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A Mixed-Methods Investigation of an Attendance Program in a Missouri School District

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by

Lindsay Sutherlin

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

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School of Education

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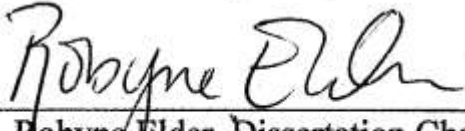
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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Dr. Robyne Elder, Dissertation Chair   2/10/17
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon

my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it

for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Lindsay Nicole Sutherlin

Signature: _____ Date: 2/10/2017

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Abstract

In pursuance of analyzing attendance at Midwest High School (a pseudonym), the researcher examined the attendance program's effect on the junior class. The goal of the researched attendance program was to find what worked in the program, what needed to be changed, and how effective was the program. In order to evaluate the program, the researcher used a software system, Pulse, to collect all quantitative data. The data system gave all numerical information covering attendance from the 2015-2016 school year. Qualitative data was used to analyze the students' reactions and responses to the then-current attendance program. Students who were juniors in the 2015-2016 school year were asked to take a voluntary survey about the attendance program. This data was coded and used to make recommendations regarding changes to be made and essentials already within the program. A focus group was also held and led by a student at Midwest High School. The focus group's answers were used to elaborate upon the program's faults and positives. The researcher analyzed both the quantitative and qualitative data and compared answers of the students to find out what were the most popular and least popular aspects of the attendance program, along with how the students perceived the program. Additionally, the rate of attendance was measured and analyzed to validate if the program was working by examining the percentage of students attending school. The data showed the program as working, and many of the students in the survey and focus group liked pieces of the program. Overall, a theme emerged that the program worked, but changes needed to be made. The researcher suggests that incentives be added to the program and contact with parents shift from weekly to a modified grouping of students who are in need of reminders and on a bi-weekly basis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

In 2011, the State Board of Education approved the Missouri School Improvement Plan 5 (MSIP 5) performance standards. The primary goal of implementing the standards was to provide a way of measuring Missouri state schools and their students' academic performance. Ultimately, the state wanted students graduating from high schools as college and career-ready. "To measure progress toward this goal and to distinguish among school and district performance, the Department computes an Annual Performance Report (APR) score for each Local Education Agency (LEA) and school" (MODESE, n.d., p. 5). As a whole, the score was assigned according to five performance standards known as MSIP 5. The performance standards were Subgroup Achievement, Academic Achievement, College and Career Readiness, Graduation Rate, and Attendance.

Each one of the subgroups was chosen because they were the root of the goals for the state. Subgroup achievement included students in any of the following categories: free/reduced lunch, racial/ethnic backgrounds, English language learners, and students with disabilities. To meet these performance standards, schools needed to focus on making sure the achievement of students within these groups remained constant or grew higher than before, with the hope of equaling the scores of students, not within these subgroups. The academic achievement piece needed students to participate in state-mandated testing and to show growth when they were tested (MODESE, n.d.). Graduation rate went hand-in-hand with college and career readiness. The graduation rate of success was measured by the percentage of students completing an education program,

such as high school. College and career readiness took into account many considerations, including college entrance exam scores, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) scores, and other program scores (MODESE, n.d.).

The mission of public and private schools was to prepare students for either college or a career-guided future. However, the actual percentage of students that graduated was determined by the local school board. To obtain a passing score for the school on college and career readiness the school needed to focus on ACT scores, Advanced Placement (AP) classes offered, and career ready programs. Midwest High School (pseudonym for the researched school) was looking to raise ACT scores in April. At the time of this writing, the school's composite score on the ACT was 21, which was a point below similar schools in the district. While Midwest offered AP courses, the school was always looking for students to continue to earn passing grades on their AP exams (MODESE, n.d.). This particular high school offered classes in the career division and opportunities outside of the school for students to learn about career driven areas of the curriculum (E. Nelson, personal communication, June 2016). The career division included a program with a local technical school, allowing students to work in career-driven jobs. In addition to these performance standards, MSIP 5 spotlighted attendance, which was focused on throughout this particular study.

According to MSIP 5 (MODESE, n.d.), the attendance rate was another piece that needed to be in place for schools to earn points towards accreditation. The goal of this performance standard was for all students to attend school regularly. The exact percent of students that needed to meet this standard was set by the state at 90%, meaning 90% of the students needed to attend 90% of school, or more. In some cases, schools needed to

demonstrate a required improvement, because the 90% goal was too high for the area at the time of this writing. The goal for Midwest High School was that, by 2020, 90% of students would be attending 90% of the school days or more (MODESE, n.d.). At the time of this writing, Midwest was at 87.42% of students attending at least 90% of the time.

MSIP 5 was changing the way schools were held accountable in Missouri. While harder to judge on many of the areas, such as graduation rate because Midwest High School was in its first year as a full high school, the school offered availability to scrutinize other areas, in particular, attendance. The goal of this study was to examine the then-current attendance program at Midwest High School, take the information gathered and offer suggestions to improve the program. In order to accomplish this study, the researcher examined the attendance program at Midwest High School.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this project was to investigate motivations for students to participate in the attendance program at Midwest High School (pseudonym) in the Missouri School District (pseudonym). The goal was for Midwest High School to maintain a rate of 90% attendance throughout the year, which was required by MSIP in 2020. MSIP 5 was the Missouri accountability system used for accreditation, with attendance noted as one component; requiring schools to "set the expectation that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time" (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2014b, p. 43). The investigation intended to examine ways to motivate students to attend school at least 90% of the time. Students who attended this school came from Midwest County (pseudonym) and attended the school

based on the school district map indicating the district jurisdiction. This project aimed to investigate what motivated the students whose attendance fell at or above 90%. Different types of motivational techniques were discussed in a focus group (see Appendix B) of students. Surveys (see Appendix A) and focus groups (see Appendix B) provided qualitative data. The quantitative aspect of the study was an analysis of the student attendance data, making this a mixed-methods research project. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods research design of at least 30 student volunteers from the pool of the 230 juniors that attended the school, who participated in the focus group and survey, and their attendance data were used in analysis. Pulse, a program used by the district to track attendance data, was used for the quantitative data portion of this research project (E. Nelson, personal communication, June 2016).

The then-current attendance program (see Attendance Program in the list of definitions) at Midwest High School was untested and in its first-year trial. This particular program was not an incentive-based program for students. There was an emphasis on teachers taking attendance every hour and being accurate with this attendance. If there is a discrepancy between the teacher attendance taken and the main office attendance, the attendance secretary called the teacher's classroom phone during that specific class period to verify an absence from class (E. Nelson, personal communication, June 2016). A program, known as Tyler School Information System (SIS) (n.d.) tracked the daily attendance and logged it into another program, known as Pulse. The computer software, Pulse, configured the data and updated the individual and school-wide attendance record daily. Once a week students and their parents received an attendance report. If the student was approaching the 90% mark by attending 90% of the

days, 90% of the time, their first-hour teacher received an e-mail detailing their absence

record, asking them to speak with and encourage the child to get to school. The then-

current program offered no physical reward for the students attending school more than

90% of the time. However, students that attended more than 95% of the time and met all

other requirements were eligible for the A+ program. At this time, no other incentive was

given, other than the fact that, as a district, Midwest Schools believed attendance was

positively correlated with better grades and a better education, as reported by Midwest

High Schools Head Principal (E. Nelson, personal communication, June 2016).

This study may possibly contribute new strategies for attendance through

exploring information, such as attendance from the perspective of a student at Midwest

High School and possible additions to make the program effective, so 90% of students

are attending school in years to come. The researcher will gather student attendance data

of juniors at one high school and use this information in the survey and focus group

portion of the study. Junior year is a vital year for students, because the coursework is

geared towards college, the ACT is often taken, students have outside responsibilities,

such as jobs, and time management becomes an imperative skill in the view of this

researcher. Among the stressors of junior year comes the opportunity to make up for

previously low grades by signing up for classes that are rigorous and doing well in them,

to show college admissions offices they can do it (Wulick, 2015). Junior year is of great

importance, because it helps shape the student's goal towards college or career (Hansen,

2015). Using the data, the researcher surveyed the students to determine what they liked

and did not like about the then-current attendance program. The answers given on the

open-ended surveys were be analyzed and quantified. In addition, the students

participated in a focus group in order for the researcher to gather data to evaluate

motivational techniques that work, with respect to attendance. The students also

discussed any perceived barriers or deficiencies in the attendance program. The focus of

the program evaluation was be on students ending their junior year at Midwest High

School, a year in which the majority of the students surveyed controlled getting

themselves to school by driving or carpooling to school (Shults, Olsen, & Williams,

2015). The completion of the project should allow the researcher to make

recommendations to Midwest High School to improve upon the attendance program. At

the time of this writing, the only goal of the attendance program was to achieve 90%

attendance.

Rationale

This program evaluation was the first in the Midwest District specifically on

attendance, and the first program evaluation conducted at Midwest High School. The

study may add to the body of knowledge, existent at the time, regarding high school

attendance. The study sought to evaluate the then-current attendance program at Midwest

High School as one component of the MSIP 5 goal of attendance, noted by the Missouri

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE). This project could

provide schools similar to the researched school with ideas and methods to reach the state

expectation of 90% attendance.

In the researcher's experience, Midwest High School began to emphasize student

attendance. The researcher believed attendance was imperative and that all students

should be at school at least 90% of the time. The study results may possibly be utilized to

spread the program across the district and be used to promote funding, if needed at any

point to back the program, or provide for incentives, if deemed a necessity to the success of the program. The researcher believed an increased focus on attendance could be utilized to increase student attendance. Districts struggling with student attendance could look at results of this study for ideas as a way of mastering 90% of students attending school 90% of the time, in the future.

This study built upon multiple studies that focused on attendance, such as those by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012, 2013), Balfanz, Herzog, and MacIver (2007), and Barge (2011). School attendance could be measured in various ways, including most widely used software programs, such as Tyler SIS. Tyler SIS (n.d.) allowed students, administrators, and parents the opportunity to track student attendance. "This robust attendance software is tailored to fit your school's unique needs at the district, school or grade level. Tyler SIS Attendance provides district-wide access to attendance information and also provides parents with views of their children's attendance records" (Tyler Technologies, n.d., para. 1). This program allowed the researcher to ensure the data used in this evaluation is accurate and valid.

Early research completed by Blyth and Milner (1999), on school attendance included numerous studies on the importance of attendance and incentive programs at the high school level. The Kent Attendance Project, conducted from 1990 to 1993, measured specific incentives and attendance rates (as cited in Blyth & Milner, 1999). The researchers, Blyth and Milner (1999), determined that curriculum factors may have caused some dips in the attendance and that the curriculum should be reevaluated; an incentive program was then put into place. The incentive program consisted of "assemblies, letters and publications to parents and personal certificates for good

attendance" (Blyth & Milner, 1999, p. 122). It was important to note the researched site

changed the incentive program from students earning 100% of their personal attendance

goal to any student earning above 95% of their personal attendance goal, in other words

in meeting their own designated goal (Blyth & Milner, 1999, p. 122). The change was

made, because many students habitually met their own attendance goal and a new way to

measure was needed, and it asked the students to create another attendance goal higher

than the previous (Blyth & Milner, 1999, p. 122).

In even earlier research, completed in 1977 by Berg, Consterdine, Hullin,

McGuire, and Tyrer (1978), truancy included students who choose not to attend school

and were unexcused. Truancy was an absence that no care giver verified, meaning the

student should be at school but was not. The research was done on truancy in the court

system in England, during this time period. It found that there were various items the

court had power to do in cases of truancy, but few worked as well as commonly checking

back with the students who failed to attend school. A year later the authors of the

research noticed an error in their ways and did more research, this time citing just two

particular cases and comparing the results. The cases studied still proved that the harsher,

more watchful program better enabled students to increase attendance than the

previously-practiced, more relaxed version (Berg, Consterdine, Hullin, McGuire, &

Tyrer, 1978).

In later research, Hallam and Rogers (2008) cited attendance needed to be taken

daily, often, and with a consistency that could be measured or described. The

administrator's job was to make sure he or she knew exactly how attendance was

handled. This allowed the administrator to correct any inconsistencies within the

attendance realm. The first step in achieving better attendance was achieving better buy-

in (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 234). Hallam and Rogers (2008), went on to state the

administrator needed to educate the community on the importance of attendance and then

get buy-in through the distribution of pamphlets and informative signage. Hallam and

Rogers (2008) even suggested holding a class competition to see which grade level had

better attendance (p. 234).

     More recent studies focused on why students choose not to attend school. Poor

peer relationships and teachers' classroom management were reasons many students

missed school (Havik, Bru, & Ertesvåg, 2015). While the researcher found numerous

studies on the use of incentives to increase attendance, the majority of studies focused on

incentives for teachers to come to school, incentives for adult learners to attend class,

socioeconomic incentives, and incentives to help students attend school in drug-

influenced homes (Havik et al., 2015).

     While many studies were found on the socioeconomic causes of lower attendance,

none focused on grade point average (GPA) in relationship to attendance. One study

focused on family income, school attendance, and academic achievement at the

elementary level, among a diverse sample of elementary students (Morrissey, Hutchison,

& Winsler, 2014). The study found that "receipt of free or reduced-price lunch and

duration of receipt have a small but positive relationship with school attendance and

tardies. . . . Poor attendance patterns predict poorer grades, with absences more associated

with grades than tardies" (Morrissey et al., 2014, p. 741). Considering the small

associations, the study found no results that provided strong evidence of a connection

between family income, attendance, and school achievement.

The researcher believed that all previous studies in attendance supported that this was a field in education which deserved further investigation (Berg, Hullin, McGuire, & Tyrer, 1977; Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Havik et al. 2015; Morrissey et al., 2014). After the researcher completed a review of the then-current literature, no studies existed on a program evaluation on attendance incentives in a secondary Midwest school setting. Previous studies focused on specific cases of truancy (Havik et al., 2015) and ways to use incentives on very specific groups (Hallam & Rogers, 2008), rather than the entire school as a whole.

Research Questions

The research questions for this mixed-methods study were as follows:

Research Question 1: According to students, what components of the attendance program are the most popular?

Research Question 2: According to students, what components of the current attendance program are least popular?

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There will be an increase in the attendance rate of the junior class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a difference in overall attendance during the 2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

Limitations

This study had limitations, including the survey designed by the researcher. In retrospect, a question at the end of the survey where respondents could communicate any other topics or thoughts they had on school attendance could have helped later in the focus group piece of the research. This was conducted in two parts. Part 1, because not every student who filled the survey out went on to be a part of the focus group; and therefore, any extra thoughts they had on attendance were not communicated. Part 2, because extra thoughts could have helped shape more questions in the focus group that the researcher had not devised or thought of. Future researchers should allow a question on the survey for students to write in any additional thoughts on attendance and should use these thoughts when developing topics for the focus group.

Another limitation of this study was the use of self-reported data. The researcher took what people said at face value and examined data in the qualitative portion by themselves, leaving the possible error in verification. Self-reported data also leads itself to areas of bias. In particular, this study could feature areas of selective memory and exaggeration. In both the survey and focus group, students could display areas of selective memory where they could be remembering or not remembering pieces of information regarding attendance that occurred at some point in the past. Furthermore, this investigation leads itself vulnerable to exaggeration. Within the focus group, because the students were surrounded by their peers, the researcher noted that students could be embellishing events or ideas in a manner of popular ideals and not necessarily conclusive of the students' own thoughts. In order to prevent this in future studies, the researcher suggests having another party look over any qualitative data, asking students to record

only memories that they remembered perfectly and not guess on any events, and reiterate within the focus group that anything students say should represent their opinion and no outside party should be warranted.

Access to the population of the students was another limitation experienced during the study. The researcher printed over 250 copies of the permission forms and received only 51 back, over the course of two weeks. This was enough to complete the study, but was only complete officially because the researcher sought after students who were already 18, and who did not need parent permission. Students who were 18 or older represented 16 of the total students surveyed. For future research, the researcher recommends emailing home and letting parents or guardians know a permission form is being sent home and to include a deadline for the form to be signed and turned in.

The final limitation involves the researcher's own involvement with the school. The researcher was many of the students' teacher for three years, and at the time of the study, was their assistant principal. The role that the researcher carried in the school may have influenced some of the answers via the survey and/or the focus group. In order to help alleviate this issue, a student became NIH certified and ran the focus group, without the researcher present, to help the environment seem more natural. Part of the limitation with this was that it was student-led and some students could have felt the importance was not as high, and many of the quietest students did not seem as compelled to share their thoughts due to the dominating student-leader and other members of the focus group. For future research, the study should be completed outside of the researcher's own school, as an attempt to find possibly more authentic answers.

Definition of Terms

A+ Program: This program provided scholarship funds to eligible graduates of A+ designated high schools, who attended a participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or certain private two-year vocational/technical schools (A+ Scholarship Program, n.d.).

Adequate yearly progress: The measure by which schools, districts, and states were held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Education Research Center, 2011).

Attendance Program: System at Midwest High School where students, parents, and teachers were notified from the principal via e-mail, concerning their then-current attendance rates. Teachers were asked by the principal to speak to students whose attendance was lower than or close to 90%, to encourage them to attend school more. The program then-currently offered no incentives for coming to school at least 90% of the time, or more. At the time of this writing, the Attendance Program consisted of e-mails, announcements over the intercom, and communication between the students and teachers about the importance of attendance.

Average daily attendance: counts were based on the number of children actually in attendance in a school or district each day; then, typically averaged on a bimonthly or quarterly basis to determine mid-year adjustments to state aid (Word Press, 2012).

Comprehensive School Improvement Plan: A local school board-approved plan that focused on the improvement of the district's student achievement levels, programs, and services (MODESE, 2014a).

Midwest: An area of the United States including the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin (U.S. Census, 2015).

Midwest High School: A pseudonym for a high school in the Midwest region, with a population of 923 students, with three grades present (9-11), and in a larger district consisting of two other high schools, at the time of this study (E. Nelson, personal communication, June 2016).

Missouri School Improvement Plan 5: was the state's school accountability system for reviewing and accrediting public school districts in Missouri (MODESE, n.d.)

Popular: For the purposes of this study this word was defined as likable and effective.

Pulse: Computer software that tracked attendance for individual students, grade level, whole school, and attendance based on the first hour of daily class meetings at Midwest High School.

Student: For the purpose of this study, a research participant classified as a junior in high school.

Truants: Children who absent themselves from school with an acceptable excuse (Berg et al., 1977, p. 359).

Tyler School Information System Attendance: Computer software developed, by Tyler Technologies, which tracked attendance and discipline for Midwest High School (Tyler Technologies, n.d.).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate motivations for students in a Midwest School to participate in an attendance program. Attending school was important for all students and crucial for the researched-district's MSIP-5 state accreditation. According to MSIP-5, 90% of students must attend school 90% of the time, in order for the school to gain points towards accreditation. The researcher believed that the various motivations for going to school were worthy of study to help increase the program's effectiveness. In Chapter Two, a review of these topics is found, through use of the literature current at the time of this study.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Introduction

For a high school student, chronic absenteeism may hinder the educational experience. If a student starts at a young age missing over 10 school days a year; eventually, this could become a pattern, leading to misfortunes in the educational system. "School non-attendance may be initiated by the child, parents or peers; reasonable or unreasonable; occasional or persistent; motivated by pressures at school, from family or peers and sanctioned or unsanctioned by the parents or school" (Thambirajah, Grandison, & De-Hayes, 2008, p. 11) . Students did not attend school for various reasons; but, this could be remedied when schools implement attendance programs and when students and parents are educated on why school attendance matters.

Why School Attendance Matters

Having the best curriculum or even the best resources money can buy will not enhance a child's education if the child is not in attendance. Students needed to be present in the classroom to learn. Student drop out and passing rates directly correlated to attendance. Those who did not show up to school regularly were therefore more likely to drop out or not pass their classes. Eventually, even modest absenteeism could lower a student's grades (Williams, 2014).

According to Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), there was an assumption that students regularly attended school. However, in Oregon and Rhode Island, one in five students missed more than 10% of the school year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 7). Maryland hosted 61 high schools that had over 250 students missing a minimum one month of school a year, adding up to roughly 10 classrooms worth of students (Toppo, 2012, para.

9). In a high poverty-ridden school district, this number could be as high as one-in-three

students. In Nebraska, where the number was quite smaller, 6% of the students missed

10% or more of the school year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 7). This 6%, which seems

small in comparison, equals out to 18,100 affected by chronic absenteeism (Balfanz &

Byrnes, 2012, p. 7). "New research suggests that as many as 7.5 million students miss a

month of school each year, raising the likelihood that they'll fail academically and

eventually drop out of high school" (Toppo, 2012, para. 2). This data proved the

assumption wrong and needs further analysis to find out why students were missing.

Students missed school over the last century, previous to this writing, for many

reasons. All of the reasons combine from three categories: students who could not attend,

would not attend, and who did not attend. The students who could not attend tended to

fall into this category due to "illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, the need

to work or involvement with the juvenile justice system" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 4).

These students were needed at home or were homebound for various reasons and could

not attend school. The second category of students who would not attend did so because

they were afraid of being bullied, embarrassment, or that school was unsafe. The majority

of these problems could be solved if the student shared the concerns with a trusted adult

at the school; however, most students stayed quiet and the true meaning behind their

absence was lost. Students who would not attend school were often conspiring with their

parents. In general, these students had no one forcing them to go or instilling the ideas of

why school mattered into the child (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Studies done by Epstein

and Sheldon (2002) showed that higher academic achievement credited to proper school

attendance. They further discovered through the investigation that all students, regardless

of background, were privy to the powers of proper attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Researchers wondered if missing school was really a significant issue, due to the

name calling through media where schools were reported as failing, ineffective, and

repetitive. As Ready (2010) researched, he found that students of high-poverty

communities benefitted the most from going to school. These same students were often

the most absent and stood to be hurt the most by absenteeism (Ready, 2010). Chang and

Romero (2008) noted that the impact was two times greater for students considered from

low-income families. The same children who were absent more than 10% of the time in

kindergarten had the lowest achievement levels in fifth grade (Chang & Romero, 2008, p.

3).

> Compared to children with average attendance, chronically absent
>
> students gained 14 percent fewer literacy skills in kindergarten,
>
> and 15 percent fewer literacy skills and 12 percent fewer
>
> mathematics skills in first grade, based on analysis of a nationally
>
> representative data set. (Ready, 2010, p. 279)

This information was tested through various studies throughout the United States.

In the state of Maryland, Connolly and Olson (2012) completed a study in

Baltimore over absenteeism in the younger years. They found that lower achievement

throughout schooling linked to chronic absences in both pre-k and kindergarten. These

same students often continued to be absent more than 10% of the time in later years of

school as well (Connolly & Olson, 2012). On the west coast, Oregon experienced similar

issues. In a study done by Upstream Public Health, it was found that "chronic absence in

one early grade is linked with lower test scores throughout elementary school; but being

chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade is linked to the lowest scores" (as

cited in ECONorthwest, 2011, p. 3). Reading tests and mathematics tests were indicators

in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties in California that students who were absent more

often than most in kindergarten and first grade suffered academically, scoring an average

60 points lower on reading and almost 100 points lower in math (Applied Survey

Research, 2011, p. 4). Studies similar existed all over the United States, including

Philadelphia, New York City, and Georgia.

The Georgia Department of Education developed a toolkit to combat absenteeism,

after a study done by the department discovered they too had an absenteeism issue. The

department did a statistical analysis and found that if a student attended 3% more days in

a year, equaling to approximately five days, 55,000 students would have seen an

improvement and passed their end-of-year standardized tests in grades 3 through 8

(Barge, 2011, para.1). The analysis stated that students who missed between 5 and 10

days would see the biggest impact academically. This suggested that missing a week or

two of school was impactful and could significantly harm a child academically (Barge,

2011). In New York a study was done on the basis of middle grades impacting the high

school graduation rate; it was found that:

> While relative improvements or declines in students' test scores are predictive of
>
> students' progress towards graduation, changes in attendance during the middle
>
> grades are also equally, if not more, predictive of the likelihood that students will
>
> be on-track in ninth grade to graduate from high school within four years.
>
> (Kieffer, Marinell, & Stephenson, 2011, p. 2)

In Philadelphia, Balfanz et al. (2007) found that 17% of sixth-graders who met the chronically absent standards actually graduated within one year of on-time graduation (p. 6). While middle grades cried out for help, there was a continuous need in the high school arena.

In another major city, Chicago, data analyzed showed that subject performance in ninth grade was a solid predictor of the probability that students would graduate. That said, it was school attendance that was the greatest predictor of subject performance, thus creating a strong correlation between absenteeism and graduation rate. The study observed that even non-chronic cases of absenteeism could have strong impacts on a student's education (Allensworth & Easton, 2007, p. 17). In a different study regarding the Chicago Public Schools, Allensworth, Ehrlich, Gwynne, and Pareja (2013) found that African-American students were twice as likely to be absent (p. 2). The researchers included socioeconomic differences and examined the races without the monetary funds included; both ways cited African-Americans as the sub-group most susceptible to absences (Allensworth et al., 2013). "Students with high test scores who missed two or more weeks of school per semester were more likely to fail than students with low test scores who missed a week or less of school" (Allensworth & Easton, 2007, p. 17). It was clear from the research that absenteeism affected students around the nation negatively, and in particular African American students.

The living evidence on absenteeism, as an issue, could not be more concise. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) summed up the absenteeism problem when they stated:

> Academic achievement from kindergarten forward, high school
>
> graduation, and post-secondary enrollment are all highly sensitive

> to absenteeism. Missing even some school can have negative
>
> impacts, especially for students who live in or near poverty.
>
> Missing a lot of school, at any time, throws students completely off
>
> track to educational success. (p. 29)

Ensuring that all students attended school regularly was the goal of the program

discussed. The program focused on poverty-stricken students, whose chances of success

were diminished when they missed academic time at school. The data on absenteeism

suggested that more was to be examined on how to keep students in school. "Finally, the

strong relationship between achievement and absenteeism needs to be factored into on-

going efforts to develop next generation accountability systems for schools and teachers"

(Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 29). Simply stated, school matters, education matters, and

attendance was the driving force behind success in education.

National Attendance Goals

Around the nation attendance was viewed as a serious problem among high

school students. In Missouri, high school attendance of seniors was dissatisfactory, with

80.1% attending school, with Missouri third-graders boasting the highest attendance, at

92.6% (Bock, 2015, p. A4). These percentages were self-reported and could be

manipulated. With the No Child Left Behind program began attendance was requested,

but not mandated, leaving schools to deliver their percentages in whatever fashion they

wished and often exaggerating the truth ("Chronic Absenteeism," 2012). The Obama

Administration steered away from NCLB, and launched "Every Student, Every Day: A

National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism," as a program to

combat frequent absences in students. The goal of the program was to eliminate chronic

absences by 10% each year. The program estimated that anywhere from five to 7.5

million students were often absent from school (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE],

2015, para. 2). "Defined as missing at least 10 percent (approximately 18 days) of school

days in a school year, chronic absenteeism puts students at heightened risk of falling

behind and dropping out of school" (USDOE, 2015, para. 2). The program closely

connected to the "President's My Brother's Keeper Task Force," which understood the

importance of school attendance in order for students to succeed and reach their full

potential (USDOE, 2015, para. 3).

The initiative described four main issues with chronic absenteeism among

students. By third grade, students were less likely to be on the proper reading level if

absent often in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade (USDOE, 2015). By age eight all

students should be of the proper reading level, and "My Brother's Keeper" was designed

to make this happen (White House, 2014). Students who did not reach the proper level of

reading were more likely to drop out of high school. When a child reached high school,

his or her attendance was a better indicator of dropout than test scores. Finally, once a

student reached eighth grade and any subsequent year after, he or she was seven times

more likely to drop out of school if he or she was chronically absent (USDOE, 2015).

The initiative also stated that chronic absence linked to the school-to-prison pipeline

(USDOE, 2015). The school-to-prison pipeline was a national trend where many students

from various backgrounds became juvenile delinquents and eventually ended up in the

criminal justice system (Parker, 2016).

In accordance with the administration's program, the "My Brother's Keeper"

initiative piece of the program aimed to help students stay on track, build a support

system for them, and build evidence of what worked for the students. The program

recognized that not every student may wish to attend college. College and career

readiness avenues were covered in the design of the program enabling students to go

down either avenue (White House, 2014). Overall, the program stressed student reading

levels, juvenile problems, and elevating the graduation rate of the country (USDOE,

2015). In order to reach the goals of both programs, attendance of 90% was to be met and

recognized as a fundamental component to the success of the students in education

(USDOE, 2015, para. 1; MODESE, n.d.). The national programs discussed and reflected

upon issues regarding attendance, in Missouri, MSIP 5 rules, how attendance was

viewed, and asking that individual districts make plans to increase attendance rates.

Missouri School Improvement Program 5

The MSIP 5 challenge was created to guarantee every child the proper tools for a

chance of success in both school and life. "MSIP 5 is the state's school accountability

system for reviewing and accrediting public school districts in Missouri" (MODESE,

n.d., para. 1). The program began in 1990 and reached its fifth version at the time of this

writing. "The Department believes high expectations, a clear vision and a few very

focused, high-impact goals will be critical to driving the improvement efforts necessary

to bring about positive results" (MODESE, n.d., para. 2). The program included policies

and goals that helped define its purpose.

MSIP 5 included four main policy goals in its implementation. As stated in MSIP

5 (MODESE, n.d.), the policy goals include properly stating the expectations for student

achievement, using language that was understood and meaningfully stated the condition

of various school performances, included all stakeholders when communicating

information, and promoted improvements in the schools. The expectation of student

achievement was that all students would graduate ready to either attend college or enter

the career world. School performances needed to be clear for two reasons. The first

reason was to help districts in need of improvement, this way they could obtain the

proper support and interventions to continue to grow. Secondly, recognition should be

communicated out clearly for schools that were classified as high-performing.

Communication was important for continuous improvement and innovation within each

district and must be transparent. Together these policy goals shaped how schools in the

state of Midwest High School earned accreditation.

These policies needed to be met in order for the school to be considered

accredited. MSIP 5 used Annual Performance Reports (APRs) which were "generated for

every public school, district and charter local education agency each year" (MODESE,

n.d., para. 3). At the district level, to determine appropriate supports and interventions the

Annual performance Reports were used. Under MSIP 5, each school "district must

maintain and implement a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)"

(MODESE, n.d., p. 2). Classifications, which began in the fall of 2015, were determined

by the State Board of Education (MODESE, n.d., p. 4).

The standards of MSIP 5 were deeper than just that of attendance. The

performance indicators included the following tests: Missouri Assessment Program Tests

(MAP), American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), COMPASS,

ACT WorkKeys, and ASVAB (military test) scores. Beyond tests, performance was

determined through successful completion of advanced courses, career education

placement, college placement, graduation rates, attendance rates, and subgroup

achievement. These scores combined helped rank the schools and allowed the State

Board of Education to determine accreditation status (MODESE, n.d.).

Beyond performance standards, schools were also required to meet another

category before determining accreditation. "The Resource and Process Standards are

designed to provide the necessary structures to support school improvement" (MODESE,

n.d., para. 2). The Resource Standards included academic content required for

elementary, junior high/middle school and high school grade levels, class size ratios, staff

ratios for administrators, guidance counselors and librarians, staff qualifications, and

teacher planning time. The Process Standards included best practices around: governance,

instruction, and the teacher (MODESE, n.d.). Together the resource, performance, and

process standards established high expectations for all schools within the state.

According to MSIP 5 (MODESE, n.d.), there were four levels to which schools

were placed on the accreditation scale. Schools earned accreditation through a points-

based system through the resource, performance, and process standards previously

discussed. The highest level was Accredited with Distinction. In order to qualify, the

school must have "equal to or greater than 90% of the points possible on the APR and

meet other criteria yet to be determined by the State Board of Education" (MODESE,

n.d., p. 5). Next, there was Accredited, where schools must at least meet 70% of the

possible points on the APR (MODESE, n.d., p. 5). The final two categories were

Provisional and Unaccredited. At the provisional level schools fell above 50% but below

70%, and unaccredited school fell at or below 50% of the possible points on the APR

(MODESE, n.d., p. 5). Outside of the basic school attendance requirements, a district in

South Dakota took attendance in a different direction requiring at least 80% of the student

population to attend at least one school-sponsored event a year (Uttermark, 2016, p. 14).

Accreditation was important and a key component to obtaining it was through

attendance. Under attendance, performance standard four required by the MODESE,

schools were asked to make sure students were attending school regularly. According to

the CSIP (2014), "Attendance targets use the individual student's attendance rate and set

the expectation that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time" (p. 48).

Calculating the data began with the question of has the student been at the school the

entire year? If the answer was no, then the calculation as follows was different for that

student slightly. "The student's attendance rate is determined by using the 'hours of

absence' method. This method is calculated by dividing the hours of attendance by the

total hours enrolled, then multiplying by 100 rounded to the tenth" (MODESE, 2014a, p.

49). Students attending a non-full year were calculated based on the hours of school

possible for their attendance at that school, based on days of attendance. Overall, MSIP 5

was helping pave the way for schools in matters of attendance, by holding schools

accountable for their attendance data. Other data was considered when scoring districts,

as well, including academic achievements, such as end of course exam scores, subgroup

achievements (such as African Americans), college or career readiness, and the district

graduation rate (MODESE, 2014). MSIP 5 focused on student attendance, but left out

another component of attendance altogether, teacher attendance.

Teacher Absences

According to Bidwell (2014), teachers were in their room 94% of the year;

however, 1 in 10 teachers were chronically absent. In order to be considered chronically

absent a teacher must miss more than 10% of the school year (para. 2). Over time, these

absences were tallying up to over one full year of a child's education (para. 3). This

meant at least 170 days were taught by a substitute teacher on average, in a child's

lifetime, if they had these chronically absent teachers. Unfortunately, with substitute

teachers, daily routines and methods were lost. In a sense, most teachers were at school;

but the distraction in the data lie with those teachers who were not getting to school as

often as they should (Bidwell, 2014).

In a study done by Roby (2013), the effect of teacher absence on student

achievement was considered using an Ohio school district. The study took place in an

Ohio school district where comparisons were made between schools with low teacher

attendance rates and schools who retained high attendance amongst their faculty. Data

used for results in the study included: school performance indicators, adequate yearly

progress (AYP), attendance rate of both teachers and students, and individual school

ratings. According to Roby (2013), "Statistical analysis included comparison of means,

standard deviations, percentages, and *t*-test ratios" (p. 201). While Ohio used data to

entice teachers, other programs across the globe used incentives.

Previous research into the problem of teacher absenteeism concluded various

ideas that did not work to entice teachers to avoid absent days. There was an obvious

correlation, according to various studies noted in the article that teachers who were often

absent had students in class that did not score as well on achievement tests (Roby, 2013).

Further research indicated that teachers were not being penalized on their evaluations

from their principals for poor attendance rates. In a study done in India, it was noted that

teachers were to be given incentives to attend work. This method did not work, and no

punishment, such as lower pay for missed days was practiced amongst the schools

(Kremer, 2005). A similar system of incentives was given for better test scores, the

research concluded that without the incentive, test scores were unlikely to increase. An

additional study was done in Georgia, where they told teachers they would be subsidized

for any unused sick leave in an attempt to reduce teacher absenteeism. Unfortunately, the

study reported that no extrinsic motivator of money provided any significant difference in

teacher attendance (Boyer, 1994). With all of the methods studied, there needed to be a

way to fix the problem of teacher attendance to serve the students better.

Ohio recognized that students must maintain a 93% attendance rate, but had no

goal for teachers to meet regarding attendance (Roby, 2013, p. 202). While supporting

research by Barrington and Hendricks (1989) suggested that early attendance in school

was the main indicator, Roby (2013) had statistics to prove that teacher influence may

have power as well. Student attendance rates reflected that of teacher attendance rates,

allowing for more absences at the schools where teachers were also frequently absent.

Student achievement was based on tested subjects, graduation rate, and attendance. In

this category, once again, a statistical significance was found where schools with lower

attendance had a score of 73.80 in the category of achievement, while the highly attended

schools had a score of 103 (Roby, 2013, p. 202). An eye-opening statistic was that of the

standards met, being that the lower attended school had a score of 20% to that of the

highly attended school of 91% (Roby, 2013, p. 203). The AYP reported that 28 of the

highly attended schools met AYP standards; while only two of the poorly rated teacher

attendance schools met AYP standards. Conclusively, the performance index stated that,

while none of the highly attended school rated academic watch or academic emergency,

15 of the under-attended schools rated in this category (Roby, 2013, p. 203). Not only did
student attendance matter, but teacher attendance could result in big differences regarding
academics, as well.

Teachers helped cultivate the learning environment that surrounded students.
They often dedicated their time to coach sports or sponsor after school clubs, and in many
cases were role models for the students. Many students did not have civic models at
home, allowing the teacher to take on that role in their lives. According to DeKalb
(1999), a teacher needed to arrive at school on time every day, in order to set an example
for the students. If a student often saw a teacher arriving late, they too could begin the
same behavior with the impression that timeliness was not important. Rohrman (1993)
stated not only that should teachers should not be late, they should also do their best to
include all students in classroom activities. He went on to say there was importance in
giving all students praise so they felt wanted; this included when coaching sports or
during any other after-school time as well. Teachers should use open-ended questions and
interact with all students during instructional time, as well as minimize verbal reprimands
and other forms of punishment during class time. Educators who worked to make all feel
included would help students want to attend school more and could aid in creating school
attendance programs to generate higher attendance overall. Leaders within the school,
including teachers, needed to attend school, but are often not given the attendance
program benefits that many schools offered to students.

School Attendance Programs

Attendance programs were needed to help monitor students, even at a young age.
Kindergartners had such poor attendance the year previous to Bock's (2015) writing, that

only secondary school trumped their low attendance rate (p.A1). Intervention specialists,

as cited in Bock (2015), were in agreement that schools needed to start tracking

attendance at a young age. Bock (2015) believed that in order to stop chronic absenteeism

schools should "partner with parents and community agencies to intervene when poor

attendance is a problem for students or schools" (p. A1). In order to turn around poor

attendance, there needed to be work done to find the source of the problem.

According to Bock (2015), first-graders and kindergartners were losing ample

time in the classroom. At least 10% of them were missing a month or more of school

each year. "These early attendance gaps can turn into achievement gaps, which contribute

to our graduation gaps" (Bock, 2015, p. A1). Schoeneberger (2012) stated that the

elementary and middle school level attendance mattered, because so much

developmentally was occurring during this time period (p. 12). In order to target the right

resources to aid in attendance, schools needed to know who was missing, where absences

occurred most, when they occurred most, and why students were chronically absent. In

order to turn around this trend of absenteeism, partnering with the families at a young age

helped those to find out the answers to these questions giving resources to bring down the

absences. In years recent to this writing, Missouri was scored by officials regarding

attendance in the following manner to maintain accreditation: 90% of the students needed

to be in class 90% of the time. The Midwest School District's 2014-2015 attendance

average was 89.2%, the lowest in Midwest County (Bock, 2015, p. A4). The goal was to

use this information to target students who were often absent and to change the trend.

Identifying those who needed interventions could be difficult, especially when

considering all of the variables. However according to a study completed in Chicago,

"students' attendance and GPA in the middle grades provided the best indication of how they will perform in their high school classes, compared to other potential indicators such as test scores" (Allensworth, Gwynne, Moore, & De la Torre, 2014). Hallam and Rogers (2008) took action when they noted it was not just about the students; in order to gain commitment to attendance the staff needed to buy in as well. Within schools, policy was a known term. The policy was a simple way of holding people accountable for their actions. In the case of attendance, effective policy was one that was clearly understood and carried out consistently by all. To make sure it was understood took the time to explain it and model it to teachers and students. Making pamphlets to send home with students, taking note of the language barriers that may be present, and sending home these pamphlets in accordance with the barriers was essential. Attendance could be such an important issue that, at times, even the law had to get involved.

A new state law in Nevada promoted attendance for hopeful drivers. The "lawmakers passed Senate Bill 269 during the 2013 Legislative session in Carson City;" the law went into effect at the start of the 2014 year (Corona, 2014, para. 2). The law presented changes for students under the age of 18. For students who wanted to receive their permit or license, they must first show proof that they were regularly attending school or had valid excuses for their absences, as approved by the school (Department of Motor Vehicles, 2016). Therefore, this law was bad news for students who had three or more unexcused absences in one year. The requirement stated, if that was the case, they would lose the right to drive. If a student wanted to be exempt from these rules or perhaps they did not pertain to them, they must show a valid high school diploma or something equivalent to a GED. For the kids doing the right thing and getting to school, "a signature

on a certificate of attendance needs to be signed by the student's principal or designee to

qualify for a license" (Corona, 2014, para. 6). Students who were consistently truant

faced consequences, both at the DMV and through the school administration, where

suspensions or detentions could be handed out. All in all, school officials agreed that

families needed to work together to get their students to school on time in order to earn

the privilege to drive in the state of Nevada.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE, 2015), schools must

first measure and analyze attendance, then monitor, and finally act last. During the

measure and analyze stage, schools were to publish what they measured, track students

on a weekly basis, and then analyze to determine why students were not attending school

(Therriault, Heppen, O'Cummings, Fryer, & Johnson, 2010). When monitoring students,

the schools were looking for which students needed the most intervention (Fuchs &

Stecker, 2003). Do the interventions require special circumstances based on the student?

Are students motivated by any measures the school can use as an incentive? What seems

to be the student's issue when it comes to attendance? When it comes time to act, staff

must be ready to follow the procedures necessary to guide the student (USDOE,

2015).The "Every Student, Every Day" initiative is nationwide; however, a single city,

New York City had an approach that was working quite well for them.

Targeting low-income and at-risk students, the NYC Success Mentor corps used

data and research to seek an improvement in attendance, behavior, and educational

outcomes. In order to form relationships with students, "Success Mentors are trained to

serve as advisors, motivators, connectors, confidence-builders, and early warning systems

for chronically absent students at risk of getting off track" (Truancy Task Force - NYC

Success Mentor Corps [Truancy Task Force], n.d., p. 1). The Success Mentors were granted a unique position via the Mayor's multi-agency campaign to achieve the goals of the "Every Student, Every Day" initiative. The mentors had access to the schools, school leaders, organizations within the community that could aid in the endeavor, student data, and were part of a greater group of interagency organizations that all strove for academic success (Truancy Task Force, n.d., p. 2).

The mentor program tried to match one mentor with about 10 to 15 target students. Students would see their mentor in school at least three times a week. Research helped the mentor to determine what interventions to put into place with each individual student by providing background knowledge of students' education and demographics. According to the Truancy Task Force - NYC Success Mentor Corps (Truancy Task Force, n.d.), effective interventions included, "personally greeting students in the morning to make them feel welcomed and noticed, calling home every day a child is absent, and connecting students and families with a wide range of services to help them overcome barriers to success" (p. 1). The majority of these interventions were extremely low cost if not free altogether.

The "Every Student, Every Day," campaign put into place a well-oiled response system for chronically absent students. Within the program graduation rates, juvenile records, and reading levels were also considered when deciphering the tier system (America's Promise, 2015). The program broke up the response system into three tiers. Tier 1 was for all students and was low cost. Tier 2 was for students exhibiting chronic absence and rose in cost slightly from Tier 1. Higher in cost, Tier 3 was for a student who missed more than 20% of the prior school year (America's Promise, 2015, p. 30). These

tiers geared up together to help create the program that spread awareness for student

attendance nationwide.

All students reaped the benefits of Tier 1 in the "Every Student, Every Day"

program, which had a common theme of including all in matters of education. With low-

cost measures taken, Tier 1 provided great benefits to schools around the nation where

money may be tight (USDOE, 2015). An easy response suggested in Tier 1 was for

schools to recognize good and improved attendance. This could include a small award,

the students name posted on the district website, or a small token of appreciation sent

home with the student. Noticing when students showed up to school was perhaps the

largest sector of this tier and recommended by Attendance Works (n.d.) as an early

deterrent to chronic absenteeism. The staff took part in Tier 1, not only by recognizing,

but by also making learning engaging and centering school discipline around restorative

practice, not punishment. Part of the educational background that had to be completed in

Tier 1 was the education of the students and the parents about the importance of

attendance. When doing this, the school leaders needed to be clear about what the school

attendance expectations and goals were (USDOE, 2015). Building this awareness among

students and parents about how absences could easily add up to too much time lost in the

classroom helped everyone understand the goals of the system. Providing parents with

on-going information about their child's absences in a supportive and positive manner

could help break down any indifferences and help solve the absenteeism problem. To

keep track of the goals of the school, Tier 1 included monitoring student attendance.

Patterns needed to be looked for when monitoring. Often patterns were seen regarding

economically challenged families. Students needed to help students and families meet

basic needs so that all had an opportunity to get to school. Finally, to continue with positive growth, schools worked to establish a positive and engaging school climate, and stopped engaging in school practices that discouraged attendance (Truancy Task Force, n.d.). In New York City, student absenteeism was a problem, enabling them to create a new program, which used phone calls to entice students to wake up for school.

Imagine students getting up at 5:30 AM, not to the voice of their mother asking them to get up, but instead to a celebrity breezily asking them to get to school today. "WakeUp! NYC is a multi-media celebrity wake-up call campaign with inspirational morning messages from celebrities such as Magic Johnson, the NY Yankees, John Legend and Whoopi Goldberg" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013, p. 17). Over 30,000 students in New York City signed up to get the free phone call in the morning. In a survey done via telephone in 2012, approximately 80% of randomly selected parents stated that the WakeUp phone calls helped their children get to school more often and on time more frequently (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p.14). This innovative measure to entice students to wake up and get to school cost the district little money and provided the students with some excitement when answering their daily wake up call. This message went out to students and parents, but parents still needed to be educated on why incentives like this mattered.

The school's message to the parents in Tier 1, needed to be conveyed in a way that parents understand and respect. As stated by Truancy Task Force (n.d.), absences and attendance had different connotations and were thus perceived differently amongst the community. While absences often appeared more negative and associated with a child being missing, attendance was associated in a more positive light and with what the child

was gaining. The perception of absences was that it was a behavior that was planned; and

therefore, parents must think about the impact of the absences. Attendance was perceived

as a behavior that was considered automatic and allowed parents to focus on what they

were already doing. In California, schools were using a Positive Parent Messaging

toolkit, to help spread the word on the importance of attendance to parents (Attendance

Works, 2016). The potential impact of both items was different, with one focusing on a

change in behavior and the other reinforcing then-current behavior.

When educating parents on their child's absences, the majority of parents

underestimated the number of year-end absences, according to the Truancy Task Force

(n.d.). When asking parents about their child's absences in the following two ways, the

math did not add up. The first question asked parents if their child was absent an average

of two or more days a month. Of the respondents, 60% of parents said their child was

absent an average of two or more days a month ("Bringing Attendance Home," 2015 p.

23). The second question asked parents if their child was absent more than 10 days over

the year. This time parents reported, with the same 60% saying that their child was not

absent more than 10 days a year ("Bringing Attendance Home," 2015 p. 24). Overall

90% of the parents polled responded that their child missed around two or more days a

month, but only 30% responded that their child missed over 10 days annually ("Bringing

Attendance Home," 2015 pp. 23-24). The math did not add up, because if the student was

absent an average of two or more days a month, then the student was absent far more than

10 or more days a year. Parents were underestimating how often their students were

actually absent and were in need of an education on the effects these absences had on

their child.

At the second rung of the ladder in Tier 2, students establishing chronic absenteeism were targeted. These students were missing 10% of the school year and needed more individualized focus than Tier 1 students, including more money spent on their interventions (Shapiro, 2014). In order to be indicative of a positive school climate, leaders must provide a personalized early outreach to students who fall within this tier. Once a personal relationship was established, it was time for the school leader to call a meeting with the student and family to develop a plan to increase the student's attendance. Finally, amp up the personalization with the student and offer them an attendance mentor or buddy (Truancy Task Force, n.d.).

According to the Truancy Task Force (n.d.), identifying which students needed more support could be seen within the first two weeks of school. Students who may need extra intervention met the following criteria: chronic absence in the prior year, meaning they missed 10% or more of the school year, and through a tracking system starting at the beginning of the school year (Truancy Task Force, n.d., para. 2). Within the first two weeks, if a student had two absences they qualified for help under Tier 2. Missing two to three days within the first month, or having four absences within the first two months also qualified as a high-risk-for-absenteeism student and they also qualified for Tier 2 services. Attendance Works (2014) cited five possible Tier 2 interventions to lead to fewer absences. Creating a student attendance plan by partnering with families, and assigning school success mentors both worked well on the Tier 2 level. Engaging before- or after-school activities provided students with a positive incentive for attending school. Schools had the option of connecting with a walk-to-school companion, providing wake-up calls, or rain gear to students who seemed excuse prone in relation to attendance.

Finally, in certain circumstances, providing the family with a plan or contact for health

support could also increase attendance.

      The mentor program was broken down in a study by Balfanz and Byrnes (2013),

for John Hopkins School of Education. In the study, they stated key successes of the

mentor program. Statistics included that students with prior histories of chronic

absenteeism with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school, which

was educationally significant (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013). The added bonus of the program

was that it engaged community members who might otherwise not be informed or

involved with the schools (Jucovy, 2007). In the top 25% of schools, students with

Success Mentors gained one additional month of school. High school students with

Success Mentors were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year, and

mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their

attendance, school work, motivation, and confidence (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013, p. 4).

While the mentorship may cost more than many of the level one interventions, it did

provide great strides for students needing level two mediation.

      At the top, schools found the most expensive options to help students fell into the

Tier 3 category. This category included students who missed 20% or more of the prior

school year. At this level, often legal measures were needed, costing thousands of dollars,

if fought. In most cases, however, it recommended that the school provide intensive case

management with coordination of public agencies (Truancy Task Force, n.d., p. 54). The

hope was that, through caring adults, mentors, and counselors, encouraging messages

could be administered to prevent students from reaching a costly three level (America's

Promise, 2015). The three-tiered system could be altered for any school district, based on the needs of the students within the district.

Acting on the issue of school attendance could be done through various school interventions. Creating a welcoming school environment was an important step in combatting attendance and it sent a message to students that they were wanted in school every day and that everyday mattered. Using and implementing a multi-tiered response system that worked for the district combined prevention with additional support for chronically absent student aided in the problem (Truancy Task Force, n.d.). Depending on the absenteeism level in the district, having the principal get involved and lead student success meetings to understand attendance trends and analyze success of interventions was helpful (America's Promise, 2015). Schools needed to create a relationship with the chronically absent students, whether it be teacher-based or mentor-based, let the students know someone cared they were there. School leaders needed to develop a plan that worked for their district to combat absenteeism and establish community relationships with others who could help fight chronic absences (Truancy Task Force, n.d.).

Extra-Curricular Activities as Incentives

After school activities provided an incentive for students to attended school every day. Providing socialization and peer attention in a supervised venue, activities after-school gave students an opportunity to demonstrate something they may be good at with no academic standards connected to the event. They engaged students in events that helped them develop persistence, surrounded students with caring adults who chose to stay after-school with the student, and provided an increased sense of belonging at school. Many parents reported that after-school program helped them keep their jobs,

because they knew their child was safe, and they did not have to take off work to pick them up from school early (After School Alliance, n.d.).

Sports and clubs were not the only programs offered after-school, many other sophisticated programs were offered to America's youth to participate in. In Chicago, Project Exploration, allowed students to participate in STEM learning programs, as well as after-school and summer learning programs. These students reported having a 95% graduation rate and 60% reported attending a four-year college program (After School Alliance, n.d., p. 1).

> High school students participating in Chicago's After School
>
> Matters program — which offers paid internships in the arts,
>
> technology, sports, and communications to teenagers in some of
>
> the city's most underserved schools — have higher class
>
> attendance, lower course failures and higher graduation rates than
>
> similar students who do not participate in the program. (After
>
> School Alliance, n.d., p. 1)

AfterZone, a program in Providence, Rhode Island, reported that attendance improved amongst students that continued in the program ("Making the Case," n.d.). Across America after-school programs helped parents and students in various ways, many of the most influential programs existed in sports and clubs sponsored by the school.

Attendance was a required piece to participate in after school activities and sports in the state where Midwest High School was located. The rules of the program required students to attend school the day of all events in order to participate, unless the absence was prearranged with the coach. If the event was on a Saturday, then students may not be

absent the Friday before the Saturday event. Practices were also affected by absences.

Students who missed more than four hours of school could not practice and thus earned

an unexcused absence from practice. If students had more than three unexcused absences

they were removed from the activity for the remainder of the year or season (Missouri

State High School Activities Association [MSHAA], 2016).

Afterschool programs that worked with schools to create an atmosphere where

attendance was valued beyond most plausible reasons were the most successful. Studies

showed the importance of attendance in school matters. After-school activities could

often generate the excitement needed to get kids to school in the first place. "Afterschool

programs play a crucial role in partnering with schools to support and reinforce good

attendance habits" (Attendance Works, 2014, para. 1). As reported by Chang and Jordan

(n.d.), there was a five-step process when intertwining attendance and afterschool

programs. Step 1 was about building the culture surrounding the importance of

attendance. To accomplish this, a school should have rules around attendance in

accordance with participating in afterschool activities and monitor attendance for tracking

purposes. Furthermore, Step 2 utilized the data tracking to ensure that students who were

showing a pattern in their attendance were receiving extra attendance help to perhaps

prevent a problem before it became a habit (Chang & Jordan, n.d.). In a study done

through United Way Foundation, a correlation was found that after school programs did

lead to better school attendance (as cited in Lotyczewski & Montes, 2012, p. 5). The

afterschool program must combine the attendance record to the school day attendance to

seek out any further problematic situations in Step 3. Engaging families about the

realities of students missing school was the theme in Step 4, where schools were asked to

gather their resources to show students the problems associated with missing school.

Finally, Step 5 asked that schools make use of their records and dive deeper into the

issues of school attendance and involve the community to help seek out indifferences

among the data (Chang & Jordan, n.d.).

      Sports and clubs were fantastic incentives for students to attend school, but what

about academics? A school district in Vermont found a system that worked for all in their

ENCORE program. ENCORE, required students to attend the regular school day in order

to attend the program, which consisted of over 1,000 students (Chang & Jordan, n.d.,

para. 15). The creators of the program understood the importance of relationship building

and focused on students building relationships with the faculty working in the programs,

90% of whom were regular school district employees (Chang & Jordan, n.d., para. 15). In

order to participate, students must miss two fewer school days per year compared to those

who had non-regular attendance. "The ENCORE afterschool program serves students in

grades K–8 and provides hands-on and community-based learning approaches not

traditionally available during the school day" (Chang & Jordan, n.d., para. 16). The

program provided students an outlet to be creative and an opportunity to build rapport

with staff members.

      The ENCORE program was different than most after school programs. The

program served students from kindergarten through eighth grade. It involved many

community based learning skills not regularly involved in everyday classroom settings

(Brookes, 2016). For example, a group of students studied the history of their state,

ENCORE developed a program that expanded upon this learning and took students into

their communities to learn about the history firsthand. To teach good nutrition, ENCORE

brought students into a garden and had them create a garden where they learned to plant

and care for their gardens, all while learning the process of what it meant to have a

nutritional meal (Chang & Jordan, n.d.). ENCORE had no limit on the topics covered;

teachers were asked to submit a proposal if they had an item they would like covered in

the program (Brookes, 2016). Opportunities within the program were countless and

included music, theater, dance, and more (Chang & Jordan, n.d.).

   Overall after school programs provided encouragement for students to be a part of

something bigger than themselves. High-quality afterschool programs provided great

benefits to all students, and especially for those at-risk students who lived in poverty.

Greater self-confidence was a positive outcome of these programs, as well as an

increased interest in community engagement. Perhaps the most gracious piece that these

programs provided was their connection to better school attendance, where students saw

themselves improve academically and decrease their visits to the principal. Programs

needed to work on diversifying their crowds and reaching out to older students who often

had lower participation, because they did not find the programs engaging (Kauh, 2011).

Impacts changed from student-to-student and greatly depended on student participation

and attendance; however, after-school programs created a positive trend in attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

   To monitor attendance effectively a school must first pick a system they believed

everyone would utilize to administer attendance daily. While some schools invested in

electronic systems, others could not afford this and did one daily check via paper, or

sporadic checks throughout the day via paper, which could be time-consuming and result

in more work for the teachers. Many schools employed staff who primarily dealt with

attendance. In most systems, teachers put in the data and the employed staff member

dealing with attendance ran reports on the data given to them by the teachers and inserted

calls, emails, and notes from guardians into the system to track attendance (Hallam &

Rogers, 2008). Data gathering on a level of great quality secured the legitimacy of any

school attendance program. According to Smith (n.d.),

> High-quality attendance data serve as the foundation for
>
> understanding where students are during the school day. These
>
> data provide the information needed for schools to formulate
>
> practices, programs, and policies to improve attendance rates.
>
> Comparable data also allow comparisons between schools,
>
> districts, and states—which is necessary for educators to identify
>
> relationships between student attendance and student achievement,
>
> promotion from grade to grade, and high school graduation.
>
> Districts and schools depend on accurate attendance data for a
>
> number of other reasons as well. For example, staff need to know
>
> which students are under the schools' supervision each day as a
>
> part of the district's general building, staff, instructional, and fiscal
>
> management responsibilities. (para. 6)

This information often became important on testing days, as well as in cases of crisis,

when locating students could be a matter of life or death (Smith, n.d.).

Once attendance was tracked into an electronic system, many systems placed

phone calls to guardians in order to inform them of the student's absence. The calls went

out to guardians who had not called in to explain a student absence. At times, when calls

were not answered or returned, emails or letters may be sent home. In extreme cases, the

police may be notified for the safety of the family, when no one made contact regarding

an absence, to visit the home as a welfare check. Whatever system a school may use, the

parents were responsible for notifying the school on the first day of their child's absence

(Hallam & Rogers, 2008).

Notification on the first day was important for safety and record keeping. If the

school was not made aware of an excused absence they would do their best to locate the

child in and around school as a safety precaution. Looking beyond safety concerns, a

student's unrecorded absence was also seen as a possible truancy situation, which would

need to be handled in a different capacity. "The systematic follow-up of unexplained or

inadequately excused absence is absolutely vital for improving attendance" (Hallam &

Rogers, 2008, p. 236). Parents were urged to call schools if their child was absent. If the

child had an unverified absence, parents would be contacted through the contact number

provided to the school. Contact numbers needed to be up to date to ensure the safety of

the students (Stuart R. Paddock Elementary School, 2016). Attendance could also be

taken from class-to-class, whether electronic or on paper.

Lesson attendance was attendance taken based on the change in subject or

teacher. In the high school setting it was most common to see attendance taken

electronically based on hour, period, or course change. Taking attendance in this manner

could divulge important information. It could reveal where there were discrepancies in a

student's attendance and help solve a core problem for that student (Hallam & Rogers,

2008). Are they missing a particular class often? Are they trying to avoid a certain

teacher? If these items are seen as a pattern in the student's attendance, they should be

addressed academically. Tracking attendance could help a student who may be struggling, but who may be afraid to speak up by checking the data on the most frequent truant or absent periods of the day (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). *Education World* recommended one simple fix to help with attendance (Pennsylvania State Education Association [PSEA], 2003). The website suggested that if teachers presented themselves in a more welcoming manner, more students would want to go to school. With more students attending, academics would be on the rise, with the use of one handshake or simple greeting each morning (PSEA, 2003).

If electronic systems were not available to the school, teachers, and their superiors may be required to lend a hand in the record keeping of attendance. Teachers were often reluctant to do this, because it could be so time-consuming. It also deterred teachers from looking at the data and using it as a tool, because it was not easily accessible. An alternative was for a superior to do this frequent, but through randomly timed spot checks of less traveled areas of the campus. This could deter students from hiding out amongst the campus to avoid class and could help cut down on truancy (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). Insisting on students and parents to sign in and out of the school helped keep students from leaving the premises on a whim (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). John Burroughs High School demonstrated this attendance method during their morning meetings. Students met in the auditorium where they had assigned seats. Selected teachers administered the attendance while morning announcements took place, based on the seat location of each student (John Burroughs School, 2016). With the trust handed to these students, the incentive to stay in school the remainder of the day might be of academic nature, or perhaps social.

Incentives

In the classroom, there could be motivation to want to attend school, as well. Students who had an unrealistic goal, or goals that were not achievable, left students feeling frustrated and more likely to skip school. To make the goal manageable, adults broke them up into manageable short-term goals, so students could see their progress, and could focus on learning (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 240). Allowing the students to explore "meaningful issues, build their capacity to participate in the workforce, and/or involve the arts would foster engagement from chronically absent students by increasing enjoyment and a stronger perception of purpose for their education" encouraged the students to create goals and enticed them to come to school (Sacramento City Unified School District [SCUSD], 2014, p. 10). There was an aspiration for challenging academic rigor and relevance from students that could lead to better student attendance and achievement (SCUSD, 2014). Adding personal touches to the design of the lesson made the day more relatable and interesting for the students; if they could apply the information to their own lives, the teacher was bound to get better participation. No matter the level of the student, organization was key to success. Students needed to be taught effective ways of organizing the material to better enable them to succeed in class (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 240).

According to Hallam and Rogers (2008), allowing the students the opportunity to participate in leadership roles, and decision making also increased their appetite for school. Responsibility needed to be taught, students needed to learn the skills to enable them to take responsibility for what they were learning. This enabled the students to feel empowered as a learner. Once students felt empowered, at some point they needed to feel

recognized for the quality work they were doing by attending school (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 240). Many students reported that life aspirations and the feeling of importance were a driving factor to attend school (SCUSD, 2014). If the teacher had an award system at some point, according to Hallam and Rogers (2008), every student should be recognized for something no matter how small the task may be. When students felt like they were being watched, even during small tasks, they felt important. Accomplishments were not the only recognizable behaviors, individual student effort and overall improvement deserved recognition, as well. Finally, when giving awards, Hallam and Rogers (2008) recommended doing so privately, because it let the student know on an individual level they mattered, and not to scare off others who may feel they were not being recognized (p. 240).

According to Hallam and Rogers (2008), allowing time to be alone and to work together were equally important when creating a classroom where students wanted to be. As stated by Hallam and Rogers (2008), in group situations allowing students to have time in cooperative group learning setting and participate in peer interaction was valuable (p. 240). SCUSD (2014) agreed with Hallam and Rogers (2008) by stating: "81% of chronically absent students were found to have been inspired to attend school by the relationships that they have with teachers, friends, mentors, role models, and others," implying that group social situations motivated students to attend school (p. 7). Group work did not mean group evaluation. Evaluations needed to be private and varied to the different levels of the students. Following evaluations, schools should give students opportunities to improve their work and allow extra time for students who have difficulty completing their work. Finally, to gain proper class atmosphere allowed students time to

reflect and plan their schedules. This gave them an opportunity to see progress and prepare for what was ahead to avoid feelings of being overwhelmed (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 240).

Good teaching was perhaps the greatest incentive of all to attend school. If teachers were clear and consistent in their classrooms, students were more likely to feel included in their education. Consistency among the staff increased learning, as well (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 241). Students craved stability, which ranked among one of the top reasons students attended school (SCUSD, 2014, p. 8). When students were getting quality feedback in a timely manner, had similar classroom expectations, and felt included in choice-making throughout their day, they were more likely to want to be at school. Supportive teachers helped students who were weak in various areas to correct their issues by giving them the tools to make the changes necessary to enhance their own learning. If teachers worked together and demanded consistent behavior, attendance would improve (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 241).

Reasons Students Do Not Go To School

Relationships among parents, students, and school leaders strengthen if schools could introspect on what they are inadvertently doing to reinforce some absence-causing beliefs. Two school behaviors that reinforced attendance were class rewards for good attendance, such as popcorn, or ice cream, and individual recognition for students with good attendance. Both of these worked, but were motivators for students, not parents. Items geared toward parents tended to be flawed and actually reinforced absenteeism. Impersonal letters were easy to disregard and sent a message to some parents that the school did not understand them. In some cases, parents even felt that the school

miscalculated but, had not kept track of attendance on their own and had no way to prove their point. Teachers had also been asked to send work home to absent students. Sending work home put in the parent's mind that their student was caught up for their missed days by completing the packet from the teacher. Parents cited regular communication with parents about their classrooms, but never about absences. These practices reinforced parents' existing attitudes and behaviors towards absences (Truancy Task Force, n.d.).

The reasons students gave for not going to school could be daunting if trying to make statistical sense of it. In a study in Chicago by Allensworth and Easton (2007), the following reasons were given most frequently for students not attending school: student health issues, a parent who was ill, babysitting younger siblings, transportation issues, student did not feel safe at school, student lacked positive relationships with staff and peers, domestic abuse, mental illness, depression, and in some cases other peers' influence the student to miss school (Williams, 2014). Among the Chicago schools used in this data, the schools who boasted high attendance had these qualities in common: "student-teacher trust, schoolwide emphasis on college, teacher monitoring and personal support, personalized classrooms, teachers who feel a shared responsibility, relevant coursework for the future, and school safety" (Williams, 2014, p. 2). School attendance was important and could be deterred for serious reasons as well, such as sickness or disease.

Illness was a commonly-used reason students could not attend school. Assorted ailments, such as the annual cold or flu were clear contributions to school absenteeism, but they were not the source of chronic absenteeism. In a federal survey, it was found that "fewer than 6% of children miss more than 11 days due to illness or injury" (Balfanz &

Byrnes, 2012, p. 30). It was rare for students to be out of school for long periods of time

due to an illness unfortunately, and many could be managed to allow the student to attend

partial if not full days of school. Poverty-stricken areas did not always have the same

medical care and prevented students from getting back to school as quickly as possible

(Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Another reason why students could not attend school had to deal with family

responsibilities.

Homelessness, movement between foster care placements, and the temporary

dislocation associated with home foreclosure or inability to pay rent can cause

students to miss days, as parents or guardians work to reestablish living quarters

and enroll students in new schools. (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 30)

An article on chronic absenteeism stated that:

Responsibilities outside of school become especially significant

issues for attendance beginning in the middle school years. It is a

factor for less than 10% of chronically absent elementary school

students, nearly 20% of middle school students, and 42% of high

school students. High school students are particularly pressed with

family care and other household responsibilities. This includes

taking care of parents, grandparents, and siblings. (SCUSD, 2014,

p. 6)

A form of this responsibility could be emergency daycare, which could keep students at

home to watch younger siblings, while the adults go to work. In some cases, day care was

swapped for eldercare, especially as found in single-parent, multi-generational homes.

Helping the family business to enable personal survival was also been cited as a reason students could not go to school. Furthermore, students who had issues with the law also might miss school due to court cases through the juvenile justice system (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

At some point in one's education, most people find a day they would like to miss to sleep a bit longer, to finish a project, or to avoid an unpleasant situation. However, for some, this feeling was not fleeting; it was much more constant. Harassment, bullying, and unsafe situations could happen at any point during school or on a student's way to and from school. These horrible circumstances force some students to stay away from school. Embarrassment, whether real or perceived was also a common theme as to why students avoided going to school. Reading aloud in class could be such a stressor for many students due to speech impediments or poor reading ability, and this embarrassment could cause a student to miss school. "Others avoid school for lack of clean or appropriate clothes. Sometimes it is rain, snow or cold combined with the lack of the necessary clothing, especially for students who take public transportation with multiple connections" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 31). Part of this embarrassment could be a lack of solid relationships. Most social issues with peers or fear developed in the younger grades while students from seventh-12th grade cited differences with adults as reasoning not to attend school (SCUSD, 2014, p. 5). Students who were frequently late due to circumstances beyond their reach often stayed at home and avoided school altogether to rid their family of the burden of getting them to school. "Finally, there is the uncertainty of new environments. It does not seem coincidental that chronic absence spikes in kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 31).

Adjustments, such as a new school building were typically associated with these school years and students feared an unwelcoming setting, where they felt they did not belong.

For many, the most puzzling of all was the final category where students could attend but did not seem to want to for various, at times unknown, reasons. This category drags in an influence of family members who possibly did not see the value of school and thus put this value system on the student (Chang & Romero, 2008). Parents themselves may be stressed, causing the absence due to a lack of diligence of school preparation and daily routine (SCUSD, 2014, p. 3). Students might see the value but might put a greater worth on doing something else, and they had the background to be able to skip school to further their own agenda. Parents may promote missing school because they themselves had an awful educational experience. "They may find that schools evoke memories of failure and alienation rather give rise to feelings of possibility and hope for a better future for their children" (Chang & Romero, 2008, p. 14). Chang and Romero (2008) stated that many parents viewed pre-k and kindergarten as day care extensions and completely optional. This instilled in the mind of the child that school was elective and they could go and come as they pleased.

Students surveyed in an urban school district reported missing school because no one checked on them. The attitude on the survey was simply it was easy to do, and the teachers did not notice nor miss them when they were gone (Attendance Works, n.d.). Students noted they missed school because they "felt like it," "overslept" or "wanted to hang with friends" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 32). Students also explained that they could easily pass the class by attending sporadically, because not that much was going on at school. Others cited they had a busy weekend and needed a day to rest or they needed a

"mental health" day (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 32). When asked where students went if

they were skipping school, the majority replied that they returned to their home after their

parents left for work (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

      Although Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) believed it was a ninth grade norm that was

set in these urban areas that skipping occasionally was okay, they think the truly telling

story was within the senior class. Many seniors did not need all the classes they signed up

for to graduate school with the needed amount of credits. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012)

noted that this spike in students missing needed to be fixed. Students needed to find an

interest in their senior year, some sort of buy-in for those who were not credit deficient.

"Separating the reasons students miss school into the three categories of can't, won't, or

don't helps illustrate the range and diversity of why students are not in school, and helps

organize a response" (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 32). When looking at some

circumstance, such as high-poverty, it became known to Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) that,

at times, all the categories may intermix depending on the day and the situation at hand.

At times the home life culture was not susceptible to schooling and an education on the

need for an education was needed (SCUSD, 2014). Effective guidance and information

on the effects of missing school needed to be dispersed through communities to help stop

the problem (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Reasons Students Do Go To School

      Motivations to attend school included promotion on a yearly basis within school,

graduation, higher self-esteem, and employment opportunity. Peers however often

waivered as a large motivator for students to attend school (National Research Council,

2004). Dekalb (1999) stated, "Antitruancy programs that expose truants to other peer

groups and other methods of interaction may be effective in reducing truancy" (p. 3).

After school opportunities provided great incentives for students to attend school on a

regular basis, as well. These programs were important because they gave students the

opportunity to make new friends (Dekalb, 1999).

   Cultivating positive relationships aided in the willingness of students to attend

school. Sports and clubs helped create a positive atmosphere where students felt as if they

belonged (Dekalb, 1999). Social factors were powerful motivators that could influence

students in a major way. When a student did not feel as if they belonged, this was where

problems, such as the stereotype threat could show face. Stereotype threat was taking a

specific piece of a person, whether it was skin color, vernacular, or socio-economic status

and creating a negative stereotype about the group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). "The

evolving literature on stereotype threat shows that performance is always social in

nature" (Paul, 2012, para. 9). Students who felt like they belonged to a club or a sport had

a chance of making new friends and discrediting any stereotype threat they may or may

not fit into.

   Attending school regularly also gave students a sense of accomplishment.

Research supported that students who attended school regularly had higher grades than

those students with high absences (Redick & Nicoll, 1990). The motivation for many

students to attend school was simple according to McCormack (2005); they wanted to

earn high wages, and they recognized in order to be rewarded with cash they needed to

earn the qualifications through schooling (p. 3). Finally, education gave choice. With the

proper education, locating a job became less stressful, than attempting to compete for

high-paying jobs with a lack of education (McCormack, 2005).

Students learned at a young age the benefits of going to school could be correlated

with the punishments of not going to school. At a young age they understood, they must

get up for school, eat breakfast, get on the bus, and sit in class in order to learn. The

motivation for doing these tasks were simple according to Smith (n.d.). He stated that

children knew the punishment for missing school could be detention, loss of course

credits, and even suspension. Smith (n.d.) noted that although punishment could be a

motivator it also could cause issues and worsen the situation. Ultimately, the student

needed to understand that if they missed school, the punishment could aggravate and lead

to a larger attendance problem over time (Smith, n.d.). The school also could provide an

emotionally supportive environment where students felt safe and rewarded with such

support for good behavior, such as proper attendance (SCUSD, 2014). School is

important to help parents as well as students.

Most adults had to work; therefore, could not be at home during the day to

homeschool their children. Approximately 3% of students in America were

homeschooled. Out of that 3%, 91% cited their reasoning for homeschooling as having to

do with the school environment where their child would be enrolled (National Center of

Education Statistics, 2012, para. 3). With 97% of students attending school, many must

go because their parents had to work and could not stay at home with them on a daily

basis to ensure they were getting the proper education (Branzburg, 2011, para. 2). In

other cases, students chose to go to school to get away from their home situation.

Hunger was a primary instinct; it was not learned, it was a known feeling upon the

time of birth. Students who came from home situations where they were hungry for food,

or hungry for support, understood the importance of school, according to Branzburg

(2011). Lack of food, child abuse, and untenable situations motivated students to attend school. Schools provided welcoming atmospheres where students could feel safe, supported, and be provided with both breakfast and lunch (Branzburg 2011). Volunteers of America had a program called, "Operation Backpack", which could help provide school supplies and food for students. The program ensured attendance because backpacks were filled with food and school supplies and delivered at school to be taken home over the weekend to ensure that students were being fed (Volunteers of America, 2016). School provided a way for students to have nutrition and learn from experts, as well.

For many a culminating motivation to go to school was to learn. A school was a place where learning was facilitated in a structured environment suitable and conducive for students to learn in. Students loved to get involved in the learning process when they got a chance to work on items that they found relevant to their own lives. Students wanted the opportunity to make a choice in their learning and find projects that were relatable and interesting to them. Hands-on classroom techniques kept students wanting to come back to class, as well (Schwartz, 2014). In a focus group conducted by Schwartz (2014), "The number one thing that students on the panel said makes them want to try hard and succeed is knowing that teachers care about them and are part of the learning journey with them" (para. 13). One student noted that students felt when the staff cared about them and it could change their view of school and make learning more fun. Teachers had the ability to motivate students through high expectations and a strong support of academics (Schwartz, 2014). Learning provided a safe way to confidence and self-esteem that could not be bought.

Importance of Junior Year

Junior year of high school was a critical year where decisions were made that could impact the rest of a student's life. Classes, grades, standardized tests, college planning, career research, and portfolio research were all factors that played an important role in this pivotal year (Hansen, 2015). In agreement with Hansen, Wulick (2015) stated that while all years in high school were important, junior year was of the greatest importance. Junior year allowed students to show off their academic excellence. If freshman and sophomore year were not so stellar, Wulick (2015) suggested that, as long as a student showed steady growth, colleges may still be impressed. Junior year gave students the opportunity to make up for past mistakes by signing up for classes that were rigorous and doing well in them, to show college admissions offices they could do it (Wulick, 2015). Beyond a demanding schedule, students must complete various standardized tests, as well.

Millions of students take the ACT and the SAT each year. In 2014, the ACT took over as the most-taken standardized test, over the SAT (Cohen, 2014). Junior year was filled with many standardized tests beyond the ACT and SAT. At the beginning of their junior year, millions of American teenagers took the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). This test opened scholarship opportunities and helped students prepare for the SAT (Hansen, 2015). AP exams were an essential part of junior year testing, as well. Students got the opportunity in May each year, to earn college credit for college-level courses they completed in high school (Wulick, 2015). Standardized testing played a large role in student success throughout junior year, along with future planning.

Juniors needed to take advantage of the free resources their schools offered, such as college and career center resources and guidance counselor review sessions. Students who met with advisors with a list of interests had more opportunities to plan in advance what they needed to accomplish in order to be accepted into their college or career program of choice (Jager-Hyman, 2014). Once the initial meeting with the counselors was made, students and their guardians should look into visiting colleges or career and college fairs in order to get a better sense of what the student may be interested in studying. According to Hansen (2015), by the end of students' junior year, the list of colleges should not top 10. He suggested looking into items, such as "majors and minors, academic quality and ranking, accreditation, job and graduate-school placement rates, costs, and financial aid" of the colleges a student is interested in (Hansen, 2015, para. 10). Beyond finding a college, searching for the right career prospect was also a daunting chore of junior year.

As students narrowed down the list of colleges they were interested in, career prospects should come into play. Once a student narrowed down their career possibilities they could have an ideal outlook of the potential colleges they wished to attend. Hansen (2015) offered a last piece of advice, that career aspirations may change, but the earlier the research started the more informed a student was in making such a life decision. Junior year was riddled with choices that could impact a student's life forever, such as college and career choice. Attendance throughout this year was imperative to keep students on track with grades and to show longevity and commitment to college admissions offices.

Summary

For schools to accomplish a system-wide success in the realm of attendance for all students they needed to commit to a plan and follow through. At the district level, the schools needed actionable data that was accurate, accessible, and regularly reported. Within individual school buildings, administrations and teachers needed to work together to interpret data and work together to adopt best practices for improving attendance. Finding strategic partnerships within the community helped address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for attendance needs. Involving the community contributed to the idea of shared accountability to ensure monitoring and incentives to address chronic absences were taking place. Sending out a positive message to the schools will help convey why building a habit of attendance is important and help define what chronic absenteeism is to all stakeholders.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate motivations for students to

participate in the attendance program at Midwest High School (pseudonym) in the

Missouri School District (pseudonym). The goal was for Midwest High School to

maintain a rate of 90% attendance throughout the year, which would be required by

MSIP in 2020. MSIP 5 was the Missouri accountability system used for accreditation

with attendance noted as one component; requiring schools to "set the expectation that

90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time" (MODESE, 2014, p. 43). The

investigation looked to examine ways to motivate students to attend school at least 90%

of the time. Students who attended this school came from Midwest County (pseudonym)

and attended the school based on the school district map. This project aimed to

investigate what motivated the students whose attendance fell at or above 90%. Different

types of motivational techniques were discussed through a focus group (see Appendix B)

of students. Surveys (see Appendix A) and focus groups (see Appendix B) provided

qualitative data. The quantitative aspect of the study was the student attendance data,

making this a mixed-methods research project. The evaluation employed a mixed-

methods research design of at least 30 student volunteers from the pool of the 230 juniors

that attended the school, who participated in the focus group, survey, and contributed

attendance data. Pulse, a program used by the district to track attendance data was used

for the quantitative data portion of this research project.

The attendance program in place at the time of this study (see Attendance

Program in the list of definitions) at Midwest High School was untested and in its first-

year trial. This particular program was not an incentive-based program for students.

There was an emphasis on teachers taking attendance every hour and being accurate with

this attendance. If there was a discrepancy between the teacher attendance taken and the

main office attendance, the attendance secretary called the teacher's classroom phone

during that specific class period to verify an absence from class. A program known as

Tyler SIS (n.d.) took the daily attendance and logged it into another program, known as

Pulse. The computer software Pulse configured the data and updated the individual and

school-wide attendance record daily. Once a week students and their parents received an

attendance report. If the student was approaching the 90% mark, attending 90% of the

days, 90% of the time, as observed and experienced by the researcher the first-hour

teacher received an e-mail detailing the absence record, asking him or her to speak with

and encourage the child to get to school. The then-current program offered no physical

reward for the students attending school more than 90% of the time. However, students

that attended more than 95% and met all other requirements were eligible for the A+

program. At the time, no other incentive was given, other than the fact that, as a district,

Midwest Schools believed attendance was positively correlated with better grades and a

better education, as reported by Midwest High Schools Head Principal (E. Nelson,

personal communication, June 2016).

      This study may lead to new strategies for attendance through exploring

information, such as attendance, from the perspective of a student at Midwest High

School, as well as possible additions to make the program effective, so 90% of students

attend school in years to come. The researcher gathered student attendance data of juniors

at one high school and used this information in the survey and focus group portion of the

study. Junior year was a vital year for students, because the coursework was geared

towards college, the ACT was often taken, students had outside responsibilities such as

jobs, and time management became an imperative skill, in the view of the researcher.

Among the stressors of junior year came the opportunity to make up for previously low

grades by signing up for classes that were rigorous and doing well in them, to show

college admissions offices they could do it (Wulick, 2015). Junior year was of great

importance, because it helped shape the student's goal towards college or career (Hansen,

2015).   Using the data, the researcher surveyed the students to determine what they liked

and did not like about the then-current attendance program. The answers given on the

open-ended surveys were analyzed and quantified. In addition, the students participated

in a focus group in order for the researcher to evaluate motivational techniques that

worked. The students also discussed any perceived barriers or deficiencies in the

program. The focus of the program evaluation was on students ending their junior year at

Midwest High School, a year in which the majority of the students surveyed controlled

getting themselves to school by driving or carpooling to school (Shults et al., 2015). The

completion of the project allowed the researcher to make recommendations to Midwest

High School to improve upon the attendance program. At the time of this writing, the

only goal of the attendance program was to achieve 90% attendance.

At the time of this writing, there were no studies examining the attendance

program at Midwest High School, allowing the aim of this study to focus on what was

working within the then-current program and what the students felt could make the

program better, so that by the required year of 2020, Midwest High School would meet

the goal of 90% of students attending school 90% of the time. By researching other

studies on attendance around the United States, the researcher was able to learn what was

working with attendance programs in some school districts and not working in others.

Through this program analysis, other high schools could learn about how to improve their

own attendance programs.

Survey

Once the researcher established approval from the Institutional Review Board of

the study university, as well as permission to use Midwest High School as the study site

(see Appendix D), Midwest High School juniors during the 2015-2016 school year were

asked to sign a form of consent, as well as obtain one from their parents (see Appendices

C & F). Once the consent forms were signed and returned, students were asked to answer

a voluntary 10-question survey (see Appendix A). The researcher developed the survey

questions after researching attendance in the United States. The researcher expected a

minimum of 50 surveys to be completed with a maximum of 250. The researcher

received 51 surveys, 16 of which did not require parental consent because the participants

were above 18 years old. The survey was completed after the end of the students' junior

year and asked the students to reflect back on their attendance for the prior year.

Focus Group

Following the Institutional Review Board approval, the return of consent forms,

and the survey completion, the researcher organized a focus group. The focus group

consisted of a minimum of 30 students; all who agreed to participate as noted on their

surveys, on their own free time. In order to prevent any pressure or bias, the researcher

removed herself from the focus group room and instead had a student who became NIH

certified host the focus group (see Appendix G). The focus group took place in Midwest

High School, in the child development center. The student led the focus group, read from

a script at the top of the focus group questions (see Appendix B), and recorded the

group's responses on a recording device provided by the researcher. Once the students

who wished to be a part of the focus group were identified, they were asked to stay after

school on a particular day for up to an hour, to attend the focus group. Only 30 of the

original 42 students who responded on their survey that they would participate showed up

for the focus group. The group, led by one of their peers, spent 32 minutes in the room

discussing the 10 questions asked by the student leader. The focus group was completed

after the end of the students' junior year and after participation in the voluntary survey

and asked the students to reflect back on their attendance for the prior year.

Pulse

Once permission to proceed with the research was granted by the Institutional

Review Board, the research began locating attendance data from the software program

used at Midwest High School, Pulse. Pulse was a database where attendance was tracked

for the school, by class, the number of days absent, total minutes absent, total percentage

of absences, percent present, number of tardies and late arrivals, ethnicity, and attendance

level. The program was used to signify all data of all students who were juniors during

the 2015-2016 school year. Data were de-identified and were used to report the number

of absences to represent the group, a whole.

Methodology

The first step the researcher took when starting this investigation was to obtain

permission from the Midwest High School Principal. His permission was needed first and

foremost, because without his permission the study would need to be revamped, possibly

relocated, or not completed at all. Next, the researcher filed for Institutional Review

Board permissions. Once the permissions were granted, the students received a letter (see

Appendix F) explaining the purpose and their role in the research via their U.S.

Government teacher. This letter provided details about the purpose of the study, so

students could choose whether to participate or not. U.S. Government teachers then

administered permission to participate forms to all 230 high school juniors.

The permission and consent forms were sent home for all students under the age

of 18 to be signed by their parents; if the student was at least 18 years of age no parent

permission was needed. The forms were asked to be turned back into the students' U.S.

Government teacher. Enough forms were turned in, but if not enough forms were

returned, forms were to be administered via e-mail to be completed online by printing

and returning to the school. The final option, if not enough of the forms were obtained,

was to send the form via postal mail to any remaining potential participants, asking them

to return the form to the school.

When the forms were collected and organized, the U.S. Government teachers

received a list of students who were asked to participate in the survey; these were

students who had all the necessary forms turned back to the teacher. The government

teacher then administrated the survey during the required junior U.S. Government class,

anonymously, and made sure any student without a permission form on file was not

asked to participate. The surveys were collected and handed to the researcher, whose job

it became to code the responses to help assess the attendance program.

The researcher analyzed surveys received for each hypothesis by applying a *z*-test

for difference in proportions to the attendance of each student, and subgroup data. After

correlation analysis, all data was de-identified by the school data manager, who kept

track of attendance, whom deleted the names and assigned numbers to each student, and

then randomized the order of students. The school data manager randomly selected from

the de-identified numbers at least 30 students to participate in a focus group. Those in this

list of de-identified students were the ones who selected that they would be willing to

participate in a focus group.

The students who said they were interested in participating in the focus group

were then contacted by the student leading the focus group. A student conducted the

focus group and posed questions related to each of the proposed research questions (see

Appendix B). The focus group was audio-recorded and the researcher analyzed answers

for recurring themes. The students' names who volunteered for the focus group were

entered into an excel spreadsheet. From the spreadsheet the researcher assigned each

name a number to the row each name was placed in. The researcher's secretary at random

picked 30 numbers. The numbers were associated with the names on the excel sheet,

which gave the researcher 30 students to invite to the focus group. The study needed at

least 30 students in the focus group portion, in order to get a reliable sampling of the

student population.

Further data from the juniors' attendance records were gathered from Pulse, the

school attendance record keeping program. The principal of Midwest High School

gathered the data for junior attendance during the 2015-2016 school year and submitted it

to the researcher. No student names were given on the attendance record data received

from the principal.

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no increase in the attendance rate of the junior class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will be no difference in overall attendance during the 2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

Research Questions

The research questions for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Research Question 1: According to students, what components of the attendance program are the most popular?

Research Question 2: According to students, what components of the current attendance program are least popular?

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

Limitations

This study had limitations, including the survey designed by the researcher. In retrospect, a question at the end of the survey where respondents could communicate any other topics or thoughts they had on school attendance could have helped later in the focus group piece of the research. This was in two parts. Part 1, because not every student who filled the survey out went on to be a part of the focus group; and therefore; any extra thoughts they had on attendance were not communicated. Part 2, because extra thoughts could have helped shape more questions in the focus group that the researcher had not

devised or thought of. Future researchers should allow a question on the survey for

students to write in any additional thoughts on attendance and should use these thoughts

when developing topics for the focus group.

Another limitation of this study was the use of self-reported data. The researcher

took what people said at face value and examined data in the qualitative portion by

themselves, leaving the possible error in verification. Self-reported data also led itself to

areas of bias. In particular, this study could feature areas of selective memory and

exaggeration. In both the survey and focus group, students could display areas of

selective memory where they could be remembering or not remembering pieces of

information regarding attendance that occurred at some point in the past. Furthermore,

this investigation led itself vulnerable to exaggeration. Within the focus group, because

the students were surrounded by their peers, the researcher noted that students could be

embellishing events or ideas in a manner of popular ideals and not necessarily conclusive

of the students' own thoughts. In order to prevent this in future studies, the researcher

suggests having another party look over any qualitative data, ask students to record only

memories that they remembered perfectly and not guess on any events, and reiterate

within the focus group that anything they said should represent their opinion and no

outside party should be warranted.

Access to the population of the students was another limitation experienced

during the study. The researcher printed over 250 copies of the permission forms and

received only 51 back over the course of two weeks. This was enough to complete the

study, but was only complete officially because the researcher sought after students who

were already 18 and did not need parent permission. Students who were 18 or older

represented 16 of the total students surveyed. For future research, the researcher

recommends emailing home and letting parents or guardians know a permission form is

being sent home and include a deadline for the form to be signed and turned in.

The final limitation involved the researcher's own involvement with the school.

The researcher was many of the students' teacher for three years and was, at the time of

this study, their assistant principal. The role that the researcher carried in the school may

have influenced some of the answers via the survey and/or the focus group. In order to

help alleviate this issue, a student became NIH certified and ran the focus group without

the researcher present, to help the environment seem more natural. Part of the limitation

with this was that it was student-led and some students could have felt the importance

was not as high, and many of the quietest students did not seem as compelled to share

their thoughts, due to the dominating student leader and other members of the focus

group. For future research, the study should be completed outside of the researcher's own

school, at an attempt to find possibly more authentic answers.

The Research Site and Participants

The researcher investigated the attendance program at Midwest High School. The

population size of the participants was 230 students. The minimum number of students

needed for the survey portion was 50, and 30 for the focus group. All 230 students were

given letters of consent to bring home to their parents for consideration. Many students

neglected to take the letters and thus opted out of participation. After two weeks, 51

students turned in their letters of consent, including 16 of which were already 18 and did

not require parental consent. The secondary data required the full population's data in

order to calculate the exact attendance rate of the students' junior year and was collected

via the school's data system, Pulse.

Participants were recruited from their U.S. Government class. After the

permission of the principal was granted, all necessary consent forms were signed, and

Institutional Review Board approval was granted. Student attendance records were pulled

from the students' junior year in the Midwest School District. Student participants were

recruited from the junior class utilizing social studies classroom teachers that taught the

required government course to administer permission forms and surveys (see Appendix

A). All 11th-grade students were asked to be participants in the study via a letter and

consent form handed out in their U.S. Government classes (see Appendix F).

The process of recruitment included a convenience sample of 11th-grade students

at the researcher's school. Students were given a letter of consent detailing the

justification of the research (see Appendix F). Students were asked in their required U.S.

Government classes to complete a survey regarding the school attendance program.

Convenience samples of participants were chosen to participate in a focus group, based

on willingness to participate. The researcher used secondary data drawn from the same

convenience sample of 11th-grade students in the researcher's school, who completed a

survey. The secondary data consisted of student daily attendance and yearly attendance

rates of students enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year. The results of the survey were

available for students and parents via the researcher. It is important to note no

participants were excluded in this study; the researcher wanted an accurate portrayal of

Midwest High School and its attendance, based on the majority and the subgroups.

The study took place off-site of the researcher's university of study. Instead, the study took place at Midwest High School, where the researcher worked. The site was well-maintained and a newer building, allowing students the freedom of a clean environment. The surveys took place in a U.S. Government classroom, and depending on the teacher, could have had anywhere from 20 to 30 students present in the room during the allotted time for the survey. Classrooms were big enough to house 30 students and consisted of desks and chairs, along with other items a teacher may utilize to personalize the room. The rooms the survey took place in had desks lined in rows, and in two circumstances, desks in pods. The focus group took place in the child development center. The room where the focus group students sat was large enough to accommodate 50 people. The chairs were set up in a circle for easier sharing, and there was a door closed for privacy.

Summary

The Attendance Program was investigated at a public high school in the Midwest, utilizing data from the 2015-2016 school year. The researcher used the program to investigate what areas of the program were improving attendance, and what students believed would help the program grow stronger and more effective. Through data collection, the researcher was able to gain feedback from students at Midwest High School on their experiences and thoughts of the then-current attendance program. A mixed-methods approach was utilized between surveys, focus groups, and attendance data driven from the software program, Pulse. Chapter Four explains the results reached from this mixed-methods study.

Chapter Four: Results

Overview

The purpose of this project was to investigate motivations for students to

participate in the attendance program at Midwest High School in the Missouri School

District. The researcher gathered data from 51 surveys received from student volunteers

at the end of the students' junior year and through a student focus group of 30 volunteers.

Students were asked to reflect back on their school attendance for the prior year. Students

at Midwest High School received letters of consent and were asked either to complete the

form granting their permissions or not to turn the form in if either they or their parents

did not want the student to participate. Once 51 consent forms were received, the students

completed the survey in their U.S. Government classroom. The researcher used the

school data manager to de-identify the students' school attendance data and then coded

the survey answers. The students indicated on the survey if they were willing to

participate in a focus group. Thirty students took part in the focus group led by an NIH

certified peer student. The researcher was not present in the room during the focus group

and recorded the group to capture the answers of the students. The researcher also

received attendance data from the software program, Pulse, used by the school.

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no increase in the attendance rate of the junior

class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance

Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will be no difference in overall attendance during the 2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

Research Questions

The research questions for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Research Question 1: According to students, what components of the attendance program are the most popular?

Research Question 2: According to students, what components of the current attendance program are least popular?

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

Null Hypothesis 1

The student responses and data were analyzed to investigate if the school's attendance program was successful in keeping the school attendance of the junior class above 87.2%, which was the overall attendance rate for Midwest School.

Null Hypothesis 1: There will be no increase in the attendance rate of the junior class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

The data collection piece focused on using the Pulse data program to pull attendance records to provide the overall rating of Midwest High School juniors' attendance performance. The highest score attendance a student could earn was perfect attendance, or 100%. The second level consisted of any student attending school more than 95% of the time but registering less than a 100% attendance rate. Level three cited students who attended more than 90% but registered less than a 95% attendance rate.

Level four was for students who attended school more than 85% but registered less than a

90% attendance rate, and the final level was for students who attended less than 85%. At

Midwest High School, the final level ranged from students who attended 26% to 84.7%

of the number of school days possible. The following table represents the junior class

attendance results.

Table 1

Results of Junior Class Attendance

Level	Count	Percentage of Students
1	3	1.06%
2	156	55.12%
3	66	23.32%
4	28	9.89%
5	30	10.6%

Note. When the study began, junior attendance was estimated at 230; however, attendance was ever changing due to student grade classification based on credit changes and student registration and the final count was 289 as seen in Table 1.

The results of Table 1 showed the level at which the students were placed(level), the total

number of students at each level (count), and the breakdown of the percent of the junior

class serving on each level (percentage of students). This table displays that three

students had perfect attendance, helping to achieve the goal of the program, and 156

students also helped achieve the program by attending school more than 95% of the time.

An additional 66 students were in congruence with the programs guidelines by attending

more than 90% of the school year, while 58 students did not make it to school at least

90% of the time. This data represented a successful program, but with 20.49% of the

students unsuccessful and in need of further intervention their senior year.

Altogether the students maintained an attendance rate of above the goal, at

91.73% overall. A *z*-test for difference in proportions was applied to compare the

91.73% to the 87.2% overall attendance for the previous school year. At a 95%

confidence level, the *z*-test value of 1.755 exceeded the *z*-critical value of 1.65.

Therefore, the data in Table 1 led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis, because

there was a significant increase in attendance for the junior class in 2015-2016. The data

piece of the study spoke for itself. When the students were given the chance for their

voices to be heard, both in a survey and focus group, some of their absences were

explained beyond numbers.

According to the 51 students surveyed, there were many reasons students were

absent. Student 1 claimed he missed six or seven days of school because he was sick and

had an elbow injury. Out of the 51 students, a total of 42 cited missing at least one day to

an illness; some, like Student 42, stated illness as the absolute only reason she was

allowed to miss school. Student 22 stated she missed a day because she was shadowing

her mom at work. The student went on to say, 'school is valuable, but the experience of

shadowing my mom at work was even more so, because I learned what she does, and if I

would possibly be interested in doing a job like this someday.' While a few students

missed due to various doctor appointments, Student 3 only missed two periods of class on

two separate days for an orthodontist appointment. The survey also indicated students

missed school for school-related functions, like Student 36 who missed two days for a

tennis tournament, Students 4 and 14 who missed days for a field trip, and finally Student

2 who missed because of a football injury garnered at practice. While some excuses were

verified and others were not, the survey continued and exposed some positive and

negative reasons why, according to students, they missed school.

Sometimes missed days were out of the control of the student. Student 8 cited

missing two days due to a death in the family and added, 'When I missed two days

because my grandma died, it was hard to deal with; but, my teachers helped when I got back, and I didn't feel like I was left behind in any of my classes.' Unfortunately, Student 14 cited missing multiple days for PTSD nightmares. The student described it as an ongoing problem that she was then in counseling for, after school. Student 50 said she missed three days because her mom was in the hospital, and she had to help her out and make sure to drive heir sisters to their appointments, games, and school. Finally, a common reason for missing school cited by nine students was they simply felt overtired. One student blamed his lack of sleep on his chores at home. Another said he 'just is tired sometimes,' and Student 6 stated, 'I play sports, I'm involved in some clubs, and I take AP classes. All of this plus I have a job. So, sometimes I sleep in a little bit more and miss school that day for a mental break.' While many of these reasons tend to be less exciting, the following reasons given during the survey were more jovial reasons for missing school.

College visits were a substantial part of the junior year and could require students to miss school. Four students cited missing at least one day for college visits, and Student 11 said, 'I have missed three days for college visits, because my parents wanted me to visit when school was in full session so I could see what every day on campus was really like.' Student 30 stated she missed two days for an out-of-town wedding, and another day for family being in town. The student said in regards to missing school because family was in town, 'I didn't really want to miss school to see my family, but my mom said I had to because we never see my grandfather.' Finally, the last reason for missing school given during the survey portion was from Student 44 who stated he missed the first two days of school because 'my parents refused to leave me home alone. This meant I had to

miss my first two days of school in order to take my big sister to college in Arkansas.' While the survey provided an array of reasons for missing school, the focus group added a few insights not mentioned or not fully explained on the survey.

A common theme expressed by the 30 students who participated in the focus group was stress. Student 5 said she felt like she had to stay home in order to study and catch up on homework. A similar insight was given by other students who said, 'Staying home helps catch up on grades,' and Student 27 who said, 'I often feel overloaded, because I am involved in clubs, sports, [and] work, and my course load keeps me at home more often than I should be.'" One student even admitted to staying home because something was due that day and he had not finished it, and he used that day to work on it. Further stressed out, Student 30 said that, at times he is so stressed out he feels sick and that he needs mental health days because of mental breakdowns the day before, and needing a day to catch up., While stress was a common reason students cited in the focus group for not attending school, there were many other reasons given as well.

During the focus group, many various reasons were explained as to why students were absent or missing from school. Student 22 stated, 'I joined a club to miss for something because it sounded fun.' When the students asked him what clubs he had joined and where he had gone with the clubs, the student replied, 'FBLA, DECA, and Student Council. So far I have gone to career day at Busch Stadium, Student Council's convention, and some arcade place to listen to presentations and then mess around.' Other students cited less exciting reasons for missing school, such as waking up late and deciding not to come because they did not want to deal with the front-desk people or their teacher for being late, and simply missing their alarm altogether and figuring by the time

they woke up it was pointless to go to school. Three other students alluded to
transportation issues. Student 15 simply stated he missed before because 'my car sucks.'
While two others blamed their older sibling who drove them for making them late to
school and living at an alternative-parent house who lived far away for missing school.
Both the focus group and the survey gave insight for reasons on why, perhaps, students
do not come to school, and in the following piece the survey gave more understanding to
why students do come to school.

      Students were asked in the survey why students attended school. The number one
reason students gave to as why they came to school was a simple two-word answer, 'to
learn.' Students noted that they needed to get good grades to get into a college they felt
was reputable and then for a future with a nice-paying job that could support a family, as
important reasons for coming to school. Learning at school was important; students
recognized this by stating, 'I come to school, because when I miss I fall way behind, and
I want to stay on track with all of my class.' Another student similarly stated that,
'missing even just one day, especially in a hard course load with Advanced Placement
classes can make it feel like you are a week behind.' Students voiced that the understood
learning at school was important to them to help in becoming an educated person; but,
one student declared, 'Theoretically I come to school to learn, but I feel like I can do so
without having to be here daily.' While opinions differed on this question, three students
responded in various ways, saying it was important to come candidly because 'it's the
law.'

      Although attending school because of desires to learn, and the law, students also
gave other reasons why to go to school, as well. Student 18 stated she went to school

'because it's a safe place to spend time with my friends' and Student 9 said, 'I come to

school to learn and make friends. To me, school should not be one sided to the numbers

but also to the humanity and kinship it can bring.' Bridging learning and friendship

together, Student 23 wrote that she came to school 'to learn with their friends because it

makes it easier to learn the material with other people your age.' Finally, after school

activities seemed to be a motivator for some students. Students 24 and 25 explained they

attended school to participate in activities, in specific student council, and Student 49 said

he attended school because, 'if I don't attend school I cannot play sports that day, so I

come to school so I can play whatever sport season I am in that night.' Decisively,

student 41 said, 'I come to school because I like school and I don't feel I need any reason

beyond that.' An overview of Hypothesis 1 along with recommendations is shared in

Chapter Five.

Null Hypothesis 2

The student responses and data were analyzed to investigate if the program was

able to meet the 90% standard of MSIP 5 for the 2015-2016 school year.

Null Hypothesis 2: There will be no difference in overall attendance during the

2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

The reasoning behind this hypothesis was that the attendance program would help

the entire school meet the 90% attendance goal set by the state in their MSIP goals. The

outcome of this information could reveal if the program was successful and if the 90%

goal was realistic. For the data piece of this hypothesis the school attendance program,

Pulse, was used in determining the success of the entire school with regard to 90% status.

Table 2 demonstrates the 90% status by grade and the total overarching status of the school.

Table 2

Ninety Percent Status by Grade vs. Whole School

Grade	Attendance Status	+/- 90%
9	94.8%	+4.8%
10	94.5%	+4.5%
11	91.73%	+1.73%
Total School	93.67%	+3.67%

Note. There was not a 12th-grade class present the year of this data was distributed.

The data piece pointed towards the direction that the goal of 90% attendance was attainable. Each grade overall had over 90% attendance. A *z*-test for difference in proportions was applied to compare the beginning percentage to the ending percentage, for the school year 2015-2016, for each grade level and for total school attendance for the previous school year. At a 95% confidence level, the *z*-test values for grades 9, 10, 11, and total school were 3.44, 3.00, 0.781, and 2.095. The values for grades 9, 10, and total school exceeded the *z*-critical value of 1.96. The *z*-test value for grade 11 did not. The data in Table 2 led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis 2, because the MSIP 5 goal of 90% overall attendance was met, as well as met with significant improvement by two of the three grade levels and by the total school. Though the junior class showed significant improvement when comparing 2014-2015 to 2015-2016, there was not a significant difference in junior class attendance when comparing beginning-to-end within the 2015-2016 school year. The junior class who participated in this study had the lowest attendance overall, and insight on this was given through the survey and focus group.

Midwest High School finished their attendance for the year above the state goal of 90%.

This data showed the attendance program was successful; however, it did not mention

how many students may have failed due to missing many days, nor did it give

suggestions on how to help those students. According to the survey, the importance of

attendance was understood by many, but lost on some.

        In the survey, the importance of attendance was brought into question. Juniors

were asked to answer a question regarding what they believed was important about

attendance at school. Many students responded back with a simple answer of it is

important to learn, and to learn they needed to be at school. Student 21 stated, 'Attending

school is very important, so much can happen in a class period, with missing one day,

you can miss a lot of notes, presentations, and tests. It's important to be at school to stay

on task and not fall behind.' While Student 21 noted the many things students could miss,

Student 7 elaborated and mentioned how AP classes did not stop for a student missing,

and 'missing just one day in an AP class can really affect my comprehension of the entire

subject.' Student 13 noted that missing school 'affects test scores and stress. If you miss a

lot of school you have more make-up work and your education suffers.' In agreement

with Student 13, Student 2 disclosed that attendance was 'very important because last

year I missed a lot of school and I had my worst year academically.' All in all, many

students wrote similar features on the importance of school regarding academics and not

falling behind, but Student 48 summed it up well by saying, 'Attendance and grades are

directly correlated! People who show up physically and mentally are more apt to excel.'

Remarked Student 22, who brought about a different outlook on the importance of

attendance, 'Some classes require attendance because you will be lost upon your return, others I could miss and be fine.'

While Student 29 expressed the importance of an education and attendance in order for students to reach goals set by themselves and provide for their families, Student 8 exclaimed, 'It is extremely important because I am in the A+ program and 95% attendance is a requirement to get two free years of school;' other students disagreed on the importance of attendance. Student 5 mentioned, 'I believe attendance isn't really important, depending on the classes you take and if there is a test or not.' Roaming in this same field of thinking was Student 28, who expressed the unimportance of attendance because 'students who want to learn can still learn without coming to school, and if you care about your education you will work hard anyways.' Many students stated that if they get good grades, then attendance does not matter; Student 35 agreed with this and elaborated by saying, 'I feel like attendance is not the most important thing in education and a lot of work can be done online without even being at school.' Students were split on whether attendance was important at school; the trend continued as many felt the attendance rate was fair, while others did not.

The fairness of the attendance program was a highly debated topic amongst the survey answers. While many students liked the program and found it to be completely fair, others felt it was too lenient and still others found it to be too strict. Student 3 said, 'I believe it is fair, a lot of learning happens during school hours and missing multiple days can seriously jeopardize grades.' This student was the only student who noted the learning time at school as important; additional responses noted the fairness but with different reasoning. Student 16 stated, 'I feel it is fair, because we never know what is

going on in someone's life and why they might need to be absent.' In agreement, Student

23 noted that exceptions should be made similar to Student 7's answer, which claimed, 'It

is fair, but students who are extremely sick or have a family situation should not be

punished for missing school.' Speaking on academic reasoning, student 50 disclosed that

she thought it was fair; but, did not think the 95% attendance rate required by the A+

program was fair and wished it was a 90% requirement, as well. Discounting the A+

portion of Student 50's answer, Student 48 said 'It's fair because students should not be

missing that much, and achieving even 95% for the A+ program is not that hard.' The

student went on to say, "Missing 90% of school is still missing a lot of school, and it

allows for illness; but, doesn't allow you to miss for sleeping in all of the time.' Student

40 ended the fairness reasoning by stating, "Ninety percent is fair. Fair does not always

mean equal. I believe in special and occasional help and excuses.' The ideological

thinking of many of the students was disagreed upon by others, via the survey.

Fairness at times is in the eyes of the beholder; the following students found the

fairness of the attendance expectation at 90% or higher to be quite harsh. Student 49

expressed distress with the requirement,

> It looks great for the school, but sometimes it's hard because students will miss a
>
> few weeks because someone died. My Grandparents died within a few weeks of
>
> each other and I had to miss a lot of school resulting in me losing A+ status and
>
> falling below 90% attendance.

While fairness was not noted by Student 11, he did advise that the program was harsh

because 'it can be unforgiving if someone has a rough year due to events that are out of

their control; like sickness or family situations.' In agreement, Students 4, 12, and 33 all

wrote that it was too high, because many students missed for important reasons, such as Student 12 specified as surgeries or college visits. In conclusion, Student 45 challenged the fairness of the 90% goal and answered, 'Ninety percent is too high, I feel if you have good grades and are a good student you shouldn't have to be here 90% of the time.' On the opposite end of the spectrum were the five students who claimed the attendance rate expectation of 90% to be too low.

Five students found that missing 10% of school was missing a great deal and that the expectation was set too low. Student 39 emphasized the expectation was low by stating, 'It is pretty low, that is that I had last year and I think my lower attendance directly correlated with my lower grades.' Unless [for] medical reasons, missing 10% of school was missing too much, according to Student 46. Students 51 and 3 agreed that missing 10% was still missing many days and that the attendance rate should be at least 95%. Lastly, Student 10 added, 'The expectation is low because you should only miss school for extreme sickness and school related activities.' An overview of Hypothesis 2 along with recommendations is shared in Chapter Five.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: According to students, what components of the attendance program are the most popular?

The responses for all of the research questions were composed of qualitative data based on a voluntary student survey and a student-led focus group. Overall, students gave various reasons as to why they liked the then-current attendance program at Midwest High School. Students 1, 8, and 9 all liked the benefits the program lent to their parents. Students 1 and 8 said they liked that there was communication with the parents, and

Student 8 noted, 'I think it's beneficial that the school contacts the parents when the child

has an unexcused absence.' The weekly attendance e-mails influenced Student 9 to say, 'I

think the weekly attendance emails are smart so parents can monitor truant kids.' While

those students cited positives for their parents, five other students noted positives for

themselves.

Five students found pieces of the attendance program that they liked. Students 7,

11, 23, 31, and 48 all stated various reasons as to why they liked the attendance program

at Midwest High School. Student 7 said, 'I like how they ask the reason I am late so it

doesn't just look like I was skipping.' Student 11 confessed, 'I like the attendance

program because it reminds people to come to school, and I come to school to see my

friends.' In agreement that the program was beneficial to students, Student 23 assured,

'The program is good for students because it holds us accountable for attending school.'

Student 31 stated, 'I like the program because I can log in to my student portal and

always see what my attendance is;' and Student 48 elaborated, 'I love that I am

constantly updated and knowledgeable on how often I am at school. It's effective and

helpful.' While these five students viewed the program as positive for them personally,

others expressed varying views on the best parts of the program.

Other students also commented on the positive aspects of the program. Student 47

stated, 'It pushes kids to come to school which has shown to be effective,' and Student 16

insisted, 'It shows that the school cares and does actually keep track of when a person is

absent.' In relation. Student 20 liked the program because she felt it encouraged, it got

her to school on time, and it helped enforce the rules. Finally, Student 27 wrote, 'I like

that you get to have a couple of free tardies before you get a detention.' On the outskirts

was Student 41, who said, 'I didn't know there was a program, I just thought it was very important to our Principal.' The survey gave many answers as to what students liked about the program; the focus group gave smaller variety but some different answers, as well.

During the focus group, students did not speak long on what they liked about the attendance program. One student said, 'I feel like staff does a great job building relationships with students so if teachers make a personal effort on connections with students it's a connection that keeps them wanting to come to school.' Another student in the focus group went on to say, 'The program is nice because you know that the school cares if you come or not and if you miss a day you are so far behind and it helps remind us of that.' Many students commented that the program strongly coincided with a decent GPA, something many of them found important, along with the fact that the program acted as an incentive to get two-years free at a community college, through the A+ program. As the conversation died down, one student commented she liked the program because it evoked the rules and that if a student missed school or was late too much, the student could get in-school suspension or lose a parking pass. This answer was not as popular an answer as others were; but, there were many reasons given in both the survey and the focus group in regards to what students liked about the then-current attendance program. An overview of Research Question 1, along with recommendations is shared in Chapter Five.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: According to students, what components of the current attendance program are least popular?

Students discussed the least popular components of the attendance program throughout the survey and the focus group. Some often noted the technology pieces of the program as a negative of the program. Student 5 said, 'I hate how they call your parents after, like 30 minutes of you not being there, when sometimes I am just running late; it makes my mom worry that I am skipping or hurt when really I am just running late.' Calling was a theme throughout and noted by Student 49, who did not like the calling system because 'sometimes teachers do not mark attendance correctly or students could be in another part of the school and get marked absent resulting in a phone call and a worried parent over nothing'. Phones were not the only downside to the program; many also noted e-mails as an ongoing issue with the program.

In the survey, e-mails were brought up often with many students simply stating, 'I hate the e-mails,' like Student 6. Student 10 elaborated and mentioned that the e-mails were bad, because there were 'too many e-mails' sent too frequently. The problem with the attendance program and the e-mails, according to Student 36 were, 'They send emails to both students and parents, even if the student has great attendance, and it gets annoying.' Finally, Student 17 mentioned, 'The email doesn't influence the students, nor the parents, and it makes my parents mad and annoyed, because they already receive so many other e-mails from the school.' Some saw the technology as a negative, while others complained about the program being too strict.

The attendance program is set up to encourage students to attend school at least 90% of the time. Some students viewed the way the program was handled as 'too pushy,' like Student 21 stated, or as Student 25 said, 'It is too strict the school does not allow us any room for error.' Some students remarked that being marked tardy over traffic was

unfair, and that they felt the school begged them to come every day, and it became cumbersome. Specifically, Student 40 noted, 'Even if I am sick I get yelled at for missing, the secretary yells at all of us for being late, and I feel sometimes special circumstances should be taken into consideration.' Other students echoed the special consideration piece as well, and Student 22 added, 'There is too much pressure on students if we do not come or are late. Sometimes I do not come because I know I am going to be late and I don't want to deal with hearing about it.' Again a common theme mentioned in the survey was that the program was not only pushy, but the 'standard was too high,' asserted Student 42.

        Many disliked the e-mails, phone calls, and rigor of the program, while others had more obtuse dialect in their survey and focus group answers. Student 43 claimed that they 'wished there was some sort of incentive program for those who do go to school,' and Student 12 agreed that the school should give incentives 'because it tells students they are appreciated for their efforts.' Student 14 did not speak of incentives, but instead what could be taken away, 'I don't like how parking privileges can be revoked if we are late too many times.' Continuing the theme, Student 15 said, 'There is no reward, only punishment and we are not able to miss that many days; 90% is still a lot of school.' While many students spoke specifically about what they disliked about the program, Student 15 went on to say, 'The program focuses more on the attendance rather than the individuals learning and it should monitor grades too not just attendance because some people have good grades but poor attendance.' An overview of Research Question 2 along with recommendations is shared in Chapter Five.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

Many students perceived the then-current attendance program well, but that changes were needed. Student 1 stated, 'The program is working, but it would be better if there were incentives for coming and being on time, or rewards for student with high attendance rates.' This sentiment was repeated time, and time again, throughout both the survey and the focus group. In the focus group, students made suggestions for incentives; some of the incentive suggestions were: field trips, better parking spots for students with higher attendance, and free food. 'Food motivates. Allowing students to leave for lunch if they have good attendance would motivate me to come to school every day,' declared Student 32. One student in the focus group mentioned if students had good grades and a certain level of attendance, that students hoped an opportunity to be exempt from one final would be an option as an incentive. Three students in the focus group offered the idea of a study hall class for no credit, for students that had great attendance but wanted extra time to work on homework. Many cited they had jobs and this opportunity could be helpful. A final suggestion in the focus group came from a student who heard about an app called Pocketpoints. The student expressed an interest in bringing the app to the school. When asked what the app did, the student replied, 'Pocketpoints is an app that tracks if you are in a certain location, and if you sign into that location enough you can earn rewards like a free burrito.' The students had many ideas they would like to add to the program, as well as some they would like to get rid of.

While many students perceived the program as working well, but needing some additions, others had fewer additions and more changes they perceived needed to be made. Student 51 simply stated, 'The program is not good because of the e-mails. Stop sending e-mails!' Many other students in the focus group also wished for the e-mails to stop. Offering a suggestion to Student 51's and focus group members' issue was Student 4, who wrote on the survey that there should not be as many e-mails, and 'I would prefer bi-weekly attendance updates to cut down on the amount we are currently getting.' A focus group member spoke up and explained, 'People are not influenced by the e-mails, they either need to stop them or rethink the context of the e-mail.' In the focus group, one student wondered if the solution could be to 'fix the e-mail system so if you are above 95% you don't receive an email;' this suggestion was well perceived within the group. Lastly, Student 35 wrote on her survey that the system was liked, but 'the parents are contacted way too soon if an appeared absence has been claimed to cause a freak out over at times nothing.' The students also perceived the program as, at times, quite grueling on a personal level.

Six students, in particular, found the program to be 'pushy,' in the words of Student 49. This student went on to say, 'The office is rude when we walk in late. I feel they need to be more apathetic to students and work on sympathizing or understand why the student may be late or not at school.' Sympathizing with Student 49 was Student 18, who added, 'I would like the school to look into why a student was absent, because I feel more should be excused.' Student 31 continued, 'There should be more excused days such as college visits.' Student 7 wrote, 'I think that people should be allowed to miss school for important events, but the program does not allow for that;' the student went on

to write, 'I hate that if I'm late or absent that I cannot play sports or go to practice either.'

Suggesting a more trusting model was Student 21, who when surveyed wrote, 'There

should be more leniency and students should be able to leave school when they do not

feel good.' On the opposite end was Student 16, who said, 'The program is good but

could be stricter, such as students receiving in-school suspension for a certain number of

unexcused absences.' An overview of Research Question 3, along with recommendations

is shared in Chapter Five.

Summary

This mixed-methods study showed there were strengths to the then-current

attendance program, but there also were improvements that needed to be made, in the

eyes of the students. The responses from the students in both the surveys and the focus

group provided suggestions as to how to improve the program. The software program,

Pulse, provided data to support that attendance rates were up for the year and evaluated

the program numerically. Popularity of the attendance program was seen in different

viewpoints, as were the negative pieces of the program, with students reporting

differences as to what was deemed as successful pieces of the program, and what was

not. Chapter Five provides recommendations for changes to the program and for future

research regarding attendance at Midwest High School.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Overview of Study

To investigate the attendance rate and its potential effect on the junior class, the researcher evaluated the attendance program at Midwest High School. The evaluation process of the attendance program was in place to help guide what changes might be needed within the program to ensure its effectiveness. The goal of the program was that 90% of the students were at school 90% of the time. In order to investigate the program, the researcher administered a voluntary survey amongst the Junior Class from the 2015-2016 school year and analyzed the feedback from the participants. Additionally, the study featured a focus group with 30 participants, led by a student, who spoke freely on their opinions of the then-current attendance program. The researcher recorded and evaluated their answers and compared the answers to those on the survey for similarities and differences. The main areas of investigation included both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was collected through use of a computer software program, Pulse, and dived into the attendance rate of the junior class. Qualitative data examined the following main research areas: most popular aspects of the program, least popular aspects of the program, and how students perceived the program. Through an examination of both the quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher investigated if the program was working in increasing attendance, and how to make the program better; pending changes were needed.

Research Questions

The research questions for this mixed-methods study were as follows:

Research Question 1: According to students, what components of the attendance program are the most popular?

Research Question 2: According to students, what components of the current attendance program are least popular?

Research Question 3: How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this mixed methods study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There will be an increase in the attendance rate of the junior class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a difference in overall attendance during the 2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

Discussion

Hypothesis 1. There will be an increase in the attendance rate of the junior class when comparing the 2014-2015 school year with the school year of the Attendance Program's implementation, 2015-2016.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, accreditation was important and a key component to obtaining accreditation was through attendance. Under attendance, standard four in the MSIP 5 standards, schools were asked to make sure students were attending school regularly. According to the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (MODESE, 2014a), "attendance targets use the individual student's attendance rate and set the expectation that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time" (p. 48). The

junior class attendance goal featured an aim of 90% of the students being at school 87%

or more of the time. For the 2015-2016 school year, the students managed to reach this

goal and data for Hypothesis 1 supported a significant increase in 2015-2016 attendance

rates, compared to 2014-2015. The attendance program was new the year this goal was

measured. Through both the survey and focus group, the researcher was able to conclude

why students at Midwest High School often missed school. Many students cited they had

good reasons for missing school, such as sickness and stress. In a study completed by

Allensworth and Easton (2007), in Chicago, stated reasons for students not attending

school including some of the same reasons stated by students at Midwest, who noted at

times they missed for things out of their control, such as a death in the family. Others

spoke of academic reasons for missing class, such as corresponding to college visits and

field trips related to school activities. In the same sense of students missing, the majority

of students attributed their reasons for coming to school as wanting to learn. The

researcher concluded that the attendance program helped the junior class reach their goal

of above 87% attendance for the 2015-2016 school year.

Null Hypothesis 2. There will be a difference in overall attendance during the

2015-2016 school year, when compared to the overall goal of 90%.

Similar to the goal set in Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 was the researcher's quest

for the students to reach the standard set by MSIP 5. In this goal, Midwest High School

was to meet the standard that 90% of the students attended school 90% of the time.

"MSIP 5 is the state's school accountability system for reviewing and accrediting public

school districts in Missouri" (MODESE, n.d., p. 2). Within MSIP 5 were five distinct

goals revolving around graduation rate, college and career readiness, academic

achievement, subgroup achievement, and as researched in this study, attendance. Attendance, as mentioned throughout the data gathered by survey and focus group, brought varying attitudes and descriptors from the students.

All grades at Midwest High School achieved the goal of 90% or above, with the Junior Class reporting the lowest overall. Insight as to why the students had the lowest rate was seen in both the survey answers and through the focus groups banter over the subject. All grades, except 11th, and the total school achieved a significant difference in attendance rates when comparing the beginning-to-the-end of the 2015-2016 school year. All grades and the total school achieve the 90% goal and improved their attendance percentage during 2015-2016, as well.

On the importance of attendance, many cited it was important to attend school in order to learn, as well as to prepare for their future goals. While many agreed upon the importance, others argued it could be just as easy to miss and make up the work and still maintain a quality education. In Chapter Two the subject was brought to light through research on what options students had to make up work when missing school. According to the Truancy Task Force (n.d.), teachers were asked to send work home to absent students. Sending work home put in the parent's mind that their student was caught up for their missed days by completing the packet from the teacher. Parents cited regular communication with parents about the student's classroom, but never about absences. These practices were reinforcing parents' existing attitudes and behaviors towards absences, which could also shape students' attitude towards attendance. The researcher concluded that the attendance program helped Midwest High School reach their goal of 90% of students attending school 90% or more of the time, for the 2015-2016 school

year, and data for Hypothesis 2 supported a positive difference in attendance rates when

comparing the beginning-to-the-end of the 2015-2016 school year. In addition factors of

needed changes were brought to light, especially concerning fairness of the program.

Research Question 1. According to students, what components of the attendance

program are the most popular?

During the research, students were asked on various platforms what liked or what

was most popular about the then-current attendance program. It was clear to see there

were differentiations within the answers and some commonalities among the group of 51

surveyed and 30 who participated in the focus group. As mentioned in Chapter Two,

Dekalb (1999) stated that "antitruancy programs that expose truants to other peer groups

and other methods of interaction may be effective in reducing truancy" (p. 3). This

researched program, according to students, was doing just what Dekalb (1999) said,

reducing absenteeism. Students cited they liked the program because it evoked the rules

of attendance and because it was seen as a benefit to parents who received phone calls

and e-mails for students who were marked absent. Students cited that after school

opportunities provided great incentives to attend school on a regular basis, in concurrence

with Dekalb (1999). These programs were important because they gave students the

opportunity to make new friends (Dekalb, 1999). Making new friends was not mentioned

directly by any of the students, but seeing friends and hanging out with peers was

mentioned by quite a few, as a motivator provided by the program.

As stated in Chapter Two, cultivating positive relationships aided in the

willingness of students to attend school (Dekalb, 1999). While many of the positive

relationships were student-to-student, one student cited teacher connections as a positive

piece of the program that enticed them to come to school. Further conclusions from this

line of questioning included: the school cared why you were late, which showed they

cared about students and gave the students an opportunity to state why they were late;

and the A+ program was a major motivating piece of the attendance program. This

information may help school leaders shape what is good about the program and help

make the program better in the future by building upon these revelations.

Research Question 2. According to students, what components of the current

attendance program are least popular?

The survey and focus group both featured opportunities for the students to discuss

items related to the attendance program which they disliked. Students felt the program

was too pushy, did not allow for special considerations, and the goal was set too high.

Hallam and Rogers (2008, p. 240), said goals needed to be manageable and broken up

into short-term goals, in order for students to see progress and focus on their learning.

Another downfall of the program was technology. Many students cited the use of e-mails

and phone calls to be too invasive and not always correct. Changes as to how to fix this

piece of the program are given under the recommendations section later in Chapter Five.

If teachers worked together and demanded consistent behavior, attendance would

improve (Hallam & Rogers, 2008, p. 241). According to Hallam and Rogers (2008)

allowing the students the opportunity to participate in leadership roles and decision

making also increased their appetite for school. Perhaps allowing students to shape some

of the rules or incentives would not be a negative aspect. Many students complained

about the lack of incentives driven via the program and listed endorsements for various

items. The incentive piece was missing from the program and this needed to change for the program to be successful.

      Research Question 3. How do students perceive the current attendance program at the Midwest High School?

      Student perceptions of the program were highly negative overall, with many changes suggested for the program. The students focused on three main ideas: the program was too pushy, used too many e-mails, and lacked incentives. Incentives were the piece most often brought up in, both the survey and the focus group. One incentive was after-school activities, which could generate the excitement needed to get kids to school in the first place. "Afterschool programs play a crucial role in partnering with schools to support and reinforce good attendance habits" (Attendance Works, 2014, para. 1).

      According to Chang and Jordan (n.d.), a school should have rules around attendance in accordance with participating in afterschool activities and monitoring attendance for tracking purposes. In a study done through United Way foundation, a correlation was found that after school programs do lead to better school attendance (Lotyczewski & Montes, 2012, p. 5). Utilizing this simple incentive could help attendance, according to the research and the students at Midwest High School.

Personal Reflections

      The attendance program began in August 2015 and concluded, for that year, in May of 2016. The investigation of this program involved 51 students from Midwest High School. Of those 51, 30 volunteered to participate in the focus group, as well. The research went smoothly, with all participants signing letters of consent and having letters

signed by their parents if necessary, in a timely manner. Participation in the survey was

voluntary and the answers were coded in the weeks following the survey. From the

survey, students were given the opportunity to sign up for a student-led focus group. The

focus group consisted of 30 students and one student leader, who led the group to deter

any bias that may have presented with the researcher in attendance. According to the

numerical data, the attendance program was a success, with over 90% of the students

attending school 90% of the time, at the end of the study year.

The students impressed the researcher with their survey answers. While they

could have written minimal answers to get the process over with at no consequence to

them, most students took their time and wrote answers of length and magnitude. The

researcher believed the students found this process to be an opportunity to reflect and be

heard about their opinions on an important school matter. Many students gave both

criticism and positive feedback on the program. The researcher thought the students

expanded their initial feedback even more through the focus group portion of the study.

Through this piece, the researcher heard many well-thought-out answers, but observed

certain students talking more and sharing more opinions than others.

A concluding thought was on the attendance rate, as calculated through the Pulse

software. The researcher believed the software did not include some of the stipulations

brought in through the MSIP 5 standards. The program was then-currently set up for both

average daily attendance and 90/90 attendance. However, many of these numbers, when

analyzed, were found to be similar if not exact in comparison; because of this some of the

numerical results may be skewed by up to 3 percentage points. For example, the Average

Daily Attendance (ADA) was, at times, the exact same number as the 90/90 attendance,

or off by very little. This was a problem potentially because ADA did not take subgroups into consideration. The 90/90 attendance took subgroups and valued them differently, based on population. This did not mean that the program itself failed; instead, it was necessary to keep these aspects in mind while comparing attendance at Midwest High School to others in the area, if not using the same Pulse program. Programs, like people can have deficiencies; to increase the consistency of the program there are recommendations and items that need to be taken into consideration.

Recommendations to the Program

The researcher has recommendations for the attendance program at Midwest High School. Midwest High School should inform parents and students in a more direct way of the importance of attendance. At the time of this writing, all information on attendance was sent out in either a newsletter, on the school website, or through e-mail, all things in which parents and students could choose to ignore. The researcher suggests that parents and student be required to attend a presentation at the beginning of the students' freshmen year and again at the beginning of the senior year. The students should not receive a schedule until both the student and the parent sit through the program and sign an attendance pledge. Within the program, school personnel would gather various stakeholders including students to talk about the importance of attendance at school, hyper-focusing on the GPA and attendance correlation. These informational items need to be taken into consideration by Midwest High School.

Midwest High School can resolve many of the technology complaints made by the students in this study. Many students cited too many e-mails overall and unnecessary e-mails for students attending school more than 90% of the time. To alleviate this issue it

is the researcher's recommendation that the attendance e-mails be sent out bi-weekly or as a part of the weekly grade checks. These options are both valid ways to slow down the amount of attendance related e-mails. In order to be effective, bi-weekly e-mails are less invasive and parents are more likely to open the e-mail if they are not receiving it as often. The other recommendation of putting the attendance in the weekly grade checks involves some changes to the system. To fully utilize this plan, the grade checks would continue to be sent out once a week with an additional message. Within this message, students should get a breakdown of their attendance per class. This may help parents and students see correlations within their grades and attendance. The researcher would hope that this e-mail would be looked at more and represent a correlation between good grades and respectable attendance and vice-versa. The researcher's recommendation for students who are attending school regularly is a congratulatory one-time email once the student reaches and maintains 95% attendance. The researcher chose 95% attendance, because this allows the student and parents to feel appreciated but also promotes the A+ program, which requires 95% attendance. The e-mail changes are critical implementations that need to be put into place, according to the researcher, for a successful program, while still monitoring the progress of those below 90%.

Another needed change requires participation from the teachers. Numerous students complained that the phone-call system was too cautionary and often called their parents falsely, claiming they were absent. The researcher recommends the phone-call system stay in place with a minor change needed, to be made by teachers. Teachers need to take attendance at the very beginning of class each hour. Not only does the attendance need to be taken, it needs to be accurate. When the attendance is taken and not precise

then faulty calls go out and parents react accordingly. The researcher recommends that

teachers become educated on the importance of taking attendance promptly and

accurately. With teachers, help attendance can improve, not only because of their help

with taking attendance, but with their help in fostering relationships with students.

   Finally, the researcher recommends incentives to be added to the program.

Through research, the researcher discovered a program in New York City, called Wake

Up NYC! The automated wake-up phone-call system works simply. The students signs

up to be a member of the program at no cost to them. When they sign up, they set a time

for their call to go through, as an alarm. When the student's phone rings in the morning, it

is a pre-recorded message from a celebrity asking them to wake-up and get ready for

school. Each day a new celebrity 'wakes' the student up. The researcher believes, if

utilized properly, this could help students get up in time, because of the anticipation and

excitement of who the next celebrity may be. The program would need to be started in St.

Louis and would feature area stars. Starting with area celebrities, such as athletes, would

help the program grow and eventually radio stations could be utilized to help collect

celebrity sound bites from around the United States. The students, in both the focus group

and survey, also brought up various other incentive ideas. While some of the ideas may

be more plausible than others, the researcher does suggest that Midwest High School

investigate the options and consider implementing incentives as part of their program.

   Food was listed as the top incentive by the students. Suggestions for incentives

surrounding food incentives for students coming to school at least 90% of the time

included: access to food trucks, free breakfast, off-campus lunch opportunities, and

coupons for local fast food chains. Other students advocated for academic incentives for

students with good attendance, such as class participation points, better parking, pass to skip one final of choice, and a study hall offered to seniors who have shown respectable attendance throughout high school. Incentives were the item most brought up throughout the study, as an aspect of the program that needs to change, as recommended by the researcher.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, this study should carry on through the 2016-2017 school year with recommended changes being made. Attendance rates should continue to be monitored and students should again be questioned on how they perceive the program and what they like and dislike about the program after the recommended changes have been made. Once the recommended changes have been made, continued research will likely provide a different reaction from the students, once some of their concerns are heard and changed accordingly. Further research should continue to use the survey instrument created by the researcher, with an additional survey sent to parents regarding attendance. The researcher believes it is important to include the parents on a similarly-worded survey, to see if there is parental backing or if there is a correlation between parents who think attendance matters and those who do not. This particular survey could lead to parental information meetings or classes on the importance of attendance. The researcher also recommends that an outside citizen lead the focus group. I recommend an outside citizen to alleviate any pressures the volunteers may feel if there is a school or peer connection with the material. Other high schools in the district should also participate in the study to find areas of needed improvement, as well as areas in which they shine.

Future studies should include a continuance with the student portion of this investigation. The study should expand to include parent and staff perspective, as well. As the program grows, a focus group of parents is recommended in order to understand how they perceive the attendance program and to understand their likes and dislikes with the program, in order to continue to improve the program. Another stakeholder that should be interviewed about the attendance program is the attendance secretary. The researcher believes this secretary could provide valid insight on the program and its effectiveness on many of the students, based on observation. Expanding the study to involve these two parties could help shape this study towards real, positive change in the future.

A further recommendation involves academic data at Midwest High School. In future research, the researcher should find out if students who take AP courses attend more school. It could be beneficial to look at students' course loads and factor in difficulty of class in comparison to attendance. This information could help the researcher determine if there is a correlation between attendance and GPA information as well. Attendance is a problem that will continue to exist, but with proper research and advanced studies, perhaps real change can take place in schools like Midwest High School.

Conclusion

As education requirements in this Midwest state continue to become more rigorous, attendance will continue to be a large aspect of school funding. MSIP 5 holds schools accountable for graduation rates, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, academic achievement, and attendance rates. Schools have opportunities to

shine in these areas and to make a difference amongst their students. Individual schools and districts can no longer expect students to show up to school every day due to many factors, including the turn towards online education, where students feel they can complete their work at home and do not feel obliged to attend. Expectations do not need to change regarding attendance; however, the way of enticing students' needs to be handled differently. At the time of this writing, the state required 90% of the students to attend school 90% of the time. This is not a lofty goal, but students who are achieving the goal should be positively reinforced. Students, parents, and other stakeholders should feel heard in respect to education. It is time for schools to listen, reflect, and make changes favoring attendance programs that help students achieve attainable goals.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

1. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group after school hours?

2. What, if anything, do you like about the current attendance program at Midwest High

   School?

3. What do you not like, if anything, about the current attendance program at Midwest

   High School?

4. What would you like to change, if anything, about the current attendance program at

   Midwest High School?

5. How many days do you believe you have been absent this year? If absent, what was

   your reasoning for missing school?

6. How important do you feel attendance is in your education? Explain.

7. Do your parents/guardians care if you miss school? Explain.

8. Why do you come to school?

9. Do you feel a 90% attendance rate is fair? Too high? Too low? Explain.

10. What types of incentives would you offer students for coming to school?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

FOCUS GROUP INTRODUCTION (SCRIPT)

Hello everyone, and thank you for being here this afternoon. I know you are all very

busy and I want you to know how much I appreciate your taking this time out of

your lives to talk with me and help me better understand attendance at Midwest

High School.

Let me introduce myself; my name is Lindsay Sutherlin. I am a doctoral student at

Lindenwood University, and I am researching attendance at Midwest High

School. A student will be facilitating the focus group today.

Today I will be asking for your opinions and experiences with attendance here at

Midwest High School. Your feedback will be very helpful in guiding attendance

practices and policies throughout Midwest School District. Your feedback will be

used in general, and your identity will remain anonymous.

To keep a record of your comments, I will give the student a digital recorder to record the

group, and I will take notes based on those recordings. No one will see or hear the

raw records other than the researcher.

What am I going to do with all the valuable information you provide? I am going to take

your feedback as well as national research on attendance, and help Midwest High

School in this study develop new and better ways to help students and families so

we can improve attendance.

Questions:

1. Warm-up question: Recall the most recent time you missed school. Share your

    experience. Discuss any interesting or challenging factors surrounding your

    absence from school. Look for similarities and differences.

It's always interesting how many different stories there are. [Explore the following

    questions]

2. What are the main reasons for missing school?

3. What barriers do you face that affect your attendance?

4. What is the school community currently doing to promote attendance? What is

    helping families understand attendance and what is not?

5. What information, resources, or supports could the school provide that would be

    helpful for you to improve your attendance?

6. What do you like about the current school attendance program?

7. What do you dislike about the current school attendance program? The current

    attendance program consists of e-mails, announcements, and includes teacher and

    student discussions over attendance.

8. What would you like to change about the current school attendance program?

9. Would you be willing to participate in a "celebrity" wake-up call program? If so, why

    and would you find it motivating?

Thank you for sharing your experiences and opinions. Now, I would like us to talk in

    more depth about home/school relationships.

10. Now, sometimes families need additional supports or referrals to help their children succeed. Do you view the school as a safe and helpful place to go for information and assistance?

11. For the final question as we move to conclude this focus group, is there anything else you would like to add regarding our discussion?

Thank you for your participation and input.

Appendix C: Letter of Consent

LINDENWOOD

ADOLESCENT (Ages 13-17) ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Mixed-Methods Program Study of an Attendance Program in a Missouri School

District

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Lindsay Sutherlin, a student at Lindenwood University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you attended Junior Year at Liberty High School and your attendance record has been kept via the schools computer program Pulse. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this project is to investigate motivations for students to participate in the attendance program at Liberty High.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say "yes" you can still decide not to do this.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

-Fill out permission and consent forms

-Complete a short survey in class

On the survey you will indicate if you are interested in taking part of a small focus group.

-If indicated that yes, you would like to be a part of a focus group. This will be student led in a classroom after school hours and will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. These questions will be open-ended.

How long will I be in the research study?

Your contribution to this study will be to contribute data to the study. If you decide not to participate your data will not be used, however you will still be required to participate in all regular classroom activities. Participation in the study will take a total of about 40 minutes over a period of two days.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not directly benefit from your participation in the research.

The results of the research may add to the current body of knowledge regarding high school attendance.

Will I receive any payment if I participate in this study?

You will receive no payment for your participation.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of de-identification by the school data person whom will delete the names and assign numbers to each student, and then

randomize the order of students. The school data person will randomly select from the

de-identified numbers at least 30 students to participate in a focus group. Those in this list

of de-identified students are ones who selected that they would be willing to participate in

a focus group. The students whom said they were interested in participating in the focus

group will be contacted by the student leading the focus group. A student will conduct

each focus group and pose questions related to each of the proposed research questions.

Focus groups will be audio-recorded and the researcher will analyze answers for

recurring themes. For analysis of the junior year attendance, data will be gathered from

Pulse, the school attendance record keeping program. The principal will gather the data

for junior year attendance during the 2015-2016 school year and submit to the researcher.

No student names will be given on the data received from the principal.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You may withdraw your assent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty

or loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this

study, you may leave the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You are

not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may

refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the

study.

Who can answer questions I might have about this study?

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the

one of the researchers. Please contact Lindsay Sutherlin at (636) 561-0075 or the faculty

supervisor Dr. Robyne Elder at (314) 566-4884 with any questions.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to

voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the

researchers, please contact Office of the Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my

satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this

form.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Name of Participant

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly agreeing to participate in

this research study.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent   Date

_____   636-561-0075

Name of Person Obtaining Assent   Contact Number

Appendix D: Approval from Principal

Approval

Lindsay Sutherlin <lindsaysutherlin@wsdr4.org>   5:54 PM (14 hours ago)
to Edgar

Mr. Nelson-

I have attached a "formal" letter asking for your permission to conduct my dissertation program analysis at Liberty High School. The school will not be named in my paper and will go under the pseudonym "Midwest High School". I ask that you consider my request and sign if approved.

Thank you for your time!

[Permission Letter attachment]

Edgar Nelson   5:56 PM (14 hours ago)
to me

You have my approval.

I will sign it and get it to you tomorrow.

Ed

Appendix E: NIH Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Lindsay Sutherlin** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 02/08/2016.

Certification Number: 1995602.

Appendix F: Parental Consent Form

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS TO SIGN FOR
STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

"A Mixed-Methods Program Study of an Attendance Program in a Missouri School

District"

Principal Investigator: Lindsay Sutherlin
Telephone: 636- 561-0075
E-mail: lns941@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant _____

Parent Contact info _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

1. Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Lindsay Sutherlin under the guidance of Dr. Robyne Elder. The purpose of this research is to investigate motivations for students to participate in the attendance program at Midwest High School (pseudonym) in the Missouri School District (pseudonym).

2. a) Your child's participation will involve

    1. This permission form will be sent home with all seniors and asked to be completed and returned to the students' Academic Intervention teacher.

    2. Academic Intervention teachers will administer the survey during the required Academic Intervention classroom anonymously, and making sure any student without a permission form on file is not asked to participate.

3. From the survey, the researcher will code the responses to help assess the attendance program.

4. The school data person will randomly select from the de-identified numbers at least 30 students to participate in a focus group. The students whom said they were interested in participating in the focus group will be contacted by the student leading the focus group. A student will conduct each focus group and pose questions related to each of the proposed research questions. Focus groups will be audio-recorded and the researcher will analyze answers for recurring themes.

5. For analysis of their junior year attendance, data will be gathered from Pulse, the school attendance record keeping program. The principal of Midwest High School will gather the data for their junior attendance during the 2015-2016 school year and submit to the researcher. No student names will be given on the data received from the principal.

The survey will take place during the student's Academic Intervention class.

The focus group will take place after school in a classroom.

Approximately 230 students may be involved in this research.

b) The amount of time involved in your child's participation will be 10 minutes to complete a survey during their Academic Intervention class. The Focus Group session will take approximately 30 minutes and take place after school. The total time requirements out of your child represent 40 minutes.

3. There are no anticipated risks to your child associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for your child's participation in this study. However, your child's participation will contribute to the knowledge about attendance and may help society.

5. Your child's participation is voluntary and you may choose not to let your child participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent for your child's participation at any time. Your child may choose not to answer any questions that he

or she does not want to answer. You and your child will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to let your child participate or to withdraw your child.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your child's privacy. As part of this effort, your child's identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study. In some studies with small samples, identification can be a risk.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Lindsay Sutherlin at 636-561-0075 or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Robyne Elder at 314-566-4884. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my child's participation in the research described above.

_____   _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature Date   Parent's/Guardian's Printed Name

_____

Child's Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date   Investigator Printed Name

Revised 8-8-2012

Appendix G: Student NIH Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Amy Paulus** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 09/09/2016.

Certification Number: 2161849.

Vitae

<u>**Colleges and Universities**</u>

2009-2012: Bachelor of Science in Education, emphasis in Social Studies from Missouri State University, 2013: Master of Arts in School Administration from Lindenwood University, 2014-2015: Educational Specialist in School Administration from Lindenwood University, 2015-present: pursuing Doctorate of Education in Educational Administration (expected graduation date in May of 2017) from Lindenwood University

<u>**Employment History**</u>

2016-present: Assistant Principal at Wentzville Liberty High School

2013-2016: Social Studies Instructor for grades 9-11, at Wentzville Liberty High School

2012-2013: Social Studies Instructor for grades 9-12, at Wentzville Timberland High School

<u>**Award**</u>

2016: Outstanding Doctoral Student in Educational Administration, Lindenwood University