EDL 550 Module 6 Critical Thinking

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Problem Identification and Analysis

Fort Collins High School (FCHS) has struggled with students abusing the hall pass system for some time. Teachers across the building handle students leaving the classroom to use the restroom, to drink water, to visit the media center or health office in different ways. Some teachers have students sign out of the classroom on a sign out sheet while others keep a lanyard pass near the door that students can take when they leave. Because of the inconsistencies and apparent abuse of the hall passes, two years ago, the school revised its school pass procedures, in conjunction with its policies around tardies and unauthorized or extended departures from the classroom. For the current Extended Departures Policy for FCHS, see the Appendix of this paper. FCHS is a large school made up of 4 main hallways. Currently, lanyard passes are color coded corresponding to hallway. If a student is using a pass within a particular hallway, it should be easy for teachers, administrators, and campus monitors to identify if a student is in the correct hallway.

Despite a well-defined policy on how students might leave the classroom, using the lanyard pass while asking for verbal permission to leave, the amount of time and frequency that a student has left the classroom difficult to track and enforce, and therefore students often abuse the system. Additionally, data at FCHS suggests that certain groups of students, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are more likely to abuse the pass system. Reasons for leaving the classroom frequently and for extended periods of time include avoidance of work and "just needing a break", as some students say. The class schedule at FCHS includes 4 90-minute block periods, and students find it difficult to maintain focus within a class for a full 90 minutes. Young (2022) reports pros and cons of a digital pass system that mirrors issues that

are seen at FCHS. Students from different hallways sometimes plan to meet at prearranged times or locations while using hall passes. It is also not unusual for students to use a hall pass to vape or smoke in the school bathrooms or commit vandalism. Frequently students misplace the hall pass for a particular classroom, and campus monitors spend countless hours remaking and replacing hall passes for classrooms. Abuse of the hall pass system becomes a safety issue when students are not in the location that they asked to visit. Learning, for the student themselves and potentially others, is disrupted when an excessive number of students are in the hallways rather than in classrooms.

Plan Implementation

To ensure the safety and academic success of students at FCHS, I propose implementing a school-wide positive behavior intervention system (SWPBIS) around proper use of hall passes and limited departures from the classroom. One strategy that is being piloted in a middle school feeder to FCHS is a digital hall pass system that is integrated as a feature in teachers' gradebook/attendance platform, which is synched to student's portal. Teachers can digitally create an immediate or future pass for a student. Teachers can easily view how many passes are active, waiting or pending, and for whom and where the passes are assigned. Students can request a pass from a teacher, and it can be approved or declined (Edupoint, 2024). The power in the digital pass system comes in being able to track and analyze data around pass usage. Pass history is available for tracking date, times, and locations of pass usage for students. An additional benefit is a population of incoming 9th graders area already familiar with the digital hall pass system. A digital hall pass system, by itself, is not a SWPBIS. However, it allows

educators to analyze data around pass usage to develop a system around desired behavior and reasonable usage of hall passes.

Table 1

Six Practices of SWPBIS to Address Hall Pass Usage and Extended Departures

1. Use an action plan to solve the problem of practice.	Agenda for first meeting: Evaluate the current policy around classroom departures (See Appendix). What is the ideal duration of a class departure? 7 minutes is dictated in the current policy. How many passes are students allowed to use in a given day? Week? Quarter? 2 per day seems sufficient. Who will monitor the data around the digital passes? Deans of students, with availability of an inquiry form where teachers or staff can request an inquiry into the pass usage of a particular student. What are consequences if the pass system is being abused? Conversation with student about the importance and value of being in class, and a gradual limitation of pass privileges (rather than 2 passes per day, 1 pass per day for example). How will we reinforce positive behaviors? In analyzing pass usage data, students who use an appropriate number of passes will be able to choose a reward. Rewards and reward levels will be determined by the team. Reference this document for reward ideas (Riffel, 2011). Additionally, students who show improvement in pass usage will receive recognition and rewards.
2. Involve the leadership team in creating and implementing universal expectations.	A team consisting of administrators, deans, campus monitors, and selected teachers and classified staff will meet throughout the second half of the 2024-2025 to discuss the desired behavior, evaluate the current policy, and make revisions with the goal of implementing a digital pass system for the 2025-2026 school year.
3. Include parents in the creation of behavior	Once a proposal for the SWPIBS program to use digital passes to monitor hall pass usage and extended departures is available in draft form, convene a parent committee to review the program

expectations by recognizing cultural practices, values, and ideas.	and offer feedback and suggestions, ideally at least one month prior to the end of the school year, so that revisions can be made and feedback can be implemented. Include a diversity of family representatives. Include parent invitations to families of students and student groups who have traditionally abused the hall pass system.
4. Provide professional development.	Inform staff at staff meetings of the SWPBIS around hall pass use, and recruit staff members who are interested in participating in the development team. During professional development days prior to the start of the 2025-2026 school year, conduct a professional development training led by the PSPBIS team to set the purpose for the initiative: For the safety and academic success of students, students should be in classrooms, not in hallways. Educate staff around use of the digital pass system and inquiry form to alert deans to potential pass misuse. Gather feedback from staff around potential rewards for students who are successful with the system. Include staff professional development around workshop model to add variety within 90 minute class periods, and research and ideas around in-class brain breaks for students, so that students feel less of a need to exit the classroom for a break.
5. Teach and reinforce desired behaviors.	During first days of school, teachers will orient students to expectations around pass usage in the team-revised policy. Set the purpose of the SWPBIS program. Students will learn how to use the digital pass system via their student portal. Begin during the first week with positive reinforcement and rewards around desired behaviors.
6. Access continuous advice and guidance from colleagues on implementation and evaluation of SWPBIS.	Gather teacher and staff input on the SWPBIS at monthly staff meetings and building leadership team meetings. Convene a meeting of the parent participants to collaboratively make adjustments to the system. Invite staff and parents to share success stories to motivate students and staff to continue with the system. Deans will continually monitor and review pass use data and look for and present any correlations with attendance and student achievement.

Conclusion

Critics of digital hall pass systems cite student privacy as a concern (Young, 2022).

However, the pass system piloted within the FCHS feeder system, and described here uses a

platform familiar to teachers and students with no additional risks to student data or privacy,

other than a means to identify potential overuse or strategic use of the hall pass system. Students

learn best when classroom distractions are minimized, and students are present within their

classrooms. This is particularly true for multilingual learners and newcomer students at FCHS.

Incorporating a digital pass system will allow teachers and administrators to monitor pass usage

for the academic and safety benefit of our students and school. Through the use of SWPBIS for

hall pass usage, it is the hope that staff, students and parents will realize these benefits.

References

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Appendix

Current Extended Departures Policy for FCHS

Policy Statement:

At FCHS, we prioritize the academic success and safety of our students. Leaving class without authorization disrupts the learning environment, compromises student safety, and may result in disciplinary action.

Guidelines:

- **Authorization for Departure**: Students are required to obtain prior authorization from their teacher before leaving class during instructional time. Hall passes will not be issued the first or final ten minutes of class.

- **Procedures for Departure**: Staff members should have an established routine for students to depart class. Lanyard passes are for bathroom/water breaks and can be used for students requiring a break per their 504/IEP. For nurse, counseling, LTC visits, etc., please use the goldenrod passes. Students should obtain the lanyard passes from their teacher, not hung by the door of the classroom.

Attendance Records:

- **Tardy:** Students arriving after the bell up to 10 minutes late will be considered tardy. Students who are tardy should report directly to class.

  - **Tardy Excused:** Students who arrive tardy (at any point) *with* an appropriate tardy pass are to be marked "excused tardy"

- **Tardy Unexcused:** Students who arrive tardy (0-10 minutes) *without* a pass are to be marked "unexcused tardy"

- **Extreme Tardy:** Students arriving between 11 and 45 minutes late (without a pass) will be counted as extreme tardy. Robocalls happen with extreme tardies like with unexcused absences.

- **Unauthorized Departure:** Students should be marked "unexcused absent" if they leave the classroom without permission or if they exceed the prescribed time to be out of class (7 minutes in most instances). Teachers leave a note in Synergy that indicates time out of class.

- **Emergency Situations**: In case of an emergency requiring immediate departure from class (e.g., medical emergency), students should inform the teacher or school staff as soon as possible.

Unauthorized Departure Consequences:

- 1st instance - Conversation between teacher and student to reiterate expectations and note in Synergy

- 2nd instance - Conversation between teacher and student *AND* teacher should notify Parent/Guardian that the student has left class without authorization on two occasions and note in Synergy

- 3rd instance - refer student to Deans via email

- Subsequent infraction(s) will result in Code of Conduct disciplinary action.

Review and Revision:

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Any necessary revisions will be made to address changing circumstances or requirements.