

Eastern Kentucky University

**Encompass**

---

Online Theses and Dissertations

Student Scholarship

---

January 2021

## The Examination of Attendance Support Teams in Urban Middle Schools

John Christopher Young  
*Eastern Kentucky University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://encompass.eku.edu/etd>



Part of the [Education Policy Commons](#), and the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Young, John Christopher, "The Examination of Attendance Support Teams in Urban Middle Schools" (2021). *Online Theses and Dissertations*. 779.  
<https://encompass.eku.edu/etd/779>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Encompass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Online Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Encompass. For more information, please contact [Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu](mailto:Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu).

THE EXAMINATION OF ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAMS IN URBAN MIDDLE  
SCHOOLS

BY

JOHN C. YOUNG

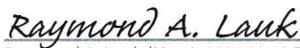
DISSERTATION APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Phillips (Mar 5, 2021 18:37 EST)

Chair, Advisory Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles Myers (Mar 8, 2021 07:38 EST)

Member, Advisory Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Raymond A. Lauk (Mar 6, 2021 09:13 EST)

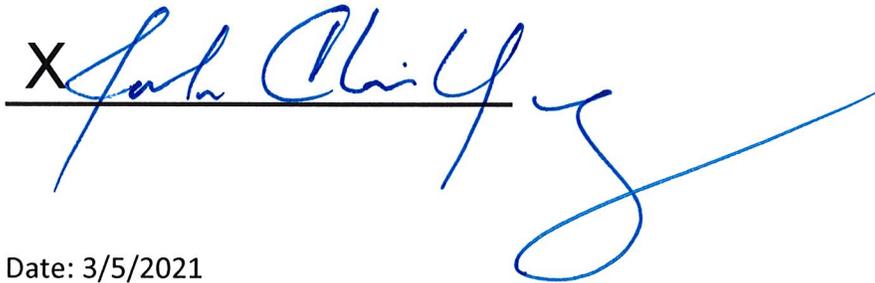
Member, Advisory Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, Graduate School

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree at Eastern Kentucky University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this document are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgements of the source are made. Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this document may be granted by my major professor. In [his/her] absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this document for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature:

X A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Chisley", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Date: 3/5/2021

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TRUANCY DIVERSION TEAM IN URBAN  
MIDDLE SCHOOLS

BY

JOHN C. YOUNG

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Eastern Kentucky University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

2021

© Copyright by JOHN C. YOUNG 2021  
All Rights Reserved.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my beautiful, loving wife Christina and my wonderful daughter, Olivia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*If you ever see a turtle on a fence post, he did not get there by himself.*

I am thankful and blessed by God to have wonderful friends, great teammates, and people that have encouraged my path and walk.

## ABSTRACT

The research study was conducted to analyze effect of an attendance support team in urban middle schools. The study utilized a six-month time window using students in three middle schools that accumulated five unexcused absences. The attendance support team was comprised of a school social worker, a family resource student support coordinator, a district-level director of pupil personnel, and a court-designated worker from family court. The function of this team was to share attendance policies, requirements, and mitigate barriers through system support to increase regular attendance for students. The research was analyzed to measure the effect on gender, grade level, and to determine if there was significance in average daily attendance funding between the intervention year and the previous year. A final analysis was conducted to measure the filed habitual truancy petitions for students in family court in the intervention year compared with the non-intervention year. The research, analysis, and further study recommendations will be used to make revisions, improvements, and systemic levels of support needed to support student regular attendance and improve learning opportunities.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose Statement.....	3
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Research Questions.....	5
Overview of Research Design and Methodology.....	6
Participants.....	7
Procedures.....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	10
The History of Education in America.....	10
History of Education in Kentucky.....	13
A New Era in Education for Kentucky.....	16
Transitions in Education for Kentuckians.....	18
Educational Reforms in the Commonwealth.....	20
An Unconstitutional Education in the Commonwealth.....	22
History of Compulsory Attendance in Kentucky.....	23
Benefits of Regular Attendance.....	25
Early Grade Opportunities.....	26
Academic Achievement.....	29
Social Interaction.....	30
Literacy Skills.....	32
Consequences of Student High Absenteeism in Elementary School.....	34
The Effects of Absenteeism in Middle School.....	36

Predictor of High School Graduation .....	37
Middle School Attendance and Test Scores .....	39
Gender Equity in Middle School .....	41
School Engagement and Attendance for Middle School Students .....	41
Behavioral Impact by Gender on Attendance .....	43
Academic Equity by Gender .....	44
Conclusion .....	44
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	48
Population .....	49
Recruitment .....	51
Instrumentation .....	52
Chapter 4: Results .....	56
Participants .....	56
Hypothesis Questions .....	57
Legal Purpose of the Research .....	57
Hypothesis Question One .....	58
Hypothesis Question Two .....	60
Hypothesis Question Three .....	61
Other Analyses .....	64
Summary .....	66
Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion .....	69
The Purpose of the Study .....	69
Summary of Study .....	70

Theoretical Framework.....	70
Literature Review.....	72
Methodology.....	79
Results.....	81
Discussion.....	87
Recommendations for Future Research.....	90
Recommendations for Future Practice.....	91
References.....	93
Appendix A: Definition of Terms.....	104

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Gender of Students Participating in a Truancy Diversion Program	57
2. Grade Level of Students Participating in a Truancy Diversion Program	58
3. 2019-2020 School Year Attendance	60
4. 2018-2019 School Year Attendance	62

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Z-score Formula	52
2. Standard Normal Distribution	52

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The need to embed progressive, research-based methodologies in instructional delivery and assessment analysis in schools is at the forefront of every building and every classroom. Education today is measured, analyzed, critiqued, politically debated, and targeted for continual improvement by high-stakes accountability measures. Teachers and school leaders are charged with the task of continuously meeting set goals even though state politicians do not adequately fund schools. Regardless of political affiliation, “accountability has become a centerpiece of both Democratic and Republican federal administrations' education policies” (Figlio & Loeb), 2011, p. 383). The pressure of improvement, meeting benchmark goals, and closing the achievement gap is a constant, but when student absences are factored in, the pressure is compounded. The truth of education is to always expect change. Theories, practices, and curriculum will always have a need to shift toward improvement whether through technology, project-based learning, or competency-based assessments. However, two fundamental truths at the core of learning remain relatively simple: trusting relationships are necessary for students to make progress, and educators must strive to accomplish the most within six hours of a school day to increase the likelihood of positive student outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of attendance support teams on student attendance in high-needs schools. This research examined will analyze a district initiative led by a group of stakeholders who placed value in increasing the opportunities for student success by leveraging the power of human relationships within a school building. The selected members of this school team were diverse in their roles

but aligned in a singular purpose of supporting students. The driving premise of this study is to examine attendance teams to support student attendance in high needs schools and foster a proactive intervention for students who have the potential trajectory to receive a juvenile habitual truancy petition filed in Family Court. The Examination of the research will provide analysis in two areas: measures of average daily attendance for students, and the annual average daily attendance directly congruent to school funding.

### **Problem Statement**

In most educational settings, hours of instruction drive teachers' daily instructional schedules and in some cases the class content schedule. The foundation of learning in any classroom is the presence of a student. From this small factor, stems the growth of behavioral, emotional, physical, social, and cognitive learning. In order to have students attend school regularly, there are state laws mandated for the sole purpose of regular school attendance. The higher the attendance rate of a student is, the higher the probable outcome for a successful education will be. As Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) concluded, an estimated five to seven and a half million students are chronically absent each school year. To pinpoint the need for regular attendance to improve student outcomes, Balfanz and Byrnes noted:

The failure to measure and act upon chronic absenteeism will be seen as a fundamental reason why the school reform efforts of the past quarter century have not been as effective as intended. By the same token, it will be realized that if chronic absenteeism is not addressed, it will continue to under-cut the impact of current and future school improvement efforts in an era when the nation, its

communities, and citizens are dependent more than ever on increasing educational attainment and achievement. (p. 6)

When students fail to attend school regularly, a habitual truancy petition may be created for the benefit of the student to leverage the support of the legal system. An attendance support or what is more commonly called, a truancy diversion team, is comprised of stakeholders who only want to have a student be in school to receive an education in a safe and caring environment. The literature on a attendance support or truancy diversion team is very limited and there have not been any successful models to replicate. As schools move into more scientific methods of instruction and assessment connected to student-centered technology systems, administrators may sometimes forget the most important and fundamental truth: students cannot learn if they are not in school.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is statistical significance in the relationship between an attendance support team and student attendance in schools of reported high absenteeism. The research will examine students who have been potentially at risk of receiving a habitual truancy petition with the court system and the impact of a truancy intervention team on preventing a petition being filed. The aim of this project is to examine the effectiveness of a diverse group of people who seek to improve school attendance in urban middle schools. The study should provide data and insight on the effectiveness of an attendance support team at improving attendance for each grade level of middle school and for male and female students.

## Conceptual Framework

In examining the effectiveness of an attendance support team to prevent truant students who could possibly receive a habitual truancy petition, it is important to decide upon a guiding framework to support this work. The postpositivism theory is applicable in analyzing the effectiveness of an attendance support team in urban middle schools through the philosophical view in which causes typically determine effects or outcomes. According to Creswell (2014), postpositivism simplifies ideas into a smaller, distinct body of ideas to test such as the variables that comprise a hypothesis. Specifically, Creswell elaborated, “Developing numeric measures of observations and studying the behavior of individuals becomes paramount for a postpositivist” (p. 8). Additionally, postpositivist thinking is the premise that some ideas regulate the world, and these ideas need to be studied, tested, and evaluated to best understand our world. The applicable knowledge gained from a postpositivist’s lens is based upon the intentional and diligent study of the objective reality that exists in the world, as we know it. A postpositivist uses testing "to develop relevant, true statements, one that can serve to explain the situation of concern or that describe the causal relationship of interest" in an unbiased and objective manner (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). As the national trend of education shifts toward a more personalized, self-governing, and competency system of student learning, a key tool in the administrator’s toolkit will be the use of a team to intervene on the top five percent of all students with the greatest number of absences to ensure they are in the classroom. When blending a theoretical approach of progressive practices to connect learning to demonstrable student competencies, the usage of

student-centered personnel in the building will be key in closing achievement gaps and improving academic proficiency.

### **Research Questions**

In examining the effectiveness of attendance support teams for supporting student academic, behavior, and attendance in high needs schools, it is critical to be aware of the obstacles, background, and family dynamics that all students bring with them each day to school. The aim is to measure the effectiveness of a team of student-centered adults positively collaborating to support students who have the potential and are at risk for being filed upon a habitual truancy petition with the family court. The purpose of this study is not to research demographics for socioeconomic factors connected to the selected students or research predictive patterns based on norm-referenced testing.

This proposed research study is to analyze the results of a strategic intervention in place within three urban high-needs middle schools to effect attendance and school funding related to attendance. The study seeks clarity in answering the following questions:

- 1) What impact does an attendance support team have upon the attendance of students based upon gender?
- 2) What impact does an attendance support team have upon a specific grade level to affect attendance?
- 3) What impact does an attendance support team have overall on the school's average daily attendance compared to a non-intervention school year?

## **Overview of Research Design and Methodology**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the overall effectiveness of an attendance support team on school attendance. At the fundamental level, the main purpose is to examine if meeting bi-monthly with a group of stakeholders can significantly affect the attendance of three urban middle schools that have been identified as needing extra support to improve their academics. At the forefront of this study is the principle that learning cannot occur if students are not present to receive the instruction. To provide more support to the students, schools, and families, the attendance team met with students from each school who had accumulated five or more unexcused absences from school. The team generated a bi-monthly report using the Infinite Campus Student Information Portal for each school's attendance, and when a student has accumulated five unexcused absences, the team sent the report to the designated school's social worker to review and verify the validity of the absences.

After careful review of each student, the social worker would submit a list of students to a court-designated worker (CDW), who would communicate with each student's family to attend a truancy intervention team meeting at each respective school. The CDW would mail an official request on behalf of the court as a pre-complaint to schedule a school intervention appointment before a habitual truancy petition could be filed against the student. The entire body of research and analysis of this dissertation is to measure the effectiveness of a school-based attendance support team and its ability to prevent habitual truancy petitions against juveniles in family court. To disseminate and determine statistical significance, each scheduled meeting with a student would be broken down by gender and grade level. At the end of the school year, the researcher

would review this information to determine if the scheduled intervention team prevented at-risk students from receiving a preliminary inquiry with the family court (i.e., habitual truancy petition). To assist the school and the school administration with a financial level of effectiveness, the researcher calculated a whole number amount of school funding to analyze the school year with an intervention team in place in comparison to the previous year without an intervention team.

At the end of this study, the researcher will use the data collected from the three selected schools that is stored in the district's student information system – Infinite Campus. The data for scheduled meetings, absences, attendance data related to individual schools, and if a habitual truancy petition was filed within the court system is housed within this system. The researcher will examine all data related to the research questions extrapolated from the three selected schools, analyze the data, and make conclusions based upon the results of the data. The results of this examination of the research will help provide framework and recommendations for future actions within schools to support student attendance and academics.

### **Participants**

Participants were selected from each middle school's student population who had accumulated five unexcused school absences occurring between September 2019 and March 2020. The last date to file a habitual truancy petition for each school year is April 1, 2020. This date has been designated because the court's diversion process lasts six months and attendance is not mandatory for summer school. When a student accumulated five unexcused absences, the team sent a generated report electronically to the respective social worker assigned at each school to review and to make student

recommendations to the CDW to process a pre-complaint and schedule a meeting at the student's middle school. The team selected participants based only on five unexcused absences regardless of gender, grade level, or grades. The minimum age for a student to have the opportunity to meet with the truancy intervention team is twelve. In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, parents who have habitually truant students below the age of twelve may be filed upon for Educational Neglect with the Department of Community Based Services (DCBS) (Child Protective Services, 2014).

### **Procedures**

After collecting data from each school's attendance team from the district's student information system (Infinite Campus) the data will be filtered and placed into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) file to determine if there is a statistical significance overall based on gender or a student's grade level. According to the 2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection, the average middle school student is absent 14% of a school year, and in Fayette County, the average is 15.9% (Shepard & Sturtevant, 2020). The data of gender, grade level, and average daily attendance funding will be entered into the SPSS software and data analysis will be conducted to determine if there is a statistical significance. To determine the overall effectiveness in assisting schools financially through average daily attendance (ADA) funding, the software uses a complex algorithm to process the schools' ADA for the year, the number of students, and the district's funds received from the state level. This amount of money is generated through the district level and is given to schools to pay for certified and classified staff as well as instructional and non-instructional purchases. The data analysis of this research will be used to project the overall school funding received and to determine if

an attendance support team impacted the school funding at each middle school from the previous school year. This study should serve as an overall guide into the utilization of school-level personnel, district administration, and court officers to assist students and families in an intervention. The overall effect will be the encompassing support for students and families when absences begin, rather than a wait and process method, which could end in a legal petition filed in family court.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This candidate will review the literature and the current research regarding student attendance in American public schools. The review of the literature will provide a history of the public-school system in the United States and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This review will provide a background addressing the effects associated with non-school attendance, non-regular attendance regarding gender, and non-regular attendance in middle schools. The intent of the literature review is to provide a perspective and to gain insight into the importance of regular attendance specifically concerning the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

### **The History of Education in America**

In the beginning of education in America, the home served as the first schoolhouse with a primary emphasis on reading, writing, mathematics, and core home values embedded into daily lessons. The earliest recorded educational system began in 1609 with the Puritans, who believed that reading was necessary and fundamental to understand the Bible (Donnelly, 2019). The Puritan view held to the Protestant Reformers of England that there was no distinction between religious and secular life and used education as a tool for navigating the hardships of the New World (Winthrop, 1630).

The continued pace of learning expanded throughout the colonies, and education served as a means for social progress as well as a means for the formation of American ideals. Thomas Jefferson, shortly after the American Revolution, was the first proponent of a public education system in America; he was the first to propose that free education should be mandatory and funded by taxpayers (Onuf, 2007). Horace Mann, brother-in-

law of Nathaniel Hawthorne, is credited as the person responsible for the creation of the American public education system, as he stated clearly, “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, -the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (Mann, 1868). His view; however, was not shared by the elected officials of the time and did not become relevant again until 1840.

In 1840, there were very few schools in communities funded by local citizens, but not every town had access to education. Horace Mann and Henry Bernard were two citizens that recognized the value in learning and in developing prosperous citizens for a strong Republic (Blanshard, 1963). These two men argued vehemently for compulsory education for all children in the United States. In 1852, Massachusetts became the first state to mandate compulsory attendance, and in the following year, New York provided the mandate for all residents (Grabner, 2009). The law included mandatory attendance for children between the ages of eight and fourteen for at least three months out of each year, of these twelve weeks, at least six had to be consecutive (Cave, 2019).

In 1918, all Americans were required to attend at least elementary school; this became the first national advocacy campaign for compulsory school attendance (Cave, 2019). Interestingly, the last state to pass a compulsory school attendance law, Mississippi in 1918, was also the first to repeal the law in 1956 (Katz, 1976). The compulsory laws used to enforce attendance became increasingly stricter, until a landmark legal case that reached the Supreme Court in 1925: *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (Katz, 1976). The Supreme Court yielded a decision that upheld a lower court’s decision in Oregon in that compulsory school attendance laws are not only enforceable in public schools (Everhart, 1977). The court did set a very crucial limit upon the state's

power to standardize its instruction for young people—limit of public schooling that created a limit of public schooling instructional influence (Rickenbacker, 1974).

The political discussion of school uniformity, school-based rituals, means of instruction, and ideals were debated in public arenas but once again ended in the Supreme Court case of *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* in 1943 (Bowman, 2019). The significance of this decision laid the framework for and placed parameters on what schools can require as compulsory and uniform actions, especially if consequences are enforced. Justice Jackson reexamined the purpose and function of public schools, noting that schools serve the essential role of “educating the young for citizenship” (Bowman, 2019).

The growth of student enrollment and the rise of high school graduations soared to over 78% by 1975 (Hechinger, 2013). This new level of commitment to increasing high school attendance and to students receiving high school diplomas also provided another landmark court case that argued against compulsory attendance in high school. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, a landmark court case in which it was argued that compulsory attendance laws were a threat to their Amish culture as an independent, religious community and violated their Amendment right to free exercise of religion, which was made applicable to the states by the Fourteenth Amendment (Keim, 1975).

Most Americans have a view of compulsory schooling as a legitimate need and well-fortified legal rule, which was upheld by the courts and reinforced by social standards. For members in the Amish community, it is seen as a coercive and illegitimate law, a requirement that conflicts with their own moral rule prohibiting school attendance beyond the eighth grade and infringes upon their rights as American

Citizens (Keim, 1975). The Supreme Court's decision supported the view of the Amish and Chief Justice Burger in his majority opinion questioned "the rationale underlying compulsory secondary schooling and thus undermined its importance in contemporary society not just for the Amish, but for all Americans" (Ellis, 2011, p. 406).

To increase the likelihood of social and personal outcomes in a democratic society, education is one of the pillars that exalts and moves a nation forward as the essentialist thought on compulsory attendance. It is also a protective measure for students who may be forced to endure challenging and harmful work, thus the conditions set forth in the Federal Fair Standards Labor Act of 1938 (Keim, 1975).

Although numbers of students were increasing both in attendance and in earning high school diplomas in the United States during the 20th century, there were still considerable gaps in relation to minorities earning diplomas. This began to change in the 1970s when socioeconomic, race, and students with disabilities were examined and studied (Peebles-Wilkins, 2005). As of 2013, the overall high school graduation rates have eclipsed those of the 1970s (Hechinger, 2013).

### **History of Education in Kentucky**

The history of the educational system in Kentucky is one in which chaos, uncertainty, and political divisiveness are as much a part of the landscape as land titles in the original state Constitution ratified in 1792 (McVey, 2015). As Kentucky was shaped by initial conservative thoughts and actions in the first two drafts of the state constitution, the area of public education was drawn out through heated debates over funding a system through taxes, and the enthusiasm faded (McVey, 2015).

The Kentucky Legislature initially considered a system for a university or an academy model used by Georgia and North Carolina before Kentucky was admitted to the Federal Union (McVey, 2015). Land tracts for operation would support the academy and university approach, but it was not intended to be utilized by the elementary-age children of the tenant or landless men (McVey, 2015). This initiative that was a progressive move forward failed due to financial burdens, lack of endowments, and support in facilities (McVey, 2015).

The initiative of the first academy type system began under the leadership of John Brown and Caleb Wallace; however, due to a level of inadequate funding, the system fell into deep decay, and by 1827 Transylvania University fell into financial hardship (McVey, 2015). After 30 years after the first draft of the state constitution, there was little evidence of public education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky or a common system of schools (McVey, 2015).

There was the University of Transylvania and a small group of private and semi-private schools, but no formal system to educate in this new frontier. Efforts by legislators, statesmen, and governors would provide sound reasons for the need for a school system to educate and move the democracy forward, but financing through taxes was not used until 1904 (Ellis, 2011). This signature initiative was able to move common families who had no formal education into a new realm and provided a greater opportunity for prosperity than previous generations. There was quite the inequity in the degree of education received due to the minimal amounts raised; the education was vastly different from those that could afford to send their children to more formal schools (Ellis, 2011).

In 1830, the state legislature proclaimed that local county courts could levy taxes upon their constituents and support local school districts (Ellis, 2011). The results of this action were minimal and provided support for only boys to attend through the fourth grade. Finally, in February 1938, Governor James Clark proclaimed with a renewed sense of optimism that Kentucky had voted to fund a public-school system (Ellis, 2011). This legislative action followed federal financial excess that was returned to the state by President Andrew Jackson.

The newly voted upon allocation, also known as The School Fund, was followed by an initial appointed Superintendent of the School Fund. This position, which would serve as a committee member with the state attorney and the secretary of state, who would comprise the state board of education. The state board's duty was to appoint five chairs in each of the districted counties to oversee the schools (Ellis, 2011). The local courts were responsible for the taxes levied upon its citizens to generate local income to support the local schools. This act did not affect local districts in Louisville, Lexington, and Maysville that were already supported by local taxes (Ellis, 2011).

The state board was responsible for the curriculum, selecting courses of study, the new health education initiative, and a full range of responsibilities that ran a common school (McVey, 2015). This new initiative of the Kentucky government supported new buildings and county teacher institutes as well as to support textbook funds for indigent children (McVey, 2015).

In 1887, the first Kindergarten Association was established in Louisville by Patty Smith Hill who was a staunch proponent in the idea that “the world moves

forward on the feet of children” and became renowned for her belief in creativity and free play for young students (Ellis, 2011, p. 94).

### **A New Era in Education for Kentucky**

The period from 1890-1920 is known as the Progressive Era in the Commonwealth due to increased initiatives and undertakings to promote commerce, attention to continuing infrastructure, and education (McVey, 2015). During this timeframe, attendance in Kentucky’s public schools increased to 36% after the passage of a compulsory attendance law (Ellis, 2011). The new era in growth for the state removed many barriers that had been impeding the educational growth of the state such as a better understanding of the educational procedure, growth in private and public institutions, and a growing tolerance among religious sects that confronted education in the past century (McVey, 2015).

In the book *Kentucky: Portrait in Paradox*, Klotter (1996) stated the commonwealth was “the only Southern state with a compulsory attendance law” (p. 192). Although the attendance rate was exceptional at the turn of the century in comparison to other states, the progress was short-lived; by 1940, Kentucky, which had ranked first in the South for attendance by both White and Black students, ranked last and next to last (Harrison & Klotter, 1997). Kentucky still failed in comparison to neighboring states in relation to receiving a proper elementary education. In 1940, the national average for elementary school attendance was 95 percent, while in Kentucky the average was 59 percent (Schacter, 1949).

In 1940, the national average for days in a school year was 151, while Kentucky students attended a school calendar of 131 days; this also accompanied a shorter school

calendar compared to neighboring states such as Indiana as 149 days and for Tennessee 138 days (Harrison & Klotter, 1997). The reasons, as in most cases, lead back to financial support to fund schools, pay educators, and pay the costs of running a school. The financial spending differed per-pupil in independent districts as compared to rural county districts, and many community schools consolidated to save costs (Schacter, 1949). Overall, the state spending on education decreased drastically during this period (1910-1940) from 44.7% to 29% (Schacter, 1949).

At the end of 1940, Kentucky was ranked 41st nationally in spending per student, spending just \$48 per student when the national average was \$92 per student. There was even a significant discrepancy within the state. In independent school districts, the disparity was also significant, spending \$72 per student while rural districts spent an average of \$40 per student (Ellis, 2011).

Before the beginning of World War II, Kentucky was nearly \$7 million in debt, but due to the wartime prosperity, Kentucky found itself with \$10 million in surplus funds (McVey 2015). It was also during this period significant political and lawful actions were passed. The first was legislation that allowed tenure for teachers passed in 1942. The second major passage of the legislation was uniformity for textbooks to be provided for all students in 1943 (McVey, 2015)

During the end of World War II, nearly \$2.5 million had poured into Kentucky by federal funds specifically for creating vocational trades to assist the wartime effort (McVey, 2015). This influx of finance into a needy state was in conjunction with the Food Preparation War Training Program. The training program trained over 156,000

Kentuckians, providing them with the skills to be job-ready in automated factories (McVey, 2015).

In 1949, the Kentucky State Legislature utilized post-war politics to harness the momentum of training and producing a greater workforce (McVey, 2015). This legislative session met and resolved to generate funding for Kentucky's public schools. The result was a constitutional amendment that was proposed to increase the state's contribution of 10% to education to 25% and became known as The Equalization Law (McVey, 2015).

When Governor Lawrence Wetherby came into office in 1950, he persuaded the legislature to allow a state vote to amend the constitution allowing state funds to be diverted where it was deemed fair and appropriate (McVey, 2015). The vote was allowed and the ability to divert funds as needed to be passed by a 2 to 1 vote on November 3, 1954. Harrison & Klotter (1997) opined, "this is merely the beginning" and the burden was placed on the General Assembly to fund "the minimum foundation."

### **Transitions in Education for Kentuckians**

The 1950s in America and in Kentucky were known for desegregation of the public school; however, in 1951 Kentucky passed a law allowing Blacks to voluntarily integrate as a result of a lawsuit by Lyman Johnson against the University of Kentucky in 1949 (McVey, 2015). This action predated any civil rights lawsuits for equality for all citizens in the United States. As the decade and future decades unfolded, legislature oversight would not only open up the doors of equality but also equity for all students.

The historic passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 made it federal law for integration to occur in all public schools. Chief Justice Earl Warren famously wrote, “We conclude that in the area of public education ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of South Carolina, 1954, p. 5). *Plessy v. Ferguson*’s ruling no longer had the sanction in public education. Governor Wetherby responded favorably stating, “we will do whatever we have to do to obey the law” and took a strong stand at the Southern Governor’s Conference for refusing to sign a statement against integration (Kleber, 1986, p. 416).

During the 1960s, Kentucky educational funding was still minimal, and property taxes and landowners that paid a very low tax rate impacted the local financial contributions. This practice continued until 1965 when the state Court of Appeals ruled that property had to be assessed at 100 percent of its real value (Ellis, 2011). Governor Ned Breathitt fell under political pressure due to the push back from powerful landowners and convened a special meeting called General Assembly. It was in this specially called assembly that the Governor won a reduction in property taxes indirectly proportionate to their increased assessment ratio (Ellis, 2011). This marked a strong stand in the funding of public education for Kentuckians.

Kentucky teachers earned a raise during the governorship of Republican Louie Nunn in 1968. It was during Governor Nunn’s first legislative session that he persuaded the legislature to increase the sales tax in the state from three cents to five cents and became known as “Nunn’s Nickel” (Harrison & Klotter, 1997). This increase led to an increase of salaries, but during the 1970 general assembly, 25,000 out of 30,000

teachers went on strike; this walkout culminated with lawsuits, but with the increased pressure from teachers, education received \$16 million out of \$18 million in Governor Nunn's final budget (Harrison & Klotter, 1997).

Although funding had increased due to push back from the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) through the state walkout, school funding was allocated on the counting of student average attendance (ADA) in classroom units and was counted in homerooms. In the book *Beyond the Minimum*, Ellis (2011) emphasized the most "desirable characteristics of local financial support is missing in Kentucky" (p. 193). This daily count of students still holds to the present day in which school districts are provided financial support based upon the average daily attendance of students into the schools, not the number of students in each school.

### **Educational Reforms in the Commonwealth**

Education in the late twentieth century was characterized by calls for reform in public schools and in funding to improve education as an institution. The minimum requirement imposed in the General Assembly is \$30 of assessed property; however, due to fact that some states have very small acreage in comparison to other districts and this produced an inequity in per-pupil spending (McVey, 2015). Due to political opportunities for alignment, some districts harmed themselves by previously breaking up large areas of land into smaller areas with too little taxable land to support schools (Ellis, 2011).

For a small state, Kentucky has 120 counties and most with small properties. Many counties were once larger but to honor local politicians or local elites, once large areas were divided into smaller areas. For example, Lee County in Eastern Kentucky

was once a part of the Owsley County and accommodations were made to honor a local official. To make the recognition into a county, a split occurred, and Lee County was named. However, this left Owsley with fewer resources, poorer land, and a smaller tax base to support education and local administration (Ellis, 2011). This practice was acceptable and was done for political purposes, but it was to the detriment of school funding received from property taxes.

In 1987, the Council for Better Education (CBE) brought a case into state court proposing that the state legislature and the governor had failed under section 183 of the Kentucky Constitution to provide an “efficient” education for all Kentucky students (Ellis, 2011). The case was argued by Governor Bert Combs and added another level of political power to move Kentucky forward in seeking equitable education for all students in the commonwealth.

In addition to a pending lawsuit for equitable funding for all students, a newcomer to the political arena was businessman Wallace Wilkinson, who ran his governor campaign on the platform of a state lottery system to serve residents and to support students. Although he did not have the political pedigree of other candidates in the primary election, he won the nomination and won the general election in 1987 (Ellis, 2011).

This was a new era in Kentucky politics in which an outsider beat the traditional names associated with elected higher offices, someone who was not recognized within the traditional political circles. As Governor Wilkinson took office, he confronted the General Assembly regarding the lottery, and an amendment was passed and approved by the citizens of the commonwealth (Ellis, 2011).

## **An Unconstitutional Education in the Commonwealth**

On May 31, 1988, Judge Roy Corns agreed with the Council for Better Education declaring the finance section 183 of the Kentucky Constitution to be unconstitutional and had failed in its duty to implement and support the students of Kentucky in their education (Ellis, 2011). The next year, the Kentucky Supreme Court upheld the decision in *Rose v. Council for Better Education* declaring the entire educational system in the state was unconstitutional in violation of section 183 (Ellis, 2011).

The Kentucky Supreme Court also ruled that the General Assembly must have remedial legislation in effect for schools open for the 1990-1991 school year (Ellis, 2011). This note pushed lawmakers, as well as state-level educators, to develop and implement new measures to ensure equal and equitable education in the commonwealth.

House Bill 940 was introduced as a landmark legislation of educational reform, Governor Wilkinson agreed to increase the state sales tax to six cents, and the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed (Harrison & Klotter, 1997). The legislation gave more ownership and oversight to local school councils. These school-based councils were comprised of administrators, teachers, and parents and were given authority within schools to create school policy (Harrison & Klotter, 1997).

To address the concern of equity in lower school districts, Family Youth Centers were developed and placed into school with a high percentage of low socioeconomic students to increase student-learning opportunities (Ellis, 2011). The new educational reform brought not only new statewide assessments but also placed in affect money for schools to reward educators for achievement results. However, after four years, the

monies used for this initiative were no longer solvent and this practice was abandoned (Ellis, 2011).

When this very progressive and historic educational system was implemented, the uncertainty of implementation with sufficient funding was, as it has always been, a concern for educators and lawmakers (Ellis, 2011). Beginning in 1994 through the present, the much-needed money to implement effective teaching in all Kentucky schools has been a part of each political election cycle. As the state continues to retain, lose, and fail to fill unfilled teaching positions, the decreased funding used to fund education, the Sustaining Educational Excellence Fund (SEEK) is a concern with every legislator session (Ellis, 2011).

In 2008, Kentucky still fell significantly behind the national average in per-pupil funding. This funding concern calls back to the goal set of doubling the number of college graduates in Kentucky by the year 2020. To achieve this goal, adequate funding levels would be needed, and unless the state is committed to allocating the needed financial resources for education, it is an impossible expectation for state educators to double the number of college graduates by 2020, as intended by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) (Ellis, 2011).

### **History of Compulsory Attendance in Kentucky**

Since the first compulsory education law in the United States in 1852, enacted in the State of Massachusetts, and requiring by law in Kentucky in 1896 for all students between the age of 6 and 16 to attend school, very little has transpired in the legal process for compulsory attendance (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015). The signature passage of this law propelled the need for education for all citizens in the

commonwealth. This statute provided guidance and regulation for students, families, and schools.

There have been some distinct amendments to the original statute, but very few statutory amendments have been put in place since the original piece of legislation. The first amended process to the statute occurred in 2011 in allowing individual districts to increase the legal dropout age or compulsory school age attendance from 16 to 18 years old (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015). While the addendum declared the decision to be “left up to individual school districts,” once 55% of all school districts in the state had declared this intent, the remaining districts would have four years to comply (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015).

To encourage student’s regular attendance and passing academic grades in secondary school classes, the No Pass/No Drive Law was passed during the 2007 legislative session (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015). This law provides the incentive for all students ages 16 to 17 who wished to have their driving permit shall not have nine or more unexcused absences and must have passing grades in at least four courses (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015). The law is written so that schools will use academic and attendance data from the previous semester of the school year to determine whether 16- and 17-year-old students are compliant with the law. If a student is defined as being noncompliant with the law, the driver’s license or permit may be revoked (Compulsory Attendance Act, 2015).

To promote efficiency and maintain the confidentiality of student records through this process, a secure web portal that connects schools directly with under the Kentucky Department of Transportation, Division of Driver Licensing. This was

promulgated in 2008 by KAR 701.13.070. To provide accountability in the process and provide verification with the Department of Transportation, each school must provide the student with a Student Verification Form that is officially given by the school (KY Rev. Stat. § 159.051). This ensures the authenticity in the same manner of providing a historic record that is protected under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (1974).

Students who attend private or parochial schools are still held accountable by the law, and each school must provide and abide by the statute. If a student is homeschooled, the student must receive the verification form from the local school district of residency to provide their verification. After House Bill 189 was officially passed in 2010 that effectively increasing the age of compulsory education to age 18 in 2011, the proponents of the bill affirmed in the House Education Committee that the potential state incomes could increase statewide by \$37 million a year. Another benefit, as stated in House Committee, was the provided preventative measures for those students who drop out of school, with the possible consequences of being adjudicated, saving \$50 million in criminal justice costs (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008).

### **Benefits of Regular Attendance**

In establishing sound and reasonable guides for the promotion of regular attendance in public schools, there are typically five main reasons: 1. Opportunity, 2. Achievement, 3. Social interaction in a school community, 4. Exposure to the English language, and 5. Importance of an education (GreatSchools, 2011). In utilizing and tracking student absences, attendance data serves as an essential tool for ensuring and intensifying the impact of efforts to boost student success— whether these efforts focus

on instruction, curriculum, school climate, or social-emotional learning (Chang, 2018). This directly points to a fundamental principle of learning— students cannot be taught if they are not present.

### **Early Grade Opportunities**

In seeking the best opportunities for potential positive outcomes for each student in the commonwealth, regular attendance is a fundamental principle meriting the rationale of missing school day to missing an opportunity to learn. As early as kindergarten, the relationship between absenteeism can be associated with negative first-grade outcomes, such as greater absenteeism in subsequent years and lower achievement in reading, math, and general knowledge (Romero & Lee, 2007). In a 2013 study conducted in the Chicago Public Schools, researchers analyzed data from 25,000 three- and four-year-olds' attendance along with monitoring their kindergarten readiness. It was concluded that students who were chronically absent had significantly weaker kindergarten readiness skills, including letter recognition and pre-reading skills (Ehrlich et al., 2013). This research also produced significant predictive measures for diminished reading success for every year the student is absent.

Students who have low attendance in both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten often continue to have low attendance are more likely to be retained by third grade and on average have lower academic outcomes than compared with their classmates who have regular attendance (Connolly & Olson, 2012). The comprehensive study also provided positive research to indicate that when students in early grades transition from a chronically absent student to a student with regular attendance their literacy and numeracy skills improve significantly (Connolly & Olson, 2012). The Chicago Public

Schools study also provided positive research in tracking students who transformed patterns of poor attendance to displaying regular attendance showed the most significant gains in their reading skills (Ehrlich et al., 2013).

In determining the need for regular attendance beginning with students in kindergarten, the Tennessee Department of Education studied 824,595 kindergartners during the 2015-2016 school year (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). This study was conducted statewide to determine indicators that bridge the gap between school absences and academic performance. The study concluded that kindergartners that are absent two days per month are 15% less likely to reach proficiency in either third-grade math or reading (Hankins, 2019). The projected trajectory of this study in Tennessee found that students who are chronically absent in ninth grade are 30% less likely to earn an on-time diploma, a 61% graduation rate compared to 91% graduation rate (Hankins, 2019). This study captures a significant number of not only reading, and graduation rates, but also revealed that on a state level, Tennessee has over 150,000 students miss school each day of the school year (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017).

A national study began that tracked students' educational progress from kindergarten through fifth grade was conducted to analyze the benefits and the possible consequences of attendance in kindergarten. This survey followed one national cohort of 3,997,200 kindergarten students and followed them until Spring 2004 (Romero & Lee, 2007). The results of this study concluded that greater absenteeism in kindergarten was associated with lower achievement in reading, math, and general knowledge at the end of first grade (Romero & Lee, 2007). The research concluded that on average,

children missing 10% or more of the school year scored five points less than students who were absent up to 3% of the school year in kindergarten (Romero & Lee, 2007).

According to research released by the University of Virginia from 1998 to 2006, kindergarten teachers reported devoting 25% more time to teaching early literacy, up from 5.5 hours to seven hours per week (Bassok & Rorem, 2014). Although there are breakdowns of each study into demographics, the true indicator of absenteeism in the early grades is low socioeconomic status. The negative impact, though, is 75% greater for a low-income student in kindergarten than for more affluent peers and 40% greater in first grade (Ready, 2010). This analysis correlates to the research that poorer children are far more likely to be chronically absent (Chang & Romero, 2008).

To provide evidence and support to encourage families who may be experiencing low-socioeconomics due to a circumstance, low-income students who attend school regularly are shown to have demonstrated the most significant benefits from instruction than their high-income peers (Ready, 2010). The students gained 8% more literacy skills in kindergarten and nearly 7% more in first grade as compared to their more affluent peers and the reading gap between affluent and low-income closed by a third (Connolly & Olson, 2012). Furthermore, poor attendance creates challenges for all children in classrooms as teachers devote more resources to helping meet the learning needs of those children who missed school (Applied Survey Research, 2011; Gottfried, 2011)

## **Academic Achievement**

A second benefit from regular school attendance is directly related to the student and their level of academic achievement. Although teacher effectiveness in the classroom is the strongest school-related determinant of student success, chronic student absence reduces even the best teacher's ability to provide learning opportunities (Adelman, 2006). Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance (National Forum on Education Statistics [NFES], 2009). This practical theory was given credible merit with a complete meta-analysis confirmed what was commonly thought. In a research study conducted in the urban middle schools of Baltimore City, the evidence provides a strong correlation of students who miss ten or more over their absences in elementary school were much more likely than other low-achieving students to never graduate (Roderick, 1993).

To determine the value, the impact, and the importance of education, many educators call upon the effect of seat time needed for oral instructions, specific content instruction, and processes needed for comprehension of content (NFES, 2009). Every day inside a school building is important in a student's life due to the value of active and passive learning occurring in a structured environment. While research clearly substantiates the value of teacher effectiveness on student achievement, even the most effective teacher cannot be effective when a student is not present or if a student has a high number of absences. Regular attendance is essential in being able to provide students with opportunities to learn, think, apply, and demonstrate the outcomes of

learning, and these opportunities are limited when students do not attend school (NFES, 2009).

### **Social Interaction**

The benefit of social interaction within a school community is related to the structure, the routine, and the socialization found in the rhythm of a school day, as well as experiencing a broader worldview. School is a structured environment in which students learn to navigate the social situations that are vital for understanding the world around them (Gottfried, 2014). Socializing with peers helps them to understand social cues, social etiquette, and to express their thoughts (Gottfried, 2014). Chronically absent students have been shown to lack certain social skills, including a child's ability to pay attention, work independently, adapt to change, and persist in tasks (Gottfried, 2014). It also reflects a lack of eagerness to learn new things and a lack of engagement in school (Gottfried, 2014).

Chronic absence is associated with a lack of certain social skills, including a child's ability to pay attention, work independently, adapt to change, and persist in tasks. It also reflects a lack of eagerness to learn new things and a lack of engagement in school (Gottfried, 2014). Again, the differences are greater for the students who miss more school. A comparison of social skills testing done in the fall and spring of the kindergarten years found that most students started school with similar levels of engagement (Ginsburg et al., 2014). Those with worse attendance showed decreases in their engagement in school and eagerness to learn by the spring testing (Ginsburg et al., 2014).

Socio-emotional development and functioning, as reported by teachers and developing school refusal behaviors as reported by parents, surfaced as important factors related to absenteeism (Romero & Lee, 2007). These findings represent a national concern in correlating absenteeism with positive student outcomes and individual student achievement (Romero & Lee, 2007). These characteristics are observed both formally and informally through a variety of structured and unstructured opportunities through the National Kindergarten Cohort beginning in 1998 (Romero & Lee, 2007). Children who exhibited less mature socio-emotional functioning in the classroom, as indicated by teachers' scores on approaches to learning, interpersonal relations, self-control, as well as on externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors, had higher absenteeism rates than those with greater socioemotional maturity (Romero & Lee, 2007). Likewise, children who, according to their parents, complained about school, were upset to go to school or claimed to be sick to stay home and had higher absenteeism than those who did not engage in these behaviors (Romero & Lee, 2007).

Eccles (1999) suggested that is within the early years of learning that students learn skills to self-monitor, regulate, communicate, and problem solve socially. As students progress through their formal schooling, the potential exists for children to follow a course of healthy development associated with positive outcomes or to experience frustration and incompetence associated with disengagement and disinterest in school increases (Eccles, 1999). Children engage in avoidance tactics to remove themselves from activities where they perceive themselves as having a low likelihood of success, in effect disengaging from the school exhibited by low school attendance patterns (Kazdin 1993; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). This begins a compounded cycle of

falling behind rather than keeping up with classmates in academics and socially and has negative effects later due to their chronic absenteeism.

### **Literacy Skills**

In establishing the lifelong skill of literacy, schooling not only provides those opportunities but also instructs and affirms those applied practices in the proper usage. The impact of chronic absenteeism in early grades yields the greatest concerns in terms of future academic achievement. In determining the significant effect and correlation between regular attendance and initiating foundational literacy skills, the California Department of Education in 2007 analyzed the attendance of 6,504,015 students (California Department of Education, 2017). The final report concluded a strong correlation between regular attendance and the impact of school-level academic outcomes (California Department of Education, 2017). This study coincides with research conducted in a 2001 childhood literacy study in California from 5,779 schools, concluding that 64% of the students with good attendance in kindergarten and first grade scored above average on the state's third-grade reading test (Ready, 2010). A third study also draws a significant comparison to 17% of students chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade (Applied Survey Research, 2011). These studies draw a strong conclusion to data that demonstrates for every year a student is chronically absent, his or her chance for reading success diminishes grade (Applied Survey Research, 2011).

In October 2007, The National Center for Children in Poverty published a report detailing the effect chronic absenteeism has on literacy. This national study profiled student demographics of 18,174 students and tracked their school absences along with

their final measures on literacy assessments. The findings of this report produced concrete evidence that all of the students who were chronically absent in kindergarten demonstrated weaker reading skills in first grade, with Latino children suffering the worst effects (Romero & Lee, 2007).

Further analysis of test scores through fifth grade showed that the ill effects of early absenteeism lingered for low-income children even if their attendance had improved in third grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). The negative impact, though, is 75% greater for a low-income student in kindergarten than for more affluent peers and 40% greater in first grade (Ready, 2010). The impact is two times greater for students from low-income families. Children from low-income families who were also chronically absent in kindergarten had the lowest levels of achievement in fifth grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). According to the research of (Elrich et. All (2013), for every year a student is chronically absent, his or her chance for reading success diminished. However, the work of Ready concluded that low-income kids who attended regularly appeared to benefit from the instruction more than higher-income peers did. The findings of the research on summer learning loss have shown that students who live in high-poverty communities benefit the most from going to school (Ready, 2010). As a result, those students who need the most academic support are the same students might be hurt the most by absenteeism (Ready, 2010).

The analytical findings studying the effects of absenteeism has upon literacy in early grades continues into the intermediate grades. The research study by Ready (2010), as well as the Chang and Romero (2008), provided evidence that poor children are far more likely to be chronically absent, thus effecting the early learning of rich

literacy skills needed for future academic success. These significant findings demonstrate the importance along with the significant impact of regular attendance in the early grades of school.

### **Consequences of Student High Absenteeism in Elementary School**

As educators study the positive outcomes associated with regular attendance, the negative consequences of high absenteeism produce negative outcomes too difficult for many students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). One of the most significant effects on student achievement begins in kindergarten or even in pre-kindergarten. Although the educational attempts to benefit many students in creative play, introduction to literacy, and numeracy, being at school is a requisite for elementary school achievement and further academic success.

In studies conducted across our nation to determine the impact of regular attendance and the connection to academic achievement, numerous findings provide a clear indication of the importance of regular school attendance. Findings from comprehensive studies analyzing chronic absenteeism in kindergarten demonstrate a strong correlation with lower academic performance in first grade (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The findings also determine that the impact is twice as great for students from low-income families (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

In analyzing various parts of the country and deciding on how to decrease the achievement in students, a simple but powerful approach is simply attending school. In Baltimore, students who were chronically absent in both pre-k and kindergarten often continued to be chronically absent in later years and are more likely to be retained in a grade and have an academic lower achievement (Connolly & Olson, 2012). In the state

of Oregon, chronic absence in one early grade of elementary school is linked with lower test scores throughout the elementary school; but being chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade is linked to the lowest scores (Buehler et al., 2012). This is profound in showing the importance of regular attendance in school because most state compulsory attendance policies began with age appropriateness in kindergarten. In specific studies conducted in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties in California, students who arrived at school academically ready to learn but were then chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade scored 60 points below good attenders on third-grade reading tests and close to 100 points below on mathematics tests (Applied Survey Research, 2011). This is significant as the third grade is the first transition grade for students before transitioning to intermediate grades, and once leaving elementary school, the achievement gap begins for students in norm and state testing. Researchers conducted a study in the city of Philadelphia City Schools to examine if days present is prevalent in all models and across multiple measures of achievement; the results of this citywide study concluded that attendance is a significant predictor of student achievement (Gottfried, 2010).

As schools and school districts track and monitor student attendance, the annual state and nationally normed assessments demonstrate a strong connection to attendance and academic achievement in elementary school. Students that were chronically absent in kindergarten, when tested at the end of the school year, had 14% fewer literacy skills in kindergarten than those who attended more regularly (Ready, 2010). There is a greater negative impact on students who are from families with a low-socioeconomic status where it is 75% greater in kindergarten and 40% greater in the first grade (Chang

& Romero, 2008). The impact is two times greater for students from low-income families. Children from low-income families who were also chronically absent in kindergarten had the lowest levels of achievement in fifth grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). Unfortunately, students from low-income homes have higher rates of absenteeism along with higher rates of missing school.

In applying the research of states and schools to the roughly 50 million students enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten to 12 in America's public schools, educators can closely estimate that from 5 to 7.5 million students each year are not attending school regularly. The more instruction missed, the greater potential for low learning outcomes grade (Applied Survey Research, 2011). A citywide study in New York concluded that the predicted effect on fourth-grade English achievement for a student moving from chronic absence to average attendance is greater than gains attributed to attending a high-quality charter school (Musser, 2011). The study also resulted in the findings that a student who moved from being defined as chronically absent to having regular attendance produced academic outcomes that resulted in a 17% achievement gap between white and minority students. In mathematics, the predicted gain is equal to 26% of the achievement gap (Musser, 2011).

### **The Effects of Absenteeism in Middle School**

As students progress in grades from elementary school to middle school, absenteeism also increases for students who have already developed habits of being absent. The rates of absenteeism only increase through middle school and into high school; this is due to students having more autonomy and independence to miss school in their attempt to express ownership in their decision-making (Brown & Knowles,

2007). The result of students continually missing more school puts the student at a disadvantage academically, and thus begins the cycle of continually attempting to catch up to their classmates.

### **Predictor of High School Graduation**

There are significant benefits of regular attendance in the middle school years. A major benefit of regular attendance is the predictor of high school graduation, and the sixth grade of middle school has a strong correlation in the predictive success of attaining a high school diploma (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Unfortunately, the converse is also true; absenteeism in middle school can predict high school dropout rates.

A national research study conducted at Johns Hopkins University found that student attendance as early as sixth grade becomes an indicator that a student will drop out (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The study also provided early warning signs that include poor grades in core courses and behavior leading to suspensions (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The behavioral infraction that precedes a school-issued suspension enforces a school-sanctioned absence, which further compounds the issue of missing classroom instruction and completing schoolwork.

### ***States Studies on Attendance and Graduation***

A statewide study in Utah, in which most students attend school in rural areas, found that a student who is chronically absent in any year between 8th and 12th grade is 7.4 times more likely to drop out (Byrnes & Reyna, 2012). The Georgia Department of Education in 2010 concluded that a 3% improvement in attendance—five additional days—would have led more than 55,000 students to pass end-of-year standardized tests in reading, English, or mathematics in third through eighth grade (Barge, 2011). The

study also revealed that students who missed between five and ten days of school can experience a significantly negative impact on achievement and can negatively alter the high school graduation rates (Barge, 2011). The study analyzing student demographics in the state of Georgia revealed that 70% of all chronically absent students live in poverty and attend school less frequently than those who do not (Barge, 2011).

### ***Urban Studies of Attendance and Graduation***

Several studies have been conducted in large cities in the United States. A 2006 study in the city of Philadelphia found only 17% of the city's 9,282 sixth graders who were severely chronically absent and attended school less than 80% of the time graduated within one extra year of on-time graduation (Balfanz et al., 2007). This comprehensive study followed four cohorts of students through high-poverty middle schools in Philadelphia. The research study that controlled for teacher quality, prior achievement, behavior, effort, and demographics, found that students who were chronically absent had significantly lower odds of closing their mathematics achievement gap than students who were equal in all other respects but attended school regularly (Balfanz et al., 2007). Kieffer et al. (2011) researched the 248 public middle schools in New York City to analyze academic, assessments, and attendance (Kieffer et al., 2011). The findings from this study showed that improvements or declines in students' test scores are predictive of students' progress towards graduation and that 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 et al., 2011).

In 2010, the public schools in Baltimore conducted a study on the effects of attendance from the 5,849 sixth graders in attendance and the connection to their graduation cohort (Baltimore Education Research Consortium [BERC] 2011). The citywide research study concluded that approximately 70% of the students missing 10 or fewer days graduated; 51% of students missing more than 10, but fewer than 20, days graduated; 36% of students missing 20 to 39 days, and just 13% of students missing 40 or more days graduated (BERC, 2011). These findings provide indicators to school districts, teachers, and administrators in monitoring the attendance of students who have frequent absences and have missed direct or passive instruction, thus creating negative learning outcomes for themselves unless interventions and remediation are put into place.

### **Middle School Attendance and Test Scores**

Recent research aimed at determining and indicating specific strategies to improve attendance could likely have as much if not more of a payoff for high school graduation even though efforts are aimed at improving test scores. The findings for middle school students provides insight as test scores are hard to change and do not show much variability throughout middle and high school. Allensworth et al., (2014) conclude that middle school attendance is much more predictive of passing high school classes than test scores.

As a result, successful high school outcomes are significantly greater for students who improve their attendance during the middle-grade years, than for students who improve their test scores among students who start with the same levels of achievement (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). There are two significant findings needed to be

monitored to ensure the graduation from high school based upon data from the middle school years: If students are attending school less than 85% of the time in any of the earlier grades in middle school (grades five through seven), they are at high risk of failing when they get to high school. A second key finding is if students are attending less than 80% of the time, they are almost certain to be off-track at the end of ninth grade. De la Torre, lead researcher for the Chicago Consortium maintains:

If our ultimate goal for students is high school and college success, then we would do well to spend at least as much time providing the instructional environment and supports that would lead to higher grades and attendance as schools currently put on improving test scores. (Allensworth et al., 2014)

When students transition from the middle school to the high school setting, the foundation of literacy and numeracy skills along with the initial processes of abstract thinking has been secured and are ready to be engaged in high thinking, concepts, and applications. One indicator of success at the secondary level is the student's historical attendance record (NFES, 2005). As a student matures and transitions from grade to grade until the end of high school, two indicators are considered important for adaptive functioning in the cognitive and behavioral realms adulthood: Grade point average (GPA) and attendance (Roby, 2004). The key findings from extensive research conducted by states, urban or rural areas, or nationally conducted studies reveal the key component of academic achievement is simply attending school. There is a simple truth that can be distilled down to one sentence regarding high school graduation: if a student wishes to become a high school graduate, the simplest way to obtain a diploma, according to research, is to have regular school attendance.

## **Gender Equity in Middle School**

One of the most common challenging periods in student's developmental years is the time associated with middle school. This is due to changes in the student's level of maturity, seeking autonomy and individuality, and the introduction to adolescence (Midgley et al., 1995). The effects of school attendance in these three years are not only profound in determining work ethic in abstract learning but in determining if a student will earn a high school diploma.

### **School Engagement and Attendance for Middle School Students**

As students transition from elementary to middle school, the middle school environment provides opportunities for students to express their interest, develop a broad base of heterogeneous friendships, and participate as a member of a school team or organization. A national study conducted by Furlong et al. (2003) studied 25,298 students over the span of a middle school to high school transition to determine a connection between middle school engagement in the activity and deemed school success. One distinct characteristic discovered that bridged the gap in student attendance and middle school is behavioral engagement (Furlong et al., 2003). Furlong et al. defined behavioral engagement as

Individual participatory activities such as attendance, task behaviors, and extracurriculars—is conceptualized as a critical building block for educational success; in essence, by being a present and active participant in school, students form emotional bonds with teachers and peers that, in turn, facilitate school investment and educational effort. (p. 1288)

The work by Elder (1998) concluded that students who had experienced elementary success and attended school regularly would continue the same success transitioning into middle school. In contrast, the students who experienced the greatest decrease in middle school attendance, the school transitions were substantially more likely to shift to more problematic attendance trajectories in high school (Elder, 1998). This conclusion is drawn to the foundational success of early elementary regular attendance and the transitional shift to middle school where there are more opportunities to become engaged in school. Specifically, adolescent students will encounter a disruption in friendship networks, have fewer opportunities to develop close relationships with their teachers, and a decrease in felt autonomy in their school environment (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Midgley & Feldlaufer, 1987; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005). This developmental period in a student's life is crucial when they are particularly in need of strong relational connections, moderately challenging academic tasks that foster skill development, and a sense of autonomy (Eccles et al., 1993; Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

### **Gender and Middle School Attendance**

One strategy to employ methodologies into the school building to have students attend school regularly is to analyze characteristics associated with a four-year graduation cohort and make comparisons with other cohorts. The intent is to replicate specific strategies that were successful and to build upon those successes. The National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP], 2015) compared one graduation cohort in 2003 and another in 2015. The study analyzed the results of 349,700 students over this period. The researchers analyzed the research findings and determined that there

were no significant differences in student assessments between fourth and eighth grade in reading and math (NAEP, 2015). This finding is based upon the small variability in change of test scores between students (Sievertsen et al., 2016). This is profound in the transition from intermediate elementary school to the middle school setting where the attainment of learning through active engagement or through passive learning is only gained when students are present in class to receive instruction.

The study produced interesting results when comparing boys' attendance rates in comparison to girls' attendance rates in middle school. The research findings of this study show boys had a higher full-attendance rate than girls (46.6% vs. 42.1% did not miss any school), and another interesting result showed that boys were no more likely than girls to display extreme chronic absenteeism (1.7% of boys and 1.6% of girls missed more than 10 days of school) (NAEP, 2015). In studying the entire year, the study found that boys (18.2%) were also slightly less likely than girls (20.2%) to be chronically absent throughout the school year missing two or more days per month or 10% of the school year (NAEP, 2015).

### **Behavioral Impact by Gender on Attendance**

The research regarding the differences by gender proves especially interesting due to the overwhelming evidence that boys typically receive more office referrals of misbehavior and poor choices (Kaufman et al., 2010). This fact has been concluded by research conducted by the Office of Civil Right ([OCR], 2010), which showed that girls represented 55% of the nearly 62,000 students in the sample reported to have been bullied or harassed on the basis of sex; boys represented 79.6% of the 92,000 students in the sample disciplined for bullying or harassment based on gender.

## **Academic Equity by Gender**

The findings of this study coincide with the research by the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection that concluded that of the 1.1 million students surveyed, 36% of middle school students (grades 6-8) retained in 2009-10 (OCR, 2012). As retention is one metric that, unfortunately, calculates the number of students failing school years, a stronger predictor of high school success is the taking of and passing of Algebra I in middle school. The OCR (2012) reported found that girls of every race/ethnicity are passing at a higher rate than their male peers. This is significant in the push for equality in the related study pathways of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). This research concludes the various elements in play regarding attendance, behavioral actions, and retention in middle school.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the research findings from studies, articles, and court cases strongly support that educational achievement has two very distinct and prominent factors for graduating from high school: attending school regularly and completing classwork to obtain good grades. Test scores are not a reliable predictor of high school success or ensuring earning credits to graduate. The success of a student is determined by their attendance and grades. The research findings show that test scores over time are replicable, where the effects of attendance lead to losses of active and passive learning.

In examining grade levels to decide which grade has a significant impact on attendance rates and academics, it also is varied and scattered in the research. The literature finds that sixth grade is the grade for student development of autonomy and the need for independent decision-making; seventh grade is the grade for the

development of abstract applications and understanding; finally, eighth grade is a predictor of high school success. The research is not clear, nor does it provide guidance or clarity in which grade level educators can focus on to improve school attendance. The research findings are surprising in the area of gender due to the contrast between the numbers of office referrals for misconduct for boys as compared to girls, but the boys generally have better attendance.

The best solution for learning, whether gaining knowledge, understanding concepts, or applying information is to attend school regularly. The research is very conclusive from various studies that range from national, to state, to large cities, and the fact remains constant: regular attendance in school, regardless of grade level, is the best indicator for academic success and positive learning outcomes. In addition to the efforts to study student attendance by various agencies, the challenge is figuring out how educators and educational agencies can increase the attendance of students throughout the school year.

All local school districts are required by the federal government, the state departments of education, and school districts to regularly measure and report the rates of chronic absenteeism and regular attendance (missing five days or less a year) for every school. State and district policies need to encourage every student to attend school every day and support school districts, schools, nonprofits, communities, and parents in using evidence-based strategies to act upon these data to propel all students to attend school daily. Mayors and governors have critical roles to play in leading inter-agency task forces that bring health, housing, justice, transportation, and education agencies together to organize coordinated efforts to help every student attend every day.

The existing evidence could not be clearer or produce a greater need to focus on educationally. If the United States wants to increase the overall graduation rate, then they must focus on the attendance of students and remove barriers that impeded regular attendance. Academic achievement from kindergarten forward, high school graduation, and post-secondary enrollment are all highly sensitive to absenteeism. Missing even a small amount of school can have negative impacts, especially for students who live in or near poverty. Missing large amounts of school, at any time, completely hinders the opportunities for students to have positive and successful educational outcomes.

One of the more challenging issues of compiling, researching, studying, analyzing, and seeking information from the literature is that there is a profound need to have a constant nomenclature regarding attendance. Although all states have their definitions of regular attendance, the deviation stems from defining chronic absenteeism and truancy in terms of quantifiable amount. This impacts the research from one state to another or from one city to another. Although most states agree on chronic absenteeism, truancy is defined by local state legislatures. There is another gap in the empirical literature that makes research challenging: the lack of the differentiation between excused and unexcused absences and the use of the arbitrary threshold measures to classify truant groups.

Researchers often fail to distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, and most of the studies have focused on total school absences (Gottfried, 2010). In a review of 16 studies on truancy, only one distinguished between excused absences and other types (Sutphen et al., 2010), yet research has shown the differential negative effects of unexcused absences on student adjustment. Students experiencing unexcused

absences were twice as likely to be involved in risk behaviors (Eaton et al., 2008) and poor academic achievement (Gottfried, 2010; Gottfried, 2011) than those experiencing excused absences.

To make a significant impact and close our achievement gaps in all demographics, educators have to make the conscious effort to assist families with ensuring their students attend school. This basic fundamental principle is based upon seeking relationships with families to strengthen the bond between school and home. This relationship, which builds trust is the key premise for insuring not only positive communication, but regular attendance which effects a student's all-around education.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

When students are in school, each day provides an opportunity for future success for the student and a financial allotment for the school for their daily attendance. When students are absent from school and the student returns to school, the student's guardian must provide a signed and dated note to the school to provide documentation of the whereabouts of the student. Two types of absences are documented and recorded hourly at each school in our country: unexcused absences and excused absences. Each school district has the autonomy to set the amount of excused absences for each of its students. In this district, students are eligible to submit 10 parent all-day notes, 10 parent tardy notes, 3 family emergency notes, and any time a student is seen by a doctor, attends court, or attends a funeral, those notes are excused. In Kentucky, one excused day is given to students each year if they choose to attend the Kentucky State Fair. The issue of truancy affects students when they return to school from an absence and fail to submit documentation of their absence. The documentation provides evidence to the school of the student's whereabouts, reasons for their absence, and excuses for their absence from the compulsory school attendance laws.

The Kentucky Revised statute (KRS §159.010) is the compulsory attendance law in our state. It states that parents must send their children to school from ages six to 21 or until graduation from high school. If a student is enrolled in a public school in Kentucky and misses school without providing an excuse, the absence is defined as being unexcused. Every student in the United States has three days from the absence to submit a note. When a student obtains three unexcused absences, the student is legally defined as truant. When a student obtains six unexcused absences within the school

year, the student is legally defined as being habitually truant. As the student's unexcused absences accumulate and reach the number twelve, the student may face a legal consequence in the form of a habitual truancy petition (HTP) being filed in Family Court.

As an educator, the most important factor facing any classroom is the amount of time spent with students. Time is the greatest resource to allow relationships to develop and grow, knowledge to be transferred and gained, and feedback provided to guide and strengthens understanding. When students are absent, this resource can never be utilized and for habitually truant students, it places them on the trajectory of being at-risk from the graduation of failing to graduate high school. In an attempt to intervene with students and families before a petition is presented to family court, a truancy diversion team is formed at three urban middle schools to determine why a student is truant and what the school, the district, and the court system can do to support the family to prevent a family court petition. This section focuses on the participants, the data, and the analysis from a truancy diversion team and the effectiveness and prevention of an HTP being filed upon a student in family court.

### **Population**

This research study will examine the effectiveness of attendance support teams during a six-month student in three selected middle schools. The middle schools were selected by the number of habitual students in their respective buildings and in relation to the number of habitual truancy petitions filed in family court. In all three of the chosen middle schools each Monday morning, a cumulative attendance report was generated from the district office listing all students who had five unexcused absences.

Five unexcused absences served as the threshold selected by members of the family court as the set number to provide an intervention with students, families, and school staff. When a student had accumulated five unexcused absences, the student is legally defined as being truant and is one unexcused day away from being habitually truant. The overarching goal of this team was to prevent an additional unexcused absence and the potential for a filed HTP in court.

A social worker from each of the chosen middle schools would review the cumulative unexcused attendance report each Monday to ensure that each student had been given three school days after the absence to submit documentation. After reviewing each student and their confirmed absences, the information was sent to the Fayette County Office of Family Courts where a CDW would contact the family by telephone, schedule a truancy intervention team meeting at the school, and send a formal letter confirming the invitation. The meetings at each school are scheduled bi-monthly.

At each scheduled meeting, the parent and the student would meet to discuss the absences, the grades, and the specific reason for the unexcused absences. The participants would have been selected based upon five unexcused absences, but the ages vary from 12- to 14-years-old and grade six through eight. This process and the opportunity for families to participate is defined as a pre-complaint. This was a level of support for families and students to ascertain the reason for the habitual absences and to add levels of support in an effort to remove barriers that may impede regular attendance.

## **Recruitment**

The initial ideation of the Attendance Support Teams began with the Fayette County Family Court in conjunction with the Fayette County Fair Team to place interventions and support for students who are potentially headed to family court due to habitual truancy. The CDW and the court-designated specialists (CDS) proposed a school-based team collaborating with the court system and facilitated through the office of pupil personnel to develop a school-based team focused on students at the middle school level who are potentially “at-risk” academically and on the pathway towards family court due to habitual truancy. The three middle schools were chosen due to habitually truant students in past years and a school district focus to provide academic support. The teams consist of a school administrator, a school family resource director, a school social worker, an assistant director of pupil personnel, and a CDW. The students were selected based upon one objective data point: obtaining five unexcused absences within the school year. Each Monday a report was given, reviewed, and communicated with families to schedule a meeting to assist students and families with the intent of preventing a possible truancy petition, placing the student in the court system.

Families were presented with information regarding the purpose of the meeting with the CDW and a release of information form is signed allowing communication between a family, a school, and the institution of law. This form protects the confidentiality of the student but allows student information to be shared and discussed during the meeting. If a parent did not wish to participate in the program or did not give permission to share information, the meeting was not scheduled for the student and

family. This study was for students and families who wish to understand the impact of habitual truancy and mitigate the factors that are the root cause of the absences. The team met to provide supports within the school, the district, or in conjunction with community partnerships to support families and students.

### **Instrumentation**

In determining the effectiveness of a truancy intervention team on potentially habitual students, the data will be input into our student information system used through the district and state – Infinite Campus. This management software system allows the user to input dates, contact information, and make comments to support student achievement. It is also used as to extrapolate data and make attendance, behavioral, and academic data decisions. All data collected from the team was completed by the end of February 2020. The researcher compiled the data to calculate the exact number of students who participated in the attendance and diversion team meeting and who received an HTP in Family Court. Once the data was compiled, the aggregated data will be input into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program for testing and the results will be analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the team. To examine and analyze the effectiveness of an attendance support team on male and female students in an urban middle school, a  $z$ -score will be utilized to determine the difference between the two nominal groups of equal variances (i.e.,  $p_{20} = p_{19}$ ). The two-proportion  $z$ -test will compare two categorical pieces of data in determining if there is a statistical significance between the proportion of students referred to the court system without a diversion program, proportion of students referred in 2019 ( $p_{19}$ ) and compared with the proportion of students referred with the diversion

program (p20). The calculation will assess the effectiveness of the diversion team on one student population compared to the other student populations of equal variance. The calculation will provide more validity for grouping with the sample size used to compare data from the previous year without the diversion team in place to the school year with a diversion team. Figure 1 exemplifies how the z-score is computed.

$$Z = \frac{\hat{p}_1 - \hat{p}_2 - 0}{\sqrt{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}}$$

**Figure 1:** Z-score Formula

*Source:* Exploring and Learning English: An Analysis of Baidu and Google Translation, M.A., Razzak International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation 2(5), 275.

Available at SSRT: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3462184>. Reprinted with permission.

$Z$  = standard score

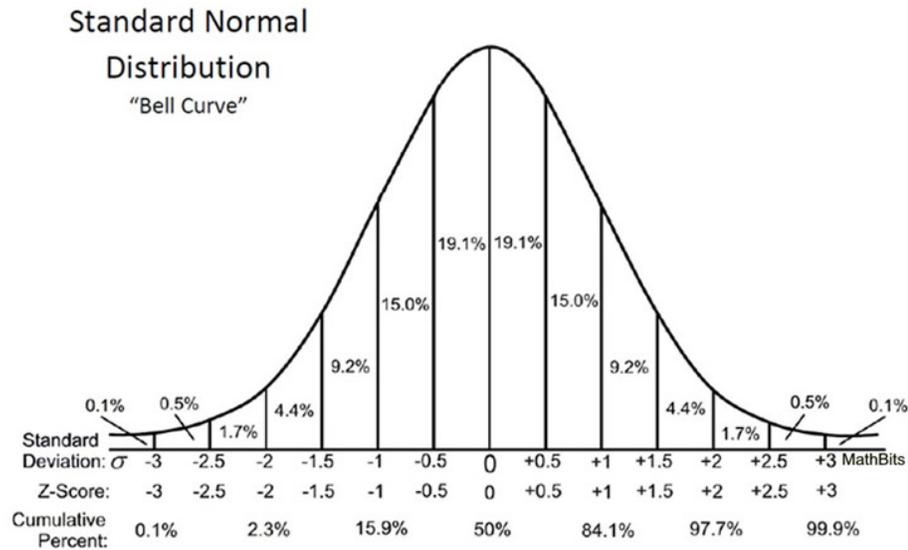
$\hat{p}$  = proportion of normal distribution in data sample

$\hat{p}_1$  = proportion of sample size one

$\hat{p}_2$  = proportion of sample size two

$n_1$  = sample size one

$n_2$  = sample size two



**Figure 2**  
*Standard Normal Distribution*

*Source:* The "Bell Curve", or Normal Distribution. Image by Julie Bang © Investopedia 2019

Once the  $p$ -value is calculated, the number calculated will be compared to the Standard Normal Distribution (Figure 2). This comparison will provide the numerical value to determine if the proportion of this two-tailed  $z$ -test is significant. If the  $z$ -test score when compared to the bell curve is significant, the researcher can conclude significance and reject the null hypothesis. If the  $z$ -test score when compared to the bell curve is not significant, the researcher can conclude from the data that there is no significance; the researcher will be able to fail to reject the null. The same methodology and calculation processes will be used to answer research question three: if the truancy diversion team influenced the average daily attendance from 2019-2020 as compared to the 2018-2019 school year. These two years also provide data for the biennium budget and allow a determination to be made in terms of school procedures to increase

attendance and school resource funding. To analyze the effectiveness of an attendance support team on annual average daily attendance funding in an urban middle school, two independent samples reflecting the proportion of student average daily attendance in comparison to the average daily membership of each selected school is needed.

To provide data to be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of an attendance support team on specific grade levels of middle school regarding attendance, a *z*-test will be performed with the collected data from the school year. The descriptive analysis is based upon the first (sixth grade), the second (seventh grade), and the third (eighth grade) years of a comprehensive middle school.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

Truancy is one of the nation's greatest concerns in education. This is a simple truth; learning cannot occur if the learner is not present to learn. This fact is evident in the research, which provides overwhelming data that students who attend school regularly have a greater opportunity to experience successful educational outcomes due to being present for instruction. The purpose of this research was to examine data to determine if a truancy diversion team was effective in preventing middle school students from receiving a habitual truancy petition (HTP) in family court. The results of this study were evaluated to determine the effectiveness on a student's gender, grade level, and to make a determination on the overall average daily funding for schools impacted with the implementation of the attendance support program.

### **Participants**

The initial study was conducted in three urban middle schools. Once a student in one of these selected schools had accrued five unexcused absences, an invitation to schedule the attendance support meeting was communicated by phone and by mail with the student's family. The study was conducted beginning in September of 2019 and met bi-weekly at three middle schools until March 2020. The participants in the study were in grades six, seven, and eight with ages ranging from 11-14 years old. Overall, 155 students participated in the six-month study, along with their parents or guardians. During the examination of the study, 77 participants were female (49.68%) and 78 participants were male (50.32%). There were no grade-level requirements for the study, only students in grades six, seven, and eight who had accrued five unexcused absences during the six-month study. The researcher disaggregated the 155 participants in the

study and determined that there were 39 sixth grade students (25.61%), 67 seventh grade students (43.22%), and 39 eighth grade students (31.61%). The research did not account for demographics of race, special education, or socio-economic status; there exists extensive research with provided statistical correlation based on these demographics. The examination of the study was strictly intended to measure effectiveness on grade level and gender to determine if school funding was affected by having an attendance support team in place in the selected schools.

### **Hypothesis Questions**

The research study was conducted to gain insight and measure the results of this strategic intervention in place within three urban high-needs middle schools. The study seeks clarity in answering the following questions:

- 1) What impact did an attendance support team have upon the attendance of students based upon gender?
- 2) What impact did an attendance support team have upon a specific grade level to affect attendance?
- 3) What impact did an attendance support team have overall on the school's average daily attendance compared to a non-intervention school year?

### **Legal Purpose of the Research**

The legal purpose in examining this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of an attendance support team in preventing middle school students receiving a habitual truancy petition (HTP) in family court. Students who have truancy issues with the school may be experiencing other issues of academics and, if possible, the attendance support team sought to offer support to the student and family through a

proactive process rather than waiting to be reactive by filing a petition once habitual truancy as occurred. The team met to provide support to students and families that participated in the study; a director of pupil personnel facilitated the program along with a court-designated worker. School support for the students and families included the presence of a school social worker and a family resource service coordinator. This added layer provided more encompassing support for the family and/or student regarding mental health services, health clinic assistance, or physical needs mentioned by the family. The primary purpose of the meeting was to identify obstacles that prevented the student from attending school regularly, provide support to negate the obstacles identified, and inform the family of the policies and procedures for school attendance. A secondary purpose of the attendance support team was to implement an individual plan of change that would have a measurable impact regarding attendance and academics. It should be noted that the meetings were led from a point of support and service to the family and student, instead of the consequential potential of habitual truancy from a family during the research.

### **Hypothesis Question One**

In this six-month study, there were 155 participants involved in the diversion team meetings. There were 78 male participants (50.03%) and 77 female participants (49.97%) in the study. After the study, the distinction between male and female participants demonstrated very little significance. Therefore, the methodology of performing a *z*-test, with the data collected would produce a *z*-score that would not have a statistical significance. A second review of the data was conducted to determine if there was a level of statistical significance in the number of male and female

participants who participated in the study but received a habitual truancy petition in court. This evidential data would provide support in determining if there is significance based upon gender, in receiving an HTP, and as a participant with the attendance support team. After examination of the study, there were 15 HTPs filed in family court. In relation to gender, eight were males (53.33%) and seven were females (46.67%). The data provided no significance between the number of males and females receiving an HTP. The data could not be utilized for determining a z-score due to the closeness of the numbers— there would no significance regarding gender. The researcher also analyzed the evidence regarding the number of referrals submitted into the truancy system after receiving 12 unexcused absences. The data calculated from all three middle schools yielded similar findings. There were 22 male referrals (49.98%) and 23 female referrals (50.02%). The truancy referral data produced no significance in the data set of gender, indicating no significant relationship between the truancy diversion team and gender (see Table 1). Due to the lack of significance within the data sets, the researcher failed to reject the null [ $H_0: p_m = p_f$ ].

**Table 1**

*Gender of Students Participating in a Truancy Diversion Program*

Gender	Number of Referrals	Participants in Study	Habitual Truancy Petitions Filed
Male	22	78	8
Female	23	77	7

## Hypothesis Question Two

In examining the data to measure the effectiveness of a attendance support team on a specific grade level, the researcher disaggregated all 155 participants into specific grade levels in which habitual petitions were filed in family court. There were 15 total habitual truancy petitions (HTP) filed in family court during the sixth-month period of the study. In the eighth grade, there were 49 (32%) students who participated in the truancy diversion team meeting at the three schools. Eight (53%) of the students who received an HTP were in the eighth grade. Seven (47%) of the students were in seventh grade that received an HTP out of the 67 (43%) total seventh graders who participated with the attendance support team. Only one student (7%) received a habitual truancy petition in the sixth grade out of the 39 (25%) total sixth graders who participated in the support team meetings (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Grade Level of Students Participating in a Truancy Diversion Program*

Grade	Number of referrals	Participants in study	Habitual truancy petitions filed
8	15	49	8
7	18	67	6
6	12	39	1

When analyzing the number of petitions from each grade level out of the total of 15 HTPs filed in family court, the researcher determined that between eighth grade (8 petitions filed and seventh grade (7 petitions filed), there was no statistical significance

in the relationship of grade level and effectiveness of the attendance support team. However, in observing the data, the significance occurred between the eighth grade [ $p_8 \approx .163$ ] in comparison to the sixth grade [ $p_6 \approx .026$ ]. Using the eighth grade and the sixth-grade proportions, a combined proportion was calculated [ $\hat{p}_c = .1023$ ] to use for a two-proportioned  $z$ -test for comparing these two categorical pieces of data. The  $z$ -score was calculated using the three proportions of sixth grade and eighth grade and a combined proportion [ $z = 2.10672$ ]. This  $z$ -score, when compared to a normal distribution curve, provides clear significance in the calculation. In calculating the  $p$ -value [ $p - value \approx .017$ ] and in making a comparison to the value of significance, [ $\alpha = .05$ ], the researcher concluded the value is considerably less than .05. It is concluded that there was a statistical significance between the students in eighth grade who participated in the attendance support team meeting who received a habitual truancy petition and the students in sixth grade who received a habitual petition and participated in the diversion team process [ $H_a: p_{8th} > p_{6th}$ ]. Based on the calculations, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis [ $H_o: p_{8th} = p_{6th}$ ].

### **Hypothesis Question Three**

The examination of the research conducted to determine if a truancy intervention was effective on the schools' average daily attendance compared to a non-intervention school year is based upon two independent variables: average daily membership (ADM) and average daily attendance (ADA). This serves as the financial basis for school funding. The research did not account for transported students, non-transported students, and students with disabilities receiving special education transportation. In examining the data of the combined average daily membership for the

three respective schools, there was a significant difference in student population between one school and the remaining two schools. School one has an average daily membership of 414 students. School two has an average daily membership of 760 students, and school three also has an average daily membership of 760 students. To determine the financial funding for the three schools, the average daily attendance is needed for the three schools: School one had an average daily attendance of 414 students (90%); school two had an average daily attendance of 710 students (93.42%); and school three had an average daily attendance of 719 students (94.61%) (see Table 3). In calculating the average daily attendance of the three selected schools, the first data point was produced [ $\hat{p}_{20} \approx .9395$ ] for computing a z-score to determine significance.

**Table 3**

*2019-2020 School Year Attendance*

Schools	Average daily membership (ADM)	Average daily attendance (ADA)	Average daily funding percentage (ADA Funding)
School one	414	388	93.71
School two	760	710	93.42
School three	760	719	94.61

In calculating the average daily attendance from the 2018-2019 school year, the researcher determined that there was a significantly larger student population at two of the schools in comparison to the 2019-2020 school year. School one had an average daily membership of 450 students, school two had an average daily membership of 743 students, and school three had an average daily membership of 782 students. In reviewing the combined average daily membership of the combined three schools,

2018-2019 had an overall average daily membership of 1,982 students compared to the 2019-2020 average daily membership of 1,934 students. Between the 2018-2019 school year and the 2019-2020 school year, the selected average daily membership from the selected three schools demonstrated a significant decrease in student population (-2.42%). This decrease is significant due to the loss of school and district funding for the three schools.

In calculating the average daily attendance for the three selected schools for the 2018-2019 school year, school one had an average daily attendance of 430 students (94.09%), school two had an average daily attendance of 699 students (94.07%), and school three had an average daily attendance of 741 students (94.76%) (see Table 4). The combination of the three selected schools' average daily attendance allowed the researcher to make a comparison with our categorical piece of data with the funding for student attendance [ $\hat{p}_{19} \approx .9434$ ]. These two calculated proportions will be utilized in determining the effectiveness of the attendance support team impacting school funding [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ]. It is also within this calculation to utilize the combination of data from both school year's average daily membership to obtain a  $z$ -score to determine significance [ $\hat{p}_c = .9415$ ].

In determining if there is significance in the two proportions [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ], the researcher calculated the  $z$ -score of the two years of average daily attendance. The  $z$ -score produced a negative significant number [ $z = -.5199$ ]. This number was then compared with the normal distribution curve to produce our  $p$ -value [ $p$ -value = .6030] at a 95% [ $\alpha = .05$ ], confidence level. In making a determination regarding the initial null hypothesis [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ], the researcher concluded that there was no significant

difference within the average daily attendance of the past school years [ $H_a: p_{20} \neq p_{19}$ ]. In determining the significant difference between the average daily attendances, the researcher is not able to conclude that the attendance support team was effective in increasing school funding. The conclusion based on the descriptive analysis is that the researcher is able to fail to reject the null hypothesis.

**Table 4**

*2018-2019 School Year Attendance*

Schools	Average daily membership (ADM)	Average daily attendance (ADA)	Average daily funding percentage (ADA Funding)
School one	457	430	94.09
School two	743	699	94.07
School three	782	741	94.76

**Other Analyses**

In analyzing the legal outcome from the point of the effectiveness of a truancy intervention team on middle school students, the number of habitual truancy petitions filed in 2018-2019 should be compared with the filed petitions of 2019-2020. The researcher needed to make a determination if the attendance support team produced any significance on the filed petitions compared to a non-intervention school year. The research provided served as a functional analysis of the true intent of the attendance support team process – to prevent middle school student from appearing in family court.

The study utilized the 15 filed petitions from the 2019-2020 and compared the number of filed petitions within the same six-month period from the 2018-2019 school year— in which an attendance support team was not in place at the three schools. The

2018-2019 school year had 107 submitted referrals from each of the selected three schools and from the submission for truancy, 18 students received habitual truancy petitions [ $\hat{p}_{19} = .1682$ ]. The researcher used the same method for determining the significance of the 2019-2020 school year in which an attendance support team was in place in the three schools and for the same six-month period. During the study, there were 155 students who participated in the program and 15 of the 155 students received a habitual truancy petition filed in family court [ $\hat{p}_{20} = .0967$ ].

To determine the significance of the attendance support program and the relationship among participants, referrals, and filed petitions, the researcher tested the hypothesis, showing no significance between the two school years for filed petitions [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ]. In determining the composite of the two school years, the filed petitions and the number of referrals combined to yield a value that was used to calculate the  $z$ -score [ $\hat{p}_c \approx .126$ ]. The researcher calculated the  $z$ -score using the data which produced a negative  $z$ -score [ $z = -1.71$ ].

The researcher used the  $z$ -score to compare in the normal distribution curve to determine the  $p$ -value. The  $p$ -value for the  $z$ -score demonstrated significance on the distribution curve [ $p$ -value  $\approx .0436$ ]. In comparing this to the value for determining significance [ $\alpha = .05$ ], the  $p$ -value of  $.0436 < .05$  [ $\alpha$ ], the researcher determined that there was statistical significance between the two school years [ $H_a: p_{20} \neq p_{19}$ ]. It is based upon this statistical significance between the two proportions of the school years that the researcher is able to reject the null hypothesis.

## Summary

An examination of a six-month study involving three urban middle schools was conducted to determine if there was statistical significance in a pilot-program attendance support team on preventing habitual students from obtaining a habitual truancy petition in family court. The study was able to provide 155 students and their families the opportunity to authentically engage with a court-designated worker, pupil personnel for the school district, and two members of the school support staff to provide information and support in alleviating problems due to habitual truancy. The study began after the first 25 days of school and was intentionally scheduled to intercede with families and their habitually truant students. The research concluded at the end of the sixth month of school and was analyzed after the six-month period to determine statistical significance on three factors of a middle school: gender, grade level, and attendance directly related to the annual school funding. The researcher was able to utilize the existing data from Infinite Campus, the student information system, and measure the support team's effectiveness for the six-month time period.

The hypothesis questions were written to examine the overall effectiveness of a attendance support team on gender, grade level, and the significant impact of average daily attendance funding for the three schools, as well as the school district. Another statistical analysis was conducted to measure the significance of habitual truancy petitions filed from the previous school year, without a truancy diversion team in place, and the school year in which a truancy diversion team was implemented. This analysis provided evidence for determining if the diversion team was effective in preventing middle school students from being filed upon in family court for habitual truancy.

The researcher's first hypothesis question sought to examine and measure the effectiveness of the attendance support team on gender. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher disaggregated the data by gender. The research concluded that out of the 155 total students that participated in the study there were 78 male participants (50.03%) and 77 female participants (49.97%) in the study. A z-score was calculated to measure the statistical difference based on gender. The disaggregated data by gender was measured with students, who participated in the attendance support program but continued to accrue unexcused absences, thus receiving a habitual truancy petition.

There were 22 male referrals (49.98%) and 23 female referrals (50.02%). In analyzing the truancy referral data there was no significance in the data set of gender, indicating no significant relationship between the truancy diversion team and gender. Due to the lack of significance, the researcher failed to reject the null [ $H_0: p_m = p_f$ ].

The second hypothesis question sought to examine the measured effectiveness of the attendance support team on grade level. The data from the study determined that there was a difference in the grade level of the students who participated in the attendance support program and who received a habitual truancy petition (HTP). The greatest statistical significance existed between students in the eighth grade who received an HTP and participated in the truancy diversion program and the students in sixth grade who also received an HTP and participated in the diversion team process [ $H_a: p_{8th} > p_{6th}$ ]. The researcher was able to conclude that there was statistical significance between students based upon grade level, therefore rejecting the null hypothesis [ $H_0: p_{8th} \neq p_{6th}$ ]. The third hypothesis question was based upon the financial impact of the truancy diversion's effect on the school's average daily attendance and the

funding directly correlated to daily attendance. In determining the significant difference between the average daily attendances, the researcher is able to conclude that the attendance support team was effective in increasing school funding [ $H_a: p_{20} \neq p_{19}$ ]. The conclusion is based upon the descriptive analysis results of the school funding; thus, the researcher fails to reject the null.

When the research was initially planned, procedures and expectations written, a schedule developed, the end goal was to prevent middle school students from appearing in family court due to habitual truancy. An examination of the data was conducted to determine if there was a statistical significance between the year with a truancy diversion team and the year without a truancy team on the total number of filed habitual truancy petitions. The researcher determined that there was a statistical significance between the two school years [ $H_a: p_{20} \neq p_{19}$ ]. Therefore, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The result was that there was statistical significance, but more importantly, the diversion team assisted students in not appearing in family court for truancy.

The examination of the research was conclusive, developed to ensure that statistics were calculated to answer the three hypothesis questions, and the results were produced to answer the stated questions. The examination of the research concludes with the task of making improvements to positively affect the change needed for students to have the opportunity for successful educational outcomes. The examination of the study also demonstrates areas of focus to be used for making data-driven decisions to affect truancy within the middle school years.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion**

### **The Purpose of the Study**

In answering the complex and multi-layered questions associated with improving students' test scores in public education, a more practical approach to learning should be reviewed in improving the attendance of students to receive an education. Since the historic legislation that ended the "separate, but equal" education in 1954, educational practices have been reformed, progress programs have been implemented, and assessments have been utilized to provide the most descriptive feedback needed to promote a deeper understanding. The programs have improved the quality of instruction, the level of professional collegiality, and the usage of data to make informed decisions to guide instructional practice; however, the most fundamental truth in learning still exists at the existential level— students need to attend school regularly to learn. The purpose of this research was to determine if a truancy diversion team was effective in preventing middle school students from receiving a habitual truancy petition (HTP) in family court. The examination of the results of this study have been evaluated in determining the effectiveness of a attendance support team in middle schools based upon gender, grade level, and in evaluating the effect on average daily attendance funding. The results of this study, along with the insight gained in shaping the fundamental processes needed to replicate best practice support for students, will serve as an initiative to be replicated in the school district's nine other middle schools. The same intentional focus will be aligned to removing barriers that impede regular attendance for students, promote all-encompassing services with families that have

expressed concerns, and improve the number of students attending school each day in middle school.

### **Summary of Study**

In examining the results of a six-month study, which initially was used to determine effectiveness on gender, grade level, and school funding, another confounding factor was studied – the descriptive analysis of supportive communication. In a school setting, the best educators have the best relationships with students. This is a tenet of leadership, casting a vision, leading systemic change in progressive innovation, and building positive levels of support all revolve around one key word – relationships. This examination of the study yielded results of student support workers, administrators, and court workers whose mission directed the work to support students, support families, and strengthen the community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the transition of the ideation of a truancy diversion team to the systemic planning and development of procedures and expectations of a attendance support team, the foundation of the research began with an applicable conceptual to guide the research and the further examination of the data. The postpositivism theory was applicable in analyzing the effectiveness of a truancy diversion team in urban middle schools through the philosophical viewpoint in determining effects or outcomes. As Creswell (2014) indicated, postpositivism simplifies ideas into a smaller, distinct body of ideas to test, such as the variables that comprise a hypothesis. Through the philosophical view, Creswell also stated, “Developing numeric measures and operations and studying the behavior of individuals becomes paramount for a postpositivist” (p. 8). The measure of

this line of thinking paralleling the philosophical view is that the proposed ideas must be analyzed, evaluated, and measured if they are to provide accurate answers to support the ideas. These ideas, once proved, can be revised into theories of practice within an organization to promote change and promote the opportunities for successful outcomes.

The applicable knowledge utilized in the research and from the data derived from this study extends from a postpositivist's viewpoint solidified in the intentional and diligent study of the objective reality that exists in the everyday practices. A postpositivist theory utilizes objective testing of the collected data "to develop relevant, true statements, one that can serve to explain the true statements of concern, or that describes the causal relationship of interest" in an unbiased and objective manner (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). It is within this applicable theory that guided the ideation, the development procedures to guide the process, the collection of data, the testing to determine significance, and in the objective analysis used in answering the proposed questions of research.

In determining theoretical approaches that serve as guidance in improving instructional and assessment practices, reducing the achievement gap, and in providing the digital citizenry necessary to deepen thinking, the fundamental principle of attendance is still true—students cannot learn if they are not present. To increase the attendance of students, provide partnering opportunities for families, and assist building-level educators to address the fundamental of attendance, a research proposal was developed through the lens of testing ideas to objectively solve concerns and seek positive results. The research sought to use the postpositivist's theoretical concept to drive thinking and positive collaboration to support student learning. The results of the

six-month study were analyzed, calculated, and evaluated to make determinations of the effectiveness of the study through the propositivist's viewpoint. The calculations and determining data analysis only supported the theoretical viewpoint. It is also the conclusive results and theoretical framework that serves as a guide for best practices in teaching and learning—measuring the ideas, concepts, and procedures of what is taught through objective assessment. This formal approach that leads to data-based decision making is a key tenant in determining best practices for improving the quality of education and in assessing the merit of constant change of initiatives, mandates, and rules of assessing learning.

### **Literature Review**

In conducting a thorough literature review of the research to provide background knowledge into the history of education, the history of education in Kentucky, the funding history of schools in Kentucky, the laws applicable to compulsory attendance, and the research correlated to the proposed hypothesis questions, one clear indicator in a student's ability to learn has been distilled down to one fundamental principle— a student must be present to learn. The research regarding the history of public schools and the value of education in our society was seen as a virtue. In the humble theoretical beginnings of education for all children, to the lawful mandates of compulsory attendance to the spread of public schools throughout America, education was viewed as a means of promoting a better life and a better society. These beginning ideals still serve as the foundation for public schools today. The methodology of instruction, the assessment criteria, the implementation of technology to guide remediation and

intervention has changed, but the core beliefs and values set in early New England still resonate today in each classroom and hallway.

The beginning history of education served as guidance in understanding the values, precepts, and beliefs that shaped the early view of public education. The research was clear in the need for public funds to supplement the costs needed to educate children, and these funds showed distinct inequalities in comparing rural and urban school districts. The same discrepancies and inequalities still exist today in every state. The research was clear in providing the knowledge that urban school districts have the benefit of greater economic benefits than rural school districts. This is especially true in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, in which this discrepancy in funding led to the legislative decision and educational reform known as the Kentucky Educational Reform Act.

This signature act of legislation, passed in 1990, served as a beacon of creating equal funding through the Sustaining Educational Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding, which calculates assess property taxes in each district and subsidizes per-pupil spending to provide equal funding for schools throughout the state. This specific piece of legislation was critical; not only did it reform instructional and assessment practices in Kentucky, but it also created a much-needed level playing field in educational economics. The basis for this funding for each school district lies in the average daily attendance for each school and each school district. The attendance calculation is measured daily in each school during the school year and averaged annually at the end of the school year to demonstrate daily student participation rates. The average daily attendance provides the needed funding for school districts to conduct operations and

allows the districted school to expend resources for individual needs throughout the school year. It is within this area of research that allowed the researcher to gain insight not only into the history of education but also into the importance of seeking school funding to the benefit of educating students.

The review of the literature provided sound insight into the importance of school attendance and the correlation with numeracy and literacy achievement. The early years of learning are paramount in serving as the foundation for each student's educational pathway. The research is clear and conclusive that in kindergarten the measurements of students who attend school regularly in comparison to the students that have truancy issues are significant in terms of academic achievement. The results are conclusive in research for the urban, rural, state, and national levels. Regular attendance at the first year of instruction and learning is paramount in a young student's educational success. The research was also clear that if a student who is habitually absent from school in kindergarten, there is a considerable need for regular attendance by the student in first grade to recover and recoup the necessary skills to match the skill acquisition with peers. The research finding also concludes that students entering third grade, if they are behind in grade level, there is only a four percent chance of being on grade level at the end of third grade. Finally, if students are not on grade level at the end of the third grade, there is a three percent chance of becoming on grade level, even with intensive interventions in place. The research of the formative and foundational years of learning only cements the fact that for students to learn, they must be present.

In reviewing the literature regarding compulsory attendance laws, the research provides the beginning history of the statute enacted to provide legal support in students

attending school regularly. Kentucky became the first Southern state in 1852 to enact compulsory attendance legislation and utilize the law to assist communities in the education of its school-age children. The formation of this bill also paralleled the tax levies on property tax to support funding for local schools. The legislation of using property taxes to fund public schools was signed into law in 1830 as the primary means of funding an academy or university model. The tax system grew in 1938 to assist local school districts by using state funds to provide financial support. This new financial system was commonly referred to as The School Fund. This new funding source would also have oversight by a created State Board of Education with an acting commissioner and five districted chairs to oversee the state's school districts. The local courts would oversee the property taxes of the county citizenry to provide local financial support to schools. The financial support of property taxes and the administrative oversight in the curriculum, course of study, and health initiatives by the State Board of Education moved Kentucky closer to the idea of having an educated citizenry to create a better society become a reality. The political push of education has continued into the modern area of elections and legislative actions. Governor Wallace Wilkinson was elected governor on the political promise of instituting a statewide lottery to provide the financial assistance needed for Kentucky to be more aligned with surrounding states in per-pupil spending. The insertion of additional financial streams into education allowed many students to receive funding to provide scholarships to students in post-secondary education through the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) funding. This opportunity drove the ideals of public education in a shaped reality in allowing

many families to send children to college and increasing the opportunities for the creation of generational wealth.

Although legislative action began with the inception of the compulsory attendance law in 1850, very little change has occurred within the parameters of the law to affect attendance. The most recent and significant was amended in 2011, which changed the dropout age from 16 to 18 years of age. This amendment took into consideration the legal age of applying for a driver's license and extended the law until the age of legal consent as an adult. This also coincides with the age of a student who can make educational decisions pursuant to their education. A secondary benefit due to the increased mandatory attendance rate of students was the increase in average daily membership (ADM) for school and district funding.

The most recent legislative actions impacting truancy occurred in 2007 with Senate Bill 200 written as a bill to alleviate the burden on courts for charging students with habitual truancy. This significant change in reformative legislation was enacted due to Kentucky having the highest number of incarcerated juveniles within the United States. There was also a secondary reason and it was in conjunction with the costs to adjudicate juveniles for a misdemeanor offense and the associated costs to house them in a juvenile facility. The premise of the bill is to provide opportunities for habitual truant youth to be met with an intervention team comprised of school and court officials, as well as members of community organizations to alleviate the obstacles that cause habitual truancy. The Family Intervention and Accountability Response Team (FAIR Team) was established as an extension of Senate Bill 200 to support students and

families and to allow the schools to receive opportunities for services rather than the former pathway of placing a habitual truant in front of a judge in family court.

This bill also provides measures to assure students are attending school regularly and passing a minimum of 70% of the courses with the passage of No Pass/No Drive legislation in 2007. This law applies accountability to students aged 16- to 17-years-old who have earned a driver's license with the understanding that grades and regular attendance are required; otherwise the license may be revoked. This was also in conjunction with the 2008 law of allowing the Department of Transportation to be notified directly by school officials in the event of a student not meeting the requirements to satisfy the law and face immediate license revocation. The student may forfeit their license for a semester of school, but have the license reinstated if grades and attendance have improved at the end of the next semester.

The review of the literature demonstrated the need for regular attendance by providing information and context on the benefits of regular attendance. The researcher focused on five key components of benefits received from attending school regularly: 1.Opportunity, 2.Achievement, 3.Social Interaction in a School Community, 4.Exposure to the English Language, and 5.Importance of an education (GreatSchools, 2011). The research was conclusive in studies conducted from inner city, rural, state, and national in establishing the significant impact that regular attendance has on reading, math, and general knowledge. Research also demonstrates not only the impact on learning and academic achievement but also the detrimental effects that are caused by irregular attendance. The detrimental effects in the early elementary years project significant deficits in assessment and learning when compared comparing students with irregular

and regular attendance. This evidence, when compounded with an inability to provide resources at home to support learning at home, provides a potential negative trajectory in a student's successful learning outcomes.

The research presented information on the exposure to not only opportunities in terms of learning and skill acquisition but also through social interaction. Students who have irregular attendance miss opportunities to learn social structure and context, positive forming relationships with peers, and gain skills in the areas of social-emotional learning. One of the key findings was from Eccles (1999), who suggested that it is within the early years of learning that students learn skills to self-monitor, regulate, communicate, and problem solve socially. This necessary acquisition is a skill that must be taught, learned, and then be provided the opportunity in real context to demonstrate learning. Students who miss the opportunities to practice these skills tend to manifest the negative outcomes in later years, thus negatively impacting not only their emotional and social awareness but also their academic outcomes. Literacy skill development and numeracy skill development is foundationally set in the elementary years. Students, who have a fractured foundation, beginning in the elementary years and carrying into the middle school years, have been shown to not be able to achieve alongside their classmates, show an overall level of disengagement, and lack skills to gain information through independent and passive learning.

The research on the effects of attendance in middle school provides insight into all three years and independent influence they exert on students and determining successful academic outcomes. The sixth grade is the bridge connecting elementary to middle school, but more importantly, this is the grade in which students become more

independent and seek identification as an individual and as a group member. The seventh-grade year serves as the year in which pre-teens become teens, social awareness occurs, and the effect of passive learning takes place. This is the year that students experience great multi-syllabic words, a greater emphasis on critical thinking skills, and the application of number sense into algebraic concepts. In the seventh-grade year, from the socio-emotional level, bullying or harassment begins to affect students, and in turn, affects attendance. The research is conclusive that while bullying does occur in both genders, it is more negatively impacts females. The eighth-grade year in middle school serves as the predictor of high school graduation. The research is very clear that only two factors are used to predict a student's probability of obtaining a high school diploma: attendance and grades. Testing is not a predictor since there is very little variability in student test scores. Therefore, the research is conclusive that if educators want to increase the graduation rate, the intentional focus needs to be placed on student attendance. At a deeper applicable level, the focus needs to be applied in the early elementary years with the foundational skills that are taught and developed. This determination is focused on the singular truth—students need to be present to learn.

### **Methodology**

Students would be allowed to schedule an attendance support team meeting within the three selected schools once the student has accrued five unexcused absences. To provide accurate information to the diversion team, the Director of Pupil Personnel (DPP) generated a bi-monthly report using the Infinite Campus Student Information Portal for each school's attendance. Student names that had five unexcused absences were emailed to each school's designated school social worker to review, verify the

validity of the absences, and to also determine if excused notes have been submitted to excuse the absences and may have not been properly documented.

After careful review of each student, the social worker submitted a list of students to a court-designated worker (CDW) who would have communicated by a mailed invitation and a follow-up phone call with each student's family to attend a truancy intervention team meeting at each respective school. The mailed invitation would have served as an official request, on behalf of the court, as a pre-complaint, to schedule a school intervention appointment before a habitual truancy petition could be filed against the student. The meetings were scheduled in intervals of 20 minutes on determined days as determined by the attendance support team. The purpose of the meetings was to identify the obstacle(s) that have affected the student's attendance, offer support to remove or assist the family in their student's attendance, inform the family and student on district policies of attendance, and communicate the legal consequences that may be rendered in attendance continues with the accrual of unexcused absences. The attendance support team, along with the FAIR Team, was led through the ability to provide supports, assistance, and wrap-around services to positively affect the student's attendance rather than drive the negative consequential actions of adjudication in family court.

The six-month study was conducted, and the student participants' information was collected in the school district and states student information system – Infinite Campus. The data collected in Infinite Campus allowed the researcher to examine the pre-existing data kept for all students and especially students who participated in this study. The student management system allowed the researcher to examine and

disaggregate the data into gender, grade level, and if a habitual truancy petition was filed on the student. The data compiled was input into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program in which a  $z$ -score was utilized to determine if there was a statistical significance on the categorical pieces of data. The  $z$ -score was compared to a normal distribution curve in which a  $p$ -value was determined. The  $p$ -value was used to decide based upon a 95% confidence value [ $\alpha < .05$ ] and determine if there was significance in the data set of proportions. It was within these procedural calculations that allowed the researcher to make a clear determination to accept or reject the null hypothesis providing clarity in answering the research questions of the study. The statistical significance calculated would allow the researcher the opportunity to revise the research study to improve areas of serving students and schools through the focus of improving school attendance.

## **Results**

The examination of the research was conducted after a six-month period during a regular school calendar beginning in September and concluding at the beginning of March. This time window allowed the methodological design to be implemented, scoped, and data obtained to make determinations to provide support for students and families. There were 155 students and families who participated with the diversion team during this six-month time frame. After the research period, the data was compiled and recorded in Infinite Campus (IC) to examine and disaggregate the data into gender, grade level, and the number of students who participated in this study who received a habitual truancy petition (HTP) in family court.

In analyzing the data, the researcher determined that of the 155 participants, 77 participants were female (49.68%) and 78 participants were male (50.32%). The collected data was also disaggregated into grade level; the researcher concluded that of the 155 participants in the study there were 39 sixth-grade students (25.61%), 67 seventh-grade students (43.22%), and 39 eighth-grade students (31.61%). The data needed to make a determination on the effect the truancy diversion team had on school funding was obtained through the district and state information system— Infinite Campus. The researcher was able to extract the data of average daily membership, average daily attendance, and compile average daily funding individually for the three schools and collectively. In terms of measuring the significance of a non-intervention year compared to the research study intervention year, it was analyzed with the same six-month period.

To answer the first research question of determining the effectiveness of a truancy diversion team on gender and the prevention of student participants from receiving a habitual truancy petition, a *z*-score was calculated using the binary-data of gender and the students who received an HTP. The *z*-score was measured against a normal distribution curve to obtain a *p*-value. This *p*-value was compared to the 95% confidence level [ $\alpha = .05$ ] to determine if there was significance between the two categorical pieces of data. The researcher determined that there were 22 male referrals (49.98%) and 23 female referrals (50.02%) signed as an affidavit into family court. The truancy referral data produced no significance in the data set of gender, indicating no significant relationship between the attendance support team and gender. Due to the

lack of significance within the data sets, the researcher failed to reject the null [ $H_0: p_m = p_f$ ].

The second research question sought to determine the effectiveness of the diversion team upon grade level in middle school. When analyzing the number of petitions from each grade level out of the total of 15 HTP's filed in family court, the researcher determined that between eighth grade (8 petitions filed) and seventh grade (7 petitions filed), there was no statistical significance in the relationship of grade level and effectiveness of the attendance support team. The research did provide statistical significance between the eighth grade [ $p_8 \approx .163$ ] in comparison to the sixth grade [ $p_6 \approx .026$ ]. The researcher calculated a combined proportion, [ $\hat{p}_c = .1023$ ], which was used to conduct a two-proportioned  $z$ -test for comparing these two categorical pieces of data. The  $z$ -score was calculated using the three proportions of sixth grade and eighth grade, and a combined proportion [ $z = 2.10672$ ]. This  $z$ -score was significant, and when compared to a normal distribution curve, the data was utilized to provide clear significance in the calculation. The  $p$ -value [ $p \approx .017$ ] was determined and in making the comparison to a 95% confidence level [ $\alpha = .05$ ], the researcher concluded the value is considerably less than .05. It was concluded that there was a statistical significance between the students in eighth grade who participated in the truancy diversion program who received a habitual truancy petition and the students in sixth grade that received a habitual petition and participated in the attendance team process. This resulted in the statistical determination [ $H_a: p_{8th} > p_{6th}$ ]. Based on the calculations, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis [ $H_0: p_{8th} = p_{6th}$ ].

The third question posed in the examination of the research sought to measure the funding level for each of the three schools based upon the intervention year and comparing the data to a non-intervention school year. In analyzing the data, the combined average daily membership for the three respective schools, the researcher was able to determine that there was a significant difference in student population between one school and the remaining two schools. School one had an average daily membership of 414 students. School two had an average daily membership of 760 students, and school three also had an average daily membership of 760 students. To calculate the financial funding for the three schools, the average daily attendance is needed for the three schools: School one had an average daily attendance of 414 students (90%); school two had an average daily attendance of 710 students (93.42%); and school three had an average daily attendance of 719 students (94.61%). The researcher calculated the average daily attendance of the three selected schools; the first data point was produced [ $\hat{p}_{20} \approx .9395$ ] for computing a  $z$ -score to determine significance between two proportions. In calculating the average daily attendance for the three selected schools for the 2018-2019 school year, school one had an average daily attendance of 430 students (94.09%), school two had an average daily attendance of 699 students (94.07%), and school three had an average daily attendance of 741 students (94.76%) (see Table 4). The combination of the three selected schools' average daily attendance allowed the researcher to make a comparison with the categorical piece of data with the funding for student attendance [ $\hat{p}_{19} \approx .9434$ ]. These two calculated proportions will be utilized in determining the effectiveness of the truancy diversion team impacting school funding [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ]. It is also within this calculation that the

combination of data from both school years' average daily membership was computed to obtain a  $z$ -score to determine the significance [ $\hat{p}_e = .9415$ ].

The researcher was able to review the is significance in the two proportions [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ]; the researcher calculated the  $z$ -score of the two years of average daily attendance. The  $z$ -score produced a negative significant number [ $z = -.5199$ ]. This number was then compared with the normal distribution curve to produce our  $p$ -value [ $p = .6030$ ] at a 95% [ $\alpha = .05$ ] confidence level. In making a determination regarding the initial null hypothesis [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ], the researcher was able to conclude that there was a significant difference within the average daily attendance of the past two school years [ $H_a: p_{20} \neq p_{19}$ ]. In determining the significant difference between the average daily attendances, the researcher can conclude that the truancy intervention team was effective in increasing school funding. The conclusion based on the descriptive analysis conducted from the study; therefore, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ].

To measure the legal effect of the study on students who participated with the attendance support team and received an HTP, the researcher calculated the total number of habitual truancy petitions filed in the 2018-2019 and measure the statistical significance compared with the filed petitions of 2019-2020. The research analysis will be used to decide if the truancy diversion team produced any significance on the filed petitions compared to a non-intervention school year during the same six-month period. The data generated from the filed petitions in family court for in both school years served as a functional analysis of the true intent of the diversion process— to prevent middle school student from appearing in family court.

The study utilized the 15 filed petitions from the 2019-2020 and compared the number of filed petitions within the same six-month period from the 2018-2019 school year—in which an attendance support team was not in place at the three schools. The 2018-2019 school year had 107 submitted referrals from each of the selected three schools and the submission for truancy, 18 students received habitual truancy petitions [ $\hat{p}_{19} = .9415$ ]. The researcher used the same method for determining the significance of the 2019-2020 school year in which a truancy diversion team was in place in the three schools and for the same six-month period. In analyzing the results of the six-month study, 155 students participated in the diversion program and 18 of the 155 students received a habitual truancy petition filed in family court [ $\hat{p}_{20} = .9415$ ]. In making a determination of the truancy diversion program and the relationship between participants, referrals, and filed petitions, the researcher tested the hypothesis of the data to reflect that there is no significance between the two school years for filed petitions [ $H_0: p_{20} = p_{19}$ ]. To calculate the total of the two school years, the filed petitions, and the number of referrals, the numbers combined to yield a value that will be used to calculate the  $z$ -score [ $\hat{p}_c \approx .126$ ]. The researcher calculated the  $z$ -score using the data which produced a negative  $z$ -score [ $z = -1.71$ ]. The  $z$ -score computed was significant and the researcher used the  $z$ -score to compare in the normal distribution curve to determine the  $p$ -value. The  $p$ -value for the  $z$ -score demonstrated significance on the distribution curve [ $p\text{-value} \approx .0436$ ]. In comparing this to our value for determining significance with a 95% confidence level [ $\alpha = .05$ ], the  $p$ -value of  $.0436 < .05$  [ $\alpha$ ], the researcher determined that there was statistical significance between the two school years [ $H_a: p_{20}$

≠p19]. It is based upon this statistical significance between the two proportions of the school years that the researcher is able to reject the null hypothesis.

### **Discussion**

As the research was analyzed and the statistical data was used to answer the research questions, the study did have some conclusions that may affect other studies. This is due to confounding factors that effected the scope of this research, as well as the final analysis of data from the three middle schools. The results yielded statistically significant data and allowed the researcher to answer and conclude the research questions. The results also prompted further thoughts on how to create more effective systems to support students and ultimately yield stronger significant academic outcomes.

One of the limitations on examining the study was the time in which the research was conducted. The six-month time window was used due to the pandemic lockdown of COVID-19 beginning in mid-March. The researcher would have had the month of March and extended into April to have a deeper level of data to gather and provide a longer time window to examine the data.. The rationale of utilizing March is that this is typically the longest month of the school year with no scheduled breaks until Spring Break in most school districts. This five-week period is correlated with an increase in behavioral incidents within schools and without this time period, it left an opportunity to measure the intervention team's effectiveness during a challenging time within schools. The attendance support team would have been able to support students and families before the final month of school identifying possible obstacles that would impede regular attendance going into the final four weeks of the school year.

A second limitation of the study resides in the designated people in each of the schools. Knowing that all people have different skills, levels of emotional intelligence when building relationships with students and families, and experiential insight, the teams at each of the three selected schools were different. This may or may not have been a factor in the number of filed habitual petitions. The team members received the same training, the same information, the same procedure framework, and expectations; however, the lens of filing the petitions in court may be affected simply by having a different person at each school. Due to the size of a school district, one district pupil personnel director and one court designated worker may have a different set of data working with all schools rather than three individual teams with three different sets of members. The school district in which the study was conducted has a student population over 40,000 students and did not allow one director and one court worker to work with the schools. When the researcher examined the collected data, the filed petitions were completely on the discretion of each director working with their chosen school.

A third limitation of the study that should be noted is the geographical location of the study. The study was conducted in Lexington, Kentucky, and the participants were students from a city school district with over 40,000 students. Although Lexington is home to many horse and cattle farms, the inner part of the city is where the study was conducted. A similar study may have non-similar data and impact if conducted in a rural area or a different state. Although demographics may be similar in a different study, the reason for truancy may be different, and the research may yield different results due to the specific location of where the study is being conducted.

A fourth limitation of the study is that the year in which the examined research was conducted was the first year after a redistricting of students in the school district. The effect in the redistrict shift was observed in the study year compared to the prior year. The shift in population not only affected the selected school's membership but also in socio-economic demographics. The obstacles or barriers that impeded regular attendance when communicated by students and families in the diversion team meetings may not have been present the previous school year. The shift in a redistricting year may not have the same effect in a non-redistricting year within a school district and may yield different data to analyze for effectiveness.

Many factors may have contributed to the set of data if there is an attempt to replicate the process of implementing a diversion team. One is the geographical location of the study and the demographical population of the participants. This insight will allow the team to assist the students and families with services and support that may be different from another geographical population or a set of demographics. There were two confounding factors that may have affected the research and the results of this study: the COVID-19 lockdown and the redistricting shift in population with the selected schools. The research study could have been extended eight more weeks and then compared with the same time frame from the previous year to compare results, but due to the lockdown, this was not possible. In addition, the redistricting factor did shift numbers within the schools. This may or may not have affected the data, but it did affect the average daily membership, which affects the average daily attendance in the research year compared to the previous year's data.

Throughout the entire examination of the research project, the study had three key data sets to measure effectiveness: The effect on gender, grade level, and school funding. The effectiveness of the diversion team's primary focus was to provide support for students and families who have barriers or obstacles preventing regular attendance. This provided intentional focus and direction from a contemplative model to a practitioner model used to prevent students from receiving a habitual truancy petition in family court. The team focused on cultivating a supportive practice that sought to assist and support rather than be authoritarian and lead with consequential information. The information of this research can be distilled into two evidentiary truths: students cannot learn if they are not present, and people matter.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In reflecting on the examination of the research and in evaluating how the study could be developed, enhanced, or utilized with greater effectiveness, the data provided several opportunities for future studies. One recommendation based upon the research model is to measure the same students who received a habitual truancy petition (HTP) one year and following up with those students in the following year(s). This would provide insight into the punitive effects of a legal petition served as a function of next year's attendance. The function of the HTP is to provide legal support to families and students, but if it is non-effective and the student continues the next year with receiving a petition, the process may not be effective. A second research study could follow-up based on the data set is to implement the study in the early years of education. The most significant in middle school occurs in the sixth grade according to this study's data. The literature to support the effect of regular attendance is most compelling in the early

grades of elementary school. A future study opportunity would be to implement an attendance support team with kindergarten and first-grade student families. The research is clear on the effect of irregular attendance on literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning in the formative years and an early opportunity support team could provide support for families and their students. Another future research study opportunity is increasing the scope of the study from one year to three years and determining the significance of one cohort group entering middle school to exiting middle school. The analysis of this study could be used to provide insight into the obstacles faced and the support systems needed for class within a full transition from elementary through middle school into high school with the same students. It would be with this full cohort year that the diversion team would be able to provide the information needed for full middle school experience.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

In providing recommendations for the future practice of a truancy diversion team in urban middle schools or any middle school based upon examined research and data, one recommendation is having the school staff embed follow-up meetings with the participants on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This focus on follow-up meetings allows the school to check on the progress, the needs, and obtain feedback based upon the personalized plan of the initial truancy diversion meeting. The follow-up meetings allow the school the opportunity to build and strengthen relationships to promote positive academic outcomes for the student. This is one key piece of information gained from the research is the need for engaging relationships with schools and students in the middle school years. The follow-up meetings allow the continuance of support for the

student and present the educational professionals within the school the opportunity to invest time in a true student-centered care practice for students.

A second recommendation from examining this study is to provide school staff and the district staff the reasons communicated by students and families that were causing irregular attendance. The research is clear on specific issues on reasons of truancy and chronic absenteeism, but it is based solely on large samples. The replication of this study can provide the framework and the insight into what is prevalent to a specific school district or specific areas of school systems. This study provided specific information that pertains to a student population within one city and allows the school staff, the district staff, and the court officers working with students, the knowledge needed to provide support. The information gained from this study allows the educators to take the information shared by families the opportunity to remove identified barriers, knowing the reasons why students are missing school. The research provided insight into the best practices gained from working with middle school students in putting systems in place to support learning. The opportunity to create a personalized specific plan to promote regular attendance with students is best to enhance in the meetings when staff can connect with the family and build trust to support the student. This is the key to success: put people first, and provide the support needed for them to be successful.

## References

- Adelman, C. (2006). The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college. *U.S. Department of Education*.
- Allensworth, E. M., Gwynne, J. A., Moore, P., & De la Torre, M. (2014). *Looking forward to high school and college: Middle grade indicators of readiness in Chicago public schools*. University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.
- Applied Survey Research. (2011, July). *Attendance in early elementary grades: Associations with student characteristics, school readiness, and third grade outcomes*. Attendance works. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ASR-Mini-Report-Attendance-Readiness-and-Third-Grade-Outcomes-7-8-11.pdf>
- Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic absenteeism: Summarizing what we know from nationally available data*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.
- Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012, October). The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 78(2), 4-9. <https://eric-ed-gov.libproxy.eku.edu/?id=EJ1002822>
- Balfanz, R., MacIver, L., & Herzog, D. J. (2007). Preventing disengagement and keeping students on the graduation path in urban middle-grade schools: Early identification and effective interventions. *Educational Psychologist*, 24(4), 223-235.

- Baltimore Education Research Consortium. (2011). *Destination graduation: Sixth grade early warning indicators for Baltimore City Schools— their prevalence and impact*. ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Barge, J. (2011). *Student attendance and student achievement*. Georgia Department of Education.
- Bassok, D., & Rorem, A. (2014). Working paper: Is kindergarten the new first grade? The changing nature of kindergarten in the age of accountability, *EdPolicyWorks Working Paper Series*, (20).
- Blanshard, P. (1963). *Religion and the schools: The great controversy*. Beacon Press.
- Bowman, K. (2019). *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943)*. Middle Tennessee State. <https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/227/west-virginia-state-board-of-education-v-barnette>
- Brown, D., & Knowles, T. (2007). *What every middle school teacher should know* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.
- Buehler, M. H., Tapogna, J., & Chang, H. N. (2012, June). *Why being in school Matters: chronic absenteeism in Oregon public schools*. Attendance Works. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Oregon-Research-Brief.pdf>
- Byrnes, V., & Reyna, R. (2012). Summary of state level analysis of early warning indicators. *Everyone Graduates Center*.
- California Department of Education. (2017, September 27). *State schools chief Tom Torlakson announces results of California assessment of student performance and progress online test*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr17/yr17rel67a.asp>

- Cave, C. A. (2019). *Compulsory school attendance*. Encyclopedia.com.  
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/compulsory-school-attendance>
- Chang, H. (2018). *Seize the data opportunity in California: Using chronic absence to improve educational outcomes*. Attendance Works.  
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Seize-Opportunity-6.pdf>
- Chang, H. N., & Romero, M. (2008). Present, engaged, and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades. *National Center for Children in Poverty*.
- Child Protective Services, 922 KAR § 1:330 (2014).
- Compulsory Attendance Act, KRS §159.010 (2015).
- Connolly, F., & Olson, L. S. (2012). Early elementary performance and attendance in Baltimore city schools' pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. *Baltimore Education Research Consortium*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Donnelly, M. (2019). *Early roots of modern American education*. Salem Press Encyclopedia.
- Eaton, D. K., Brener, N., & Kann, L. K. (2008). Associations of health risk behaviors with school absenteeism. Does having permission for the absence make a difference?. *Journal of School Health*, 78(4), 223-229.

- Eccles, J. S. (1999). The development of children ages 6 to 14. *The Future of Children*, 9(2), 30-44.
- Eccles, J. S., & Midgley, C. (1989). Stage-environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for young adolescents. *Research on motivation in education*, 3(1), 139-186. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.43.2.522
- Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C. M., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & Mac Iver, D. (1993, February). Development during adolescence: The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*, 48(2), 90-101. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.48.2.90
- Ehrlich, S. B., Gwynne, J. A., Pareja, A. S., & Allensworth, E. M. (2013). *Preschool attendance in Chicago public schools: Research summary*.  
<https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/preschool-attendance-chicago-public-schools-relationships-learning-outcomes-and-reasons>
- Elder, G. H. (1998). The life course and human development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 939-991). Wiley
- Ellis, W. E. (2011). *A history of education in Kentucky*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Everhart, R. B. (1977). From universalism to usurpation: An essay on the antecedents to compulsory school attendance legislation. *Review of Educational Research*, 47(3), 499-530.
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (1974).
- Figlio, D., & Loeb, S. (2011). School accountability. In E.A. Hanushek, S. Machin, and L. Woessmann (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of education* (pp. 383-421). Elsevier.

- Furlong, M. J., Whipple, A. D., St. Jean, G., Simental, J., Soliz, A., & Punthuna, S. (2003). Multiple contexts of school engagement: Moving toward a unifying framework for educational research and practice. *California School Psychologist*, 8(1), 99-113.
- Ginsburg, A., Jordan, P., & Chang, H. (2014). Absences add up: How school attendance influences student success. *Attendance Works*.  
[https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Absenses-Add-Up\\_September-3rd-2014.pdf](https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Absenses-Add-Up_September-3rd-2014.pdf)
- Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), pp. 434-465. doi: 10.3102/0002831209350494
- Gottfried, M. A. (2011). The detrimental effect of missing school. *American Journal of Education*, 117(2), 147-82. doi: 10.1086/657886
- Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 19(2), 53-75. doi:10.1080/10824669.2014.962696
- Gottfried, M.A. (2014). Peer effects in urban schools: Assessing the impact of classroom composition on student achievement. *Educational Policy*, 28, 607-647.
- Grabner, M., (2009). The causal effect of education on obesity: Evidence from compulsory schooling laws. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.  
doi:10.2139/ssrn.1505075

- GreatSchools. (2011). *GreatSchools: 2011 Annual Report*.  
<https://www.greatschools.org/catalog/pdf/GreatSchools-2011-AR-final.pdf>
- Hankins, D. (2019, January 27). Attendance matters: Social workers help keep students in schools. *Shelbyville Times-Gazette*. <https://www.t-g.com/story/2583412.html>
- Harrison, L.H., & Klotter, J. C. (1997). *A New history of Kentucky*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Hechinger, J. (2013, January 22). *U.S. high school graduation rate at highest since 1970s*. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-01-22/u-s-high-school-graduation-rate-at-highest-since-1970s>
- Katz, M. S. (1976). A history of compulsory education laws. *Fastback Series, 75*.  
Bicentennial Series
- Kaufman, J. S., Jaser, S. S., Vaughan, E. L., Reynolds, J. S., Di Donato, J., Bernard, S. N., & Hernandez-Brereton, M. (2010). Patterns in office referral data by grade, race/ethnicity, and gender. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*(1), 44-54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300708329710>.
- Kazdin, A. E. (1993). Adolescent mental health: Prevention and treatment programs. *American Psychologist, 48*(2), 127-141.
- Keim, A. N. (1975). *Compulsory education and the Amish: The right not to be modern*. Beacon Press.
- Kieffer, M., Marinell, W., & Stephenson, N. (2011). *The middle grade student transition study: Navigating the middle grades and preparing students for high school graduation*. The Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

[https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/sg158/PDFs/navigating\\_middle\\_grades\\_2011/NavigatingMiddleGrades\\_2011.pdf](https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/sg158/PDFs/navigating_middle_grades_2011/NavigatingMiddleGrades_2011.pdf)

- Kleber, J. E. (1986). As luck would have it: An overview of Lawrence W. Wetherby as governor, 1950-1955. *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 84(4), 397-421.
- Klotter, J. C. (1996). *Kentucky: Portrait in paradox, 1900-1950*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Mann, H. (1868). Twelfth annual report to the Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1848. *Life and works of Horace Mann*, 3, 669.
- McVey, F. L. (2015). *Gates open slowly. A history of education in Kentucky*. The University Press of Kentucky.
- Midgley, C., Anderman, E., & Hicks, L. (1995). Differences between elementary and middle school teachers and students: A goal theory approach. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 15(1), 90-113. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0272431695015001006>
- Midgley, C., & Feldlaufer, H. (1987). Students' and teachers' decision-making fit before and after the transition to junior high school. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 7(2), 225-241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0272431687072009>
- Musser, M. P. (2011). *Taking attendance seriously: How school absences undermine 44 student and school performance in New York City*. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc.
- <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/nyregion/20110617attendancereport.pdf>

- National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2015). *2015: Mathematics & reading assessment*. The nation's report card.  
[https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2015/#?grade=4%3E](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#?grade=4%3E)
- National Forum on Education Statistics. (2005). *Forum guide to education indicators*. U. S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005802.pdf>
- National Forum on Education Statistics. (2009). *Every school day counts: The forum guide to collecting and using attendance data* (NFES 2009-804). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009804.pdf>
- Office for Civil Rights. (2012, June). *Gender equity in education: A data snapshot*. U.S. Department of Education.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/gender-equity-in-education.pdf>
- Onuf, P. S. (2007). *The mind of Thomas Jefferson*. University Press of Virginia.
- Peebles-Wilkins, W. (2005). Help close the achievement gap. *Children & Schools*, 27(4), 195-196. doi:10.1093/cs/27.4.195
- Pierce v. Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (Excerpts)*. (2008). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ready, D. D. (2010, October). Socioeconomic disadvantage, school attendance, and early cognitive development, the differential effects of school exposure. *Sociology of Education*, 83(4), 271-286.
- Rickenbacker, W. (1974). *The twelve-year sentence: Radical views for compulsory schooling*. Open Court Publishing.

- Roby, D. E. (2004) Research on school attendance and student achievement: A study of Ohio schools. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 28(1), 3-16.
- Roderick, M. (1993). *The path to dropping out: Evidence for intervention*. Auburn House.
- Romero, M., & Lee, Y. S. (2007). *A national portrait of chronic absenteeism in the early grades*. National Center for Children in Poverty.  
<https://doi.org/10.7916/D89C7650>
- Rumberger, R. W., & Lim, S. (2008). *Why students drop out of school: A review of 25 years of research*. California dropout research project.  
<https://www.issuelab.org/resources/11658/11658.pdf>
- Schacter, H. W. (1949). *Kentucky on the march* (1st ed.). Harper & Brothers.
- Shepard, R. I., & Sturtevant, D. (2020, February 20). *Truancy charges within CDW complaints filed fiscal year 2019 Fayette County and statewide*. Family and Juvenile Services
- Simmons, R. G., & Blyth, D. A. (1987). *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context*. Routledge.
- Sievertsen, H., Gino, F., & Piovesan, M. (2016). Cognitive fatigue influences students' performance on standardized tests. *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences*, 113(10), 2621-2624. doi:10.1073/pnas.1516947113
- Sutphen, R. D., Ford, J. P., & Flaherty, C. (2010). Truancy interventions: A review of the research literature. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(2), 161-171.

Tennessee Department of Education. (2017). *Chronically out of school in Tennessee*.

[http://tnedequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ESSA-Chronically-Out-of-School\\_V6.pdf](http://tnedequity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ESSA-Chronically-Out-of-School_V6.pdf)

The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2008, February). *One in 100: Behind bars in America 2008*.

[https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/sentencing\\_and\\_corrections/onein100pdf.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/sentencing_and_corrections/onein100pdf.pdf)

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of South Carolina. (1954). *Dissenting opinion from Harry Briggs, Jr., et al. v. R. W. Elliott, Chairman, et al.* National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/279306>

Winthrop, J. (1838). A model of Christian charity. *Winthrop Papers*, 2, 1929-47.

Wigfield, A., & Wagner, L. (2005). Competence, motivation, and identity development during adolescence. In A. J. Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation* (pp. 202-221). Guilford

## APPENDIX

## Appendix A: Definition of Terms

## **Definition of Terms**

**Chronic Absenteeism** is generally defined as missing 10% of a school day (Benger, Discher, & Chang, 2017) or where a student misses 18 days of school or more per year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Gottfried, 2014).

**Truancy** in Kentucky is defined as any student who has been absent from school without valid excuse for three or more days, or tardy without valid excuse on three or more days, is a truant. Being absent for less than half of a school day is regarded as being tardy (KY Rev. Stat. § 159.150).

**Habitual Truancy** in Kentucky is defined as any child who has been reported as a truant two or more times is a habitual truant (KY. Rev. Stat. § 159.150).