% of its original value. The intent of this policy is to encourage students to complete work, but to stay focused on the current material being presented in class. The researcher will take notes on how effective the new policies are and adjust as necessary.

This study is important to other teachers because it shows that draconian-style penalties for late assignments are not very effective. While educators should try to grade only the standards met by the students when possible, sometimes, in certain situations, light late work penalties may be effective at holding students accountable, and improving their overall academic performance. More research is needed in this area.

### **Plan for Sharing**

The researcher will share the results of this study at his next professional learning community meeting. The biology faculty have shown an interest in the researchers' study, and are curious to see the final results, because they are still using the 50%-point deduction late work penalty. The results of this study may make some of the researchers' coworkers reconsider their late work policies that they have in place. This research could also potentially help the researcher's school adopt a new school-wide late work policy that all teachers will use.



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## APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
 2875 NW Goldenrod Road  
 Jensen Beach, FL 34957

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in a study to determine the effects of getting rid of late work penalties.

Your child was selected because she/he is in my biology classroom. If you decide to participate, please understand that your child will be asked to do the following, and these are typical classroom activities that involve no risk to your child.

1. The late work penalty in your child's class will be dropped. This means that the current 50% deduction for late work will be redacted, and your child will receive no penalty for turning in work that is late for quarter 3.

Although I was granted access to conduct this study through the Martin County School District, since this information is being used to help me complete my master's degree at Minnesota State University Moorhead, I need to have parental consent to use this information in my final paper that I am required to do as part of my degree. If I didn't need this information to complete my master's degree, I would be conducting this same type of research in my normal everyday lessons and I would not need signatures. If you sign this form, you are giving me consent to use the information that I gather. All information that is used will be confidential, no names will be used. Please also note, that your child can choose not to participate at any time without any consequences.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have regarding this study. You may contact me here at school: [orttela@matinschools.org](mailto:orttela@matinschools.org). You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Kathy Enger at [Kathy.enger@mnstate.edu](mailto:Kathy.enger@mnstate.edu).

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. You are deciding whether to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

*Anthony J Orttel*  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator

11/15/2022 9:01am EST  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Date

## APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

**Institutional Review Board**




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DATE: January 17, 2023

TO: Kathy Enger, Principal Investigator

FROM: Dr. Robert Nava, Chair  
Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB

**ACTION: APPROVED**

PROJECT TITLE: [1958221-1] Action Research Proposal

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

APPROVAL DATE: January 17, 2023

EXPIRATION DATE:

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB.

This project has been determined to be a project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the [Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB](#). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

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This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University Moorhead's records.

**APPENDIX C: MARTIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER**

DEPARTMENT OF RECRUITMENT &amp; RETENTION

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA**1939 SE Federal Highway, Stuart, Florida 34994 • Telephone (772) 219-1200 • email: [Careers@martinschools.org](mailto:Careers@martinschools.org)

**SHANNON ARMSTRONG**, Director of Recruitment & Retention - Ext: 30226  
Elizabeth (Betsy) Paul, Secretary to the Director - Ext: 30100  
Amber Ellis, Volunteer Services, Liaison - Ext: 30223

02/24/2023

Mr. Anthony Orttel,

I am happy to inform you of your request to conduct a research project, "To examine the effects of eliminating late work penalties in high school classrooms. *This study uses a quantitative research design to collect numerical data on the number of missing assignments students have before and after implementing a penalty-free late work policy. Data is also collected on student grade percentages before and after implementing a penalty-free late work policy. The researcher will not be participating in class to get a grade, but he will observe how this new policy affects his students. The researcher chose this design because it is the best way to determine the effects of a penalty-free late work policy.* This approval comes with a few requirements #1 that you follow school board policy to include the redaction of any student PII. Congratulations on this crucial step in getting your doctorate; please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Shannon Armstrong

Director Recruitment &amp; Retention

***Dr. John D. Millay, Superintendent***

School Board Members Anthony Anderson • Victoria Defenthaler • Michael DiTerlizzi • Marsha Powers • Christia Li Roberts  
"Educate all Students for Success"