

Absenteeism: A Descriptive Study of Student and Staff Perceptions

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
Abstract	ii
I. Introduction	1
Overview	1
Statement of Problem	2
Hypothesis	2
Operational Definitions	2
II. Review of the Literature	4
Introduction	4
Absenteeism	4
Research on Absenteeism	6
Disproportionality between special education students and non-disabled peers	8
Factors Related to Absenteeism	10
Consequences of Absenteeism	11
Interventions	12
Summary	16
III. Methods	17
Design	17
Participants	17
Instrument	18
Procedure	18
IV. Results	20

Survey Results	20
V. Discussion	26
Implications of Results	26
Theoretical Consequences	27
Threats to Validity	28
Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature	29
Implications for Future Research	30
Summary	32
References	33
Appendices	35
Appendix A: Student and Staff Surveys	35

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Student Survey Results, Questions 3-4</i>	20
Table 2 <i>Student Survey Results, Question 7</i>	21
Table 3 <i>Student Survey Results, Question 9</i>	22
Table 4 <i>Student Survey Results, Questions 10-13</i>	22
Table 5 <i>Student Survey Results, Questions 18</i>	24

Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the perceptions of students and staff participating in a self-paced blended-learning environment on the topic of absenteeism. The research and its findings examine the similarities and differences between the perceptions of students who receive special education services and their non-disabled peers. In addition, the research and its findings determine similarities and differences between the perceptions of students and staff. The reviewed literature examines the disproportionality in absenteeism rates between special education students and non-disabled peers, factors related to absenteeism, consequences of absenteeism, and interventions. Derived from the literature, survey questions were created and posed to voluntary and anonymous participants. The results revealed that there are more similarities than differences between student perceptions but some significant differences between staff and student perceptions. Implications of the study reveal the need for an increase in systemic interventions to help decrease overall absenteeism rates with a focus on aligning staff efforts with student needs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and 504 plans have a disproportionate amount of missed days in comparison to their non-disabled peers. In the school year 2013-14, 24.6% of high school students with disabilities were chronically absent in comparison to 18.1% of non-disabled peers. Overall, fourteen percent of the student population or approximately six million students missed fifteen or more days of school (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016). Absenteeism is a complex issue within our public school system. It interferes with the delivery of academic services, impacts student progress, and often contributes to at-risk behaviors. A variety of factors contribute to the reasons for absenteeism including family, peer, and community influences. According to Mahoney (2015), students who are frequently absent often feel as if school is boring or chaotic. They feel as if they are not valued as individuals and often display signs of depression and anxiety. Students who are chronically absent often drop out of school. Parents contribute to an increase in absenteeism due to work schedules, family conflicts, mental and physical health issues, and uncertain living situations. Overall family influences can contribute to absenteeism such as language barriers, values toward education, child care issues, and social-economic status. Community influences such as tension in the community, unsafe neighborhoods, diverse cultural values, and lack of community support at the school level, can also contribute to student absenteeism.

When faced with the challenge of changing absenteeism rates, developing meaningful programs or interventions that prove to be successful are often as challenging as the problem itself. Efforts to build relationships with students who are chronically absent have proven to be

successful. Educators need to listen to the students in reference to why they are absent. They need to build connections that establish trust and demonstrate a willingness to provide ongoing support. When students feel valued and participate in meaningful connections, they are more willing to participate in instruction and school-based activities (Strand & Cedersund, 2013).

Statement of Problem

The purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of both students and staff concerning the topic of absenteeism. Students with IEPs, 504 plans, and non-disabled students were surveyed to gather information on their perceptions of why students are absent, including questions that pertained to them individually. Educators and support staff were surveyed to gather information concerning their perceptions of why students in general are absent.

Hypothesis

The study is a descriptive study that utilizes two surveys on the topic of absenteeism as the methodology. One survey is a student survey on the topic of absenteeism. The other is geared toward the staff's perspective on student absenteeism. There is no hypothesis as such in this study. The following research question was examined: What are the staff and student perceptions on absenteeism for students enrolled in a self-paced, blended learning environment?

Operational Definitions

The EDLP, Extended Day Learning Program, is defined as a program designed to provide students with an opportunity to complete high school credits within a self-paced blended-learning environment. The EDLP consists of five different high school centers within Baltimore County Public Schools, located in Baltimore County, Maryland. The five EDLP centers are strategically placed to provide opportunities to students in each county demographic area: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central. Each EDLP center operates

outside of the typical school timeframe. The majority of the centers operate in the evenings during the timeframe of 6:00 P.M. to 9:45 P.M. on various weekdays. One center operates during Saturday mornings.

Student perceptions is defined as data collected from the student surveys given at each EDLP center. The student data was organized into two categories: students receiving services and non-disabled students. Students receiving services include students with IEPs and 504 plans. Data concerning individual disability type was not collected. All student data was collected in a voluntary manner with anonymity.

Staff perceptions is defined as data collected from the staff surveys given at each EDLP center. The staff is defined as a collection of educators, related service providers, and support staff consisting of administrative assistants and para-educators. The following staff participated in the survey in a voluntary manner with anonymity: administration, general educators, special educators, pupil personnel workers, school counselors, and support staff.

Any descriptive study involving surveys is limited in constraints imposed upon the study. Limitations from this type of study are discussed in more detail in the findings.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Absenteeism is complex problem that is influenced by many factors involving the child, parent, family, peers, school, and the community. In order to understand the impact absenteeism has on our children, one must look at the problem with a social, psychological, economic, and political perspective. Within this literature review, the term “absenteeism” is defined. Research and data concerning the scope of absenteeism is explored. Additionally, the research in this literature review will reflect data on the disproportionality between absenteeism in the special education population in comparison to non-disabled peers. “Students with disabilities are nearly 50% more likely to be chronically absent than students without disabilities” (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016, para 10). This literature review explores this disproportionality as well as factors that influence absenteeism, the short and long-term consequences of absenteeism, and interventions.

Absenteeism

“Absenteeism in schools is a community, city, district, state, and nation’s problem” (Mahoney, 2015, p. 127). Absenteeism has both short and long term consequences on student achievement. School attendance for all students is critical. Students who are not engaged in school miss instruction and are at risk of dropping out of school. In addition, students who miss school potentially engage in risky behaviors (McConnell & Kubina, 2014). When considering the impact of absenteeism on student progress, one needs to differentiate between truancy and chronic absenteeism. “Truancy applies only to unexcused absences, whereas chronic absenteeism can include absences for any reasons” (London, Sanchez, & Castrechini, 2016, p. 3). According to Lyon and Cotler, 2007 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), excessive or chronic

absenteeism is defined by 10-40% missed days. Data on truancy has been collected for many decades. Data on chronic absenteeism is just starting to become available (London et al., 2016). It is important to note that most data surrounding absenteeism only includes students who miss a whole day of instruction. The data does not include information on students who miss a partial day, skip classes, or miss school without detection (Kearney, 2008).

“According to the USA Department of Education, over 6 million students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14. That’s 14% of the student population or 1 in 7 students” (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016, para. 6). According to the data in the 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection, chronic absenteeism is more prevalent in high school with almost 20 percent of students absent. Twelve percent of middle school students were absent and eleven percent of elementary school students were absent. Gender was not a significant factor in chronic absenteeism (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016). Chronic absenteeism is very high in minority students. “The disparities are striking. Consider the relative differences: compared to their white peers, the groups with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism — American Indian and Pacific Islander students — are each over 65 percent more likely to lose three weeks of school or more, black students 36 percent more likely, and Hispanic students 11 percent more likely” (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016, para. 9). Students with special needs have a disproportionate amount of missed days. “It is well established that children receiving special education services will attend school at lower rates than their general education counterparts” (Redmond & Hosp, 2008, p. 99).

Research on Absenteeism

Research on absenteeism is often focused on the following three areas: psychology, social/criminal justice, and education. The three areas are very different and often cause a lack of consensus regarding key terminology and strategies for intervention (Kearney, 2008).

Research on the psychological approach to absenteeism concentrates on cognitive-behavioral techniques such as psychoeducation regarding anxiety, relaxation, cognitive therapy, and parent involvement. In addition, the psychological interventions are given in conjunction with antidepressant medication and are often associated with a formal diagnosis of child anxiety disorder or emotional disorders. Research on the psychological influence on absenteeism often excludes family or cultural factors and school climate concerns (Kearney, 2008).

Research on the social/criminal justice approach to absenteeism concentrates on systemic and legal interventions and negative student behavior. In addition, research in this area includes homelessness, pregnancy, poverty, family disconnect and chaos, and student association with delinquent peer groups (Kearney, 2008). According to Chapman, 2003 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), there is a correlation between unsafe and disorganized communities and lack of responsiveness to chronic absenteeism. Interventions include early educational programs, health services, family counseling and outreach, legal interventions, and court referrals (Kearney, 2008). According to Reynolds et al., 2001 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), at-risk families benefit from family outreach that mobilize resources, contribute to the overall health and nutrition of students, and provide screening for speech, cognitive, or medical disorders. Students who are at-risk benefit from early interventions for language and math development, full-day kindergarten, low ratios for students and teachers, and highly structured small group instruction. In addition, according to White et al., 2001 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), programs that involve community

law enforcement agencies have been effective in finding truant students, providing a linkage with mentors or administrative teams to address truancy, and when necessary, referring students to the juvenile justice system. Research on the social/criminal justice approach to chronic absenteeism typically focuses on broad systemic factors but often excludes parental attitudes toward education and school-based variables such as school culture and climate, school-based violence, bullying, student boredom, student-teacher conflict, language and cultural differences, and efforts to involve parents and increase communication.

Research on the educational approach to absenteeism concentrates on a blend of both the psychological and social/criminal justice approach. According to James and Freeze, 2006 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), school funding is often dependent upon student attendance data. According to Zhang, 2004 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), school policy toward absenteeism stems from the legal definitions of truancy and associated referrals to juvenile justice systems. In addition, research on the educational approach focuses on the school-based variables that contribute to excessive absenteeism. According to Stone, 2006 and Worrell and Hale , 2001 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), interventions regarding school variables include flexible scheduling, clearly stated expectations and consequences, programs that match student ability and needs, student engagement in extracurricular activities, and implementation of activities that increase school pride or promote school traditions.

“Research on the relationship between school refusal and learning difficulties or special education needs and school refusal is sparse and rather dated” (Havik, Bru, & Ertesvåg, 2015, p. 319). School refusal is linked with anxiety and a variety of emotional problems. Students with learning difficulties often display a variety of emotional problems. According to Berg & Nursten, 1996 (as cited in Havik et al., 2015), students who are absent are often students with

special needs who experience academic difficulty and poor performance. Academic stress and perceived difficulty with learning are associated with subjective health complaints and resulting absenteeism.

Disproportionality between Special Education Students and Non-Disabled Peers

According to Chiland & Young, 1990 (as cited in Redmond & Hosp, 2008), “[e]stablished risk factors for attendance difficulties include English language learner status, eligibility for free or reduced lunch, and the receipt of special education services” (p. 98). A disproportionality between special education students and non-disabled peers exists in data concerning chronic absenteeism. According to the USA Department of Education data for 2013-14, 15.6 % of elementary school students with disabilities were chronically absent in comparison to 10.1% of non-disabled peers. 17.9% of middle school students with disabilities were chronically absent in comparison to 11.8% of non-disabled peers. 24.6% of high school students with disabilities were chronically absent in comparison to 18.1% of non-disabled peers (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016).

“Students with disabilities ... are almost 1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent than students without disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is intended to ensure all students with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate education, yet chronic absenteeism is a barrier that gets in the way of achieving that goal” (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016, para. 12). Absenteeism interferes in the delivery of academic services. 15 to 20 percent of instructional time is missed by students with disabilities due to absenteeism (Spencer, 2009). Besides a decrease in academic services, students with special education services have a reduction in the benefits from therapeutic services when absent (Redmond & Hosp, 2008).

According to Sullivan and McDaniel, 2001 (as cited in Redmond & Hosp, 2008), absenteeism in the special education population impacts practice and the IEP team process. Special education teams design IEPs to reflect the amount of time each student requires for specific services. When the student demonstrates chronic absenteeism, IEPs should be adjusted to reflect the anticipated amount of student attendance.

There is also a disproportionality within the attendance rates of special education students based on their disability. Redmond and Hosp (2008), conducted a research study involving students with communicative disorders (CD), learning disabilities (LD), and students with emotional disturbances (ED) in kindergarten through ninth grade. They concluded that students with LD and ED were absent more frequently than students with CD. Within their study, Redmond and Hosp also determined that students with LD and ED had an increased level of absenteeism during the transition year between 8th and 9th grade in comparison to students with CD and those in general education.

Many reasons for chronic absenteeism exist for a student with a disability including medical needs, anxiety, school refusal and avoidance. According to Teaseley, 2004 (as cited in Spencer, 2009), increased absenteeism is a result of teachers' neglect in attending to the diverse needs of students. Teachers may require more intensive training and access to resources to assist special education students to be academically and socially successful. "Feelings of failure in school could push some students toward truancy" (Havik et al., 2015, p. 330).

Factors Related to Absenteeism

According to Kearney (2008), there are six factors that influence absenteeism: child, parent, family, peer, school, and community. Poor health, both physical and psychological, poor academic performance, low-school commitment, employment, and problems with authority figures are factors that directly influence the child. Many students feel as if there are little to no consequences for absenteeism. They feel as if the classroom is boring or chaotic and often feel invisible to the teacher. This contributes to their lack of interest in learning and an increase in absenteeism (Mahoney, 2015). “Parents are equally to blame when students are chronically truant from school” (p. 127). Parent factors include: low expectations of school performance, parenting styles, parent history of dropout or school withdrawal, language barriers, cultural differences, and maltreatment (Kearney, 2008). Parents often contribute to frequent absenteeism both directly and indirectly. Parental anxiety, mental health issues, separation or divorce, family dynamics, family conflict, single parent status, and child-parent relationships are contributing factors toward absenteeism (Mahoney, 2015). “Family characteristics are strong determining factors in students’ school attendance” (McConnell & Kubina, 2014, p. 249). Homelessness, chaos and conflict, poverty, single parent status, divorce, unemployment, illness, and any stressful family situation are considered family factors. Peers have a great influence on school attendance. Gangs or gang related activity, bullying, lack of extracurricular activities, peer pressure, and the influence of low performing peers or peers that participate in illegal activities are peer factors. School factors would include a negative school climate or culture, school violence, intolerance to diversity, poor student-teacher relationships, lack of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support programs, grade retention, punitive measures for absenteeism, and irrelevant or inadequate curriculum. An unsafe neighborhood, diverse cultural values, tension

between community members, gang activity, lack of community supports, and low social-economic status are some community factors that contribute to absenteeism (Kearney, 2008).

“ Understanding when students are most at risk will help schools and advocates better target interventions to improve student outcomes” (Chronic Absenteeism, 2016, para. 14).

Consequences of Absenteeism

The consequences of absenteeism are far-reaching and detrimental to an individual’s personal, educational, and employment outcomes. According to Almeida et al., 2006, (as cited in Kearney, 2008), violence, suicide, risky sexual behavior, drug use, teenage pregnancy, and injury are linked with chronic absenteeism. According to Borrego et al., 2005 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), students who demonstrate chronic absenteeism also experience an increase in both physical and psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, asthma, and a variety of disruptive behavior disorders. In addition, according to Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), economic deprivation, social problems in adulthood, and an increase in risk for dropout from school are associated with chronic absenteeism.

“Teachers cannot teach students who are not in attendance” (Mahoney, 2015, p. 125). Instruction today is fast paced and time-sensitive. Students who are absent frequently have difficulty making up missed assignments. Absenteeism can contribute to a student’s retention or even social promotion. Social promotion without adequate skill development can lead to an increase in dropout rates and absenteeism (Smink & Heilbrunn, 2006). Absenteeism is also linked with future employment outcomes. Students who are frequently absent are at risk of dropping out of high school and have difficulty finding employment without a diploma (Mahoney, 2015).

The increase in dropout rate associated with chronic absenteeism has consequences on school and public funding streams. Often, enrollment determines a school's level of funding (Smink & Heilbrunn, 2006). Standardized testing indirectly impedes progress in decreasing absenteeism. Schools are held accountable for the test data and funding is often dependent upon performance. "Administrators are generally held more strictly accountable for raising standardized test scores than for retaining low-performing students on their enrollment lists or tracking down truants. Although most district policies require schools to take action to correct truancy after only a few absences, in practice schools may let many absences accumulate before they intervene with a particular student" (Smink & Heilbrunn, 2006, p. 18). According to Smink & Heilbrunn (2006), the costs associated with educational failure or dropout rates include the following: loss in income taxes to federal and state government, increase in cost of funding for social services programs, higher unemployment rates, high juvenile and adult criminal justice costs, increase in crime and loss of monetary property for victims.

Smink & Heilbrunn (2006), recommend expanding data reporting regulations and laws, investing in truancy reduction and prevention programs, eliminating push-out practices, developing school incentives, developing regulations and programs for students supervised by the court systems, and taking a social service approach to truancy.

Interventions

Developing meaningful interventions for chronic absenteeism is almost as complex as the problem itself. Each factor that influences absenteeism such as the child, parent, family, peers, school, and the community should be considered when developing new interventions or evaluating existing interventions.

Possible student interventions to increase attendance may include addressing anxiety or fear based concerns through counseling efforts, cognitive behavioral therapy techniques, and group interventions that include the parent (Mahoney, 2015). External bullying in the form of cyber-bullying and in-school bullying is a major factor in absenteeism. Programs that help to combat bullying need to be incorporated in all schools (Reid, 2012).

“One program that reduces chronic absenteeism and truancy is linking the school-to-home connection, having parent involvement activities on a regular basis, and communication” (Mahoney, 2015, p. 126). According to Broussard, 2003 (as cited in Kearney, 2008), interventions to improve parent involvement may incorporate the use of translators, programs that support child care, parent participation in classroom activities, reduction in transportation barriers, increase in parent-teacher communication including home visits, and an emphasis on hiring school staff that understand the needs of the community including language and cultural considerations. Parental punishment for absenteeism should be re-evaluated. An increase in mandatory parenting classes and a decrease in fines would be more effective (Reid, 2012).

“Direct parent contact on a daily basis appears to have the most promising results” (McConnell & Kubina, 2014, p. 254). Attendance can be improved with direct interventions such as phone calls home to parents from teachers, principals, and support staff (McConnell & Kubina, 2014). “Telephone contact did improve attendance, staff members praising parents when their student attended school appeared to improve attendance more than negative calls, family meetings, class visits, or home visits. Students who were praised maintained a 70% attendance rate as compared with their peers with a 30% attendance rate, while receiving negative calls” (p. 253). “Studies using indirect parent interventions, addressing other issues beyond attendance, appeared to have little to no effect on attendance outcomes” (p. 254).

Programs that involve social workers who work directly with families to identify and prevent problems related to absenteeism are also very effective in decreasing absenteeism and increasing a positive school culture (Mallett, 2016). “School-based mental health services to promote all students’ mental health and social-emotional learning could also improve attendance” (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014, p. 7). According to Miller et al. 2008, (as cited in Kearney & Graczyk) character education that promotes social competence, life skills, values, and learning enhance attendance.

“Changing absenteeism issues takes school improvements in structures, teacher instructional quality, interpersonal relationships with students, and collaboration between teachers and parents to ensure that students feel welcomed and important in school classrooms” (Mahoney, 2015, p.126). Intensive training is needed for all school personnel in reference to interventions to improve attendance. Early intervention strategies and monitoring of identified at-risk students should be part of every school’s approach to decreasing absenteeism (Reid, 2012).

One positive intervention to improve attendance would be the introduction of an attendance chart. The chart’s intention is to track student attendance and reward students for their efforts to increase or maintain regular attendance. The chart can be displayed in a prominent area of the school in order to reinforce a positive approach to change and align with corresponding school vision and mission statements (Mahoney, 2015).

According to Mallett (2016), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a strong intervention focused on teaching positive student behaviors and behavior management. PBIS programs often involve student centered teaching strategies, improved tolerance, mentoring programs, group discussions, and family involvement. PBIS programs have been found to improve attendance rates, lower suspension rates, improve student and family involvement, and

decrease school-based incidents. Another positive approach to school climate change is the concept of restorative practices. Restorative practices involve student-focused interventions. These interventions may include the following: peer juries, peer mediation, and peace circles that allow student dialogue and collective decision making. The focus of restorative practices is conflict resolution instead of traditional forms of punishment for school-based infractions.

Alternative educational programs or a “school within a school” are considered effective for increasing attendance rates, graduation rates, academic achievement, and decreasing dropout rates for at-risk students (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Alternative education programs often include mentoring programs, small group instruction, decreased class size, lower teacher to student ratio, PBIS programs, cooperative learning strategies, community based instruction, services learning activities, and a more student-centered approach to learning.

Interventions involving a collaborative approach to problem solving may be more successful in the long term. When schools work with parents to problem solve for solutions to absenteeism, the root causes are often discovered and addressed. If there is a collaborative approach, educators can learn more about the specific needs of the students and assist in the process of identifying needs and monitoring progress (Vanneste, Loo, Feron, Rots, & Goor, 2016). Students who have participated in interventions for absenteeism benefit from long-term and on-going interventions. When the interventions are no longer available, at-risk students will no longer experience positive gains even if the initial intervention was considered comprehensive (Licht, Gard, & Guardino, 1991).

Summary

“Attendance rates, and by inference students’ overall levels of physical and mental health, can be affected by the presences of environmental, social, and psychological stressors” (Redmond & Hosp 2008, p. 97). According to Fallis and Opotow, 2003 (as cited in Strand & Cedersund, 2013), high levels of absenteeism can be effectively addressed by listening to students, taking student concerns seriously, working collaboratively, and looking inward to scrutinize school and district based programs or initiatives. Efforts to build relationships and engage students who are chronically absent have proven to be effective. In order to decrease chronic absenteeism, teachers need to engage students and demonstrate a consistent willingness to provide support. Teachers need to listen to the students in reference to reasons why they are absent. When schools build connections that establish trust and foster on-going relationships between students and teachers, students feel more connected to the school environment and are more willing to participate in instruction and school-based activities. “Truancy is a problem for many students, but disproportionately impacts vulnerable and already at-risk children and adolescents” (Mallett, 2016, p. 337). Further research is needed for the at-risk populations, especially the special education population, in order to fully understand the educational, social, psychological, political, and economic impacts including the short and long-term consequences for this population.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The descriptive study was conducted to determine the reasons for student absenteeism and to compare those reasons with staff perceptions of student absenteeism. Because the purpose of the descriptive study was to glean information, there was no hypothesis.

Design

The researcher met with small groups of students at each EDLP center. Each student in the small groups were given an anonymous survey on absenteeism. Students with IEPs, 504 Plans, and non-disabled status were identified prior to the survey and given a survey with a specific code. The researcher also met individually with staff members at each EDLP center and asked each staff member to complete an anonymous survey. This kind of study is defined as a descriptive research. Descriptive research does not involve the use of controls, treatments, or pre-post assessments. The purpose is to glean information from a specific group or groups of individuals. It does not have an independent variable. However, there are dependent variables in this descriptive study. The dependent variable is the difference in each student's status as students receiving services or non-disabled students. The other dependent variable is the overall status of student or staff.

Participants

Five demographic areas were included in this study. The demographic areas were the EDLP centers within the Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central areas of Baltimore County Public Schools. Within those five demographic areas, the researcher surveyed students with IEPs, 504 Plans, and non-disabled status. The researcher also surveyed staff from each of the five centers. To qualify for the study, the participants had the following in common:

participation in the EDLP for their individual center, participation in grades 9-12, and the status of students receiving services or non-disabled students. The gender or age of the students did not have a significant role in their qualifying status. In addition, to qualify for the study, the staff participants had to be currently employed at their assigned EDLP center and fall under the defined definition of staff.

Instrument

The researcher and her design advisor created twenty questions to pose to student participants and ten questions to pose to staff participants. Those questions in the form of surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Procedure

There were eight steps in the process: create survey questions for both students and staff, obtain permission from the program supervisor and each EDLP center's principal, acquire email addresses, message participants, visit EDLP centers, identify students with IEPs and 504 plans, conduct surveys, and transcribe information from the surveys into a database for analysis. The procedure began with the researcher and her design advisor creating the surveys for both the students and the staff. Next, the researcher met with the IEP chair of one EDLP center to review the survey and gain insight into how to reach out to the other centers. The researcher also met with the program supervisor and the principal of another high school's EDLP to describe the opportunity, review the surveys, and obtain permission for the study. Over the course of the next month, the researcher visited each EDLP center and administered both surveys. The data from each EDLP center was transcribed from the surveys and organized into an Excel file. Specific Excel formulas were utilized to determine frequency and percentage for each survey question. In addition, the data was analyzed for patterns of results within the demographic areas and within

each category of participants: students receiving services, non-disabled students, and staff. The data was then transferred into charts that are included in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data was collected from surveying five different centers throughout Baltimore County Public Schools. Within those centers, staff, students receiving services, and non-disabled students were surveyed. A total of 48 staff members, 61 special education students, and 50 non-disabled students were surveyed. The overall results indicate some similarities and differences within each category. When compared closely, student and staff perceptions varied greatly which may indicate a disconnect between what staff believe students need and what students actually need in reference to school programming and interventions. Tables 1-5 display the results of the student survey. Each survey question is clearly stated with corresponding results organized by the response item, frequency of answer and percent. Narrative describing the data follow each table. Connections to the staff survey are included when applicable.

Table 1

Student Survey Results, Questions 3-4

Question 3: Do you think it is important to attend school regularly?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	92%		Yes	49	98%
No	5	8%		No	1	2%
Question 4: Does your family think it is important to attend school regularly?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Yes	60	98%		Yes	50	100%
No	1	2%		No	0	0%

When asked if students thought attending school regularly was important, slightly more non-disabled students responded yes in comparison to students receiving services. Eight percent

of students receiving services responded no. One hundred percent of non-disabled students responded yes when asked if their families thought it was important to attend school regularly. Slightly fewer students receiving services responded yes with two percent responding no (See Table 1).

Table 2

Student Survey Results, Question 7

Question 7: When you are absent, what is your most common reason for being absent?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Illness	23	38%		Illness	15	30%
Family/Personal Reasons	17	28%		Family/Personal Reasons	14	28%
Personal Motivation	9	15%		Personal Motivation	9	18%

Students were asked about their own most common reason for being absent. Illness, family/personal reasons, and personal motivation were the top three common reasons for both the non-disabled students and students receiving services. Slightly more students receiving services reported illness in comparison to the non-disabled students. Twenty-eight percent of students in both categories reported family/personal reasons as the second most common reason for absences. Slightly more non-disabled students reported personal motivation as the third most common reason for absence. (See Table 2). The staff reported the most common reasons for students being absent as personal motivation, transportation, and family/personal reasons. It is interesting to note that the staff did not see illness as a main reason for absence. The staff focused on personal motivation as the main reason for absence. Transportation to the EDLP centers was the second reason for student absences. Most students rely on parents and family members to transport them to the EDLP centers.

Table 3

Student Survey Results, Question 9

Question 9: What are the most common concerns that contribute to your absenteeism?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Too stressed	32	26%		Too stressed	27	28%
School - too challenging	14	11%		Easily make up work	16	17%
Not accepted at school	11	9%		Not worried about consequences for absence	12	13%

Students were asked about their most common concerns that contribute to their absences. Both the students receiving services and the non-disabled students reported being too stressed as their number one concern. Slightly more non-disabled students reported being too stressed in comparison to the students receiving services. Eleven percent of students receiving services reported that school is too challenging while nine percent reported that they do not feel accepted at school. Seventeen percent of non-disabled students feel as if it is easy to make up missed work while thirteen percent are not worried about the consequences for being absent (See Table 3).

The staff reported the most common student concern that contributes to absenteeism as not being worried about consequences. Being too stressed, and feeling as if school is too challenging were the second and third reasons.

Table 4

Student Survey Results, Questions 10-13

Question 10: What are the most common family influences on your absenteeism?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Access to transportation	24	22%		Conflict or stressful family situations	14	16%
Conflict or stressful family situations	15	14%		Access to transportation	13	15%
Caring for younger siblings	13	12%		Family values	9	10%
Question 11: What are the most common peer influences on your absenteeism?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Need for positive relationships	15	21%		Peer Pressure	13	25%
Peer Pressure	13	18%		Need for Positive Relationships	11	21%
Bullying	10	14%		Bullying	1	2%
Question 12: What are the most common school-based influences on your absenteeism?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Student-teacher relationships	21	24%		Student-teacher relationships	11	16%
School culture	14	16%		Course content	11	16%
School environment	8	9%		School culture	10	14%
				School environment	8	11%
Question 13: What are the most common community-based influences on your absenteeism?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Difficult bus routes	14	20%		Tension in the community	10	17%
Tension in the community	10	14%		Difficult bus routes	10	17%
Concern over policies	5	7%		Unsafe neighborhood	5	8%
				Concern over policies	4	7%

Family, peer, school-based, and community-based influences often play an important role in understanding the reasons for absenteeism. Students receiving services reported the most common family influence as access to transportation and the most common community-based influence as difficult bus routes. Non-disabled students reported the most common family influence as conflict or stressful family situations and the most common community-based influence as tension in the community. Twenty-five percent of the non-disabled students and eighteen percent of the students receiving services reported peer pressure as the most common peer influence. Twenty-four percent of students receiving services and sixteen percent of non-disabled students reported student-teacher relationships as the most common school-based influence (See Table 4). The staff reported the most common family influences on absenteeism as access to transportation, family work schedules, and family values. The most common peer influences on absenteeism were reported as peer pressure, need for more positive relationships, and bullying. The most common school-based influences on absenteeism were reported as course content, school culture, and student-teacher relationships. The most common community-based influences on absenteeism were reported as difficult bus routes, unsafe neighborhood, and concern over school policies concerning absenteeism.

Table 5

Student Survey Results, Questions 18

Question 18: Which school-based programs or activities encourage you to attend school?						
Students Receiving Services				Non-disabled Students		
Response Item	Frequency	Percent		Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Graduation	48	58%		Graduation	41	62%
Phone calls home from school	13	16%		Phone calls home from school	13	20%
PBIS	6	7%		Peer-to peer mentoring	6	9%
Peer-to peer mentoring	6	7%				

Overall, both students receiving services (58%) and non-disabled students (62%) reported graduation as the most important school-based program or activity that encourages them to attend school. Phone calls home from school are the second most important activity. Students receiving services reported Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) programs as their third most important activity while non-disabled students reported peer-to-peer mentoring as their third most important activity (See Table 5). In contrast, the staff reported PBIS as the most effective school-based program or activity that encourages students to attend school. Adult-to-student mentoring and graduation were also reported by the staff as effective programs or activities.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The research and results within this study were descriptive in nature and therefore do not have a hypothesis. The following research question was examined: What are the staff and student perceptions on absenteeism for students enrolled in a self-paced, blended learning environment? The research method and instrument supported the question and produced results that encourage dialogue and further research concerning the reasons for student absenteeism and the development of effective student-centered interventions.

Implications of Results

Overall student perceptions of the reasons students are most often absent seem to center around family, community, and school-based influences. Students reported being too stressed, having difficulty with conflict and stressful family situations, poor student-teacher relationships, awareness of tension in the community and a negative school culture/environment. Staff seemed to be aware of some of the same influences but often focused on course content, the impression that students are not worried about absences and consequences, and access to transportation.

The results of the questions given to both the students and staff reveal areas of need in terms of further study, student-centered interventions, and the need for more direct services from school counselors, social workers, and other applicable related service providers. The results point out the need for further study into interventions that support the whole child in terms of wellness, ability to manage and understand emotions, the ability to recognize stressful situations and apply strategies for self-management. The results point out the need for more positive student-teacher relationships, increased parent-teacher communication and community outreach.

Theoretical Consequences

Interventions should align with the specific needs of a given population. A typical school-based intervention is a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program that often has a focus on increasing positive school-based behaviors including attendance. The results from this research study indicate a disconnect between what the students feel contributes to change in their behavior toward attending school and what the staff perceives. Sixteen percent of the students receiving services and twenty percent of the non-disabled students responded that phone calls home concerning attendance encouraged them to come to school. Peer-to-peer mentoring was also expressed as an effective program or activity. PBIS was not a significant response for the non-disabled students and only seven percent of the students receiving services responded that PBIS encouraged them to attend school. In contrast, the staff reported PBIS as the most effective program or activity along with adult-to-peer mentoring. Phone calls home and peer-to-peer mentoring were not significant responses for the staff. In theory, educators should align their interventions with data or input that directly supports the population they serve. The population represented in this study expressed different needs. Direct and indirect consequences concerning absenteeism may result from misaligned goals and resources. In the short term, if the results of this study were considered, the staff would need to re-evaluate their approach to interventions in order to align their focus with the student's needs. This would require funding to develop, implement, and monitor professional learning within the targeted areas such as peer-to-peer mentoring programs, positive student-teacher relationships, and increased parent communication. In addition, the resources required to increase social worker, school counselor and other applicable related service provider's involvement in the process of providing more outreach to the families and community would be significant. Many different stakeholders would

need to be involved in the planning and implementation process. In the long term, resources will need to be allocated to the process of determining the effectiveness of new interventions and the responsiveness to an ever changing population.

Threats to Validity

Many variables exist when determining validity within a descriptive study. A variable that may pose a threat to the validity of this research study would be the sample itself. The student participants were not selected at random but identified within the categories of students receiving services (IEP and 504 Plans) and non-disabled students. However, even though the students were identified prior to participating in the survey, their participation was still voluntary and anonymous. The number of participants was not pre-determined. The sample size was restricted to participation within the EDLP centers throughout Baltimore County Public Schools and restricted to the voluntary status. Forty-eight staff members, sixty-one students receiving services, and fifty non-disabled students were surveyed. This represents a moderate amount of participants as compared to those enrolled in or employed by the program. A larger sample size may prove to be stronger statistically. Even though the intent of the study was to compare the different group responses, the groups themselves are unequal which may represent a bias or internal validity threat. The survey itself was not validated or tested statistically prior to administration. The design of the survey does not provide a connection between cause and effect but rather reports on perceptions.

Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature

Chronic absenteeism interferes with student progress and the delivery of academic services and often contributes to at-risk behaviors and increased drop-out rates. This is a known fact and

proven many times over within various research studies on absenteeism. When faced with the challenge of changing this fact, it is imperative to understand the root causes of absenteeism in order to develop meaningful student-centered interventions for various student populations. It is also a known fact as demonstrated in the findings of Redmond & Hosp (2008) and Spencer (2009) that students with disabilities are absent more frequently than students without disabilities. Because of this connection to existing research, the researcher included the two different categories of students: students receiving services (IEP and 504 Plans) and non-disabled students within the research methodology and data analysis. The research results indicated some differences and similarities between the two different populations as reported in Chapter IV.

Both student and staff survey questions were built around the following categories: overall reason for student absence; top three reasons for student absences; student concerns regarding absence; and family, peer, community, and school-based factors that influence absenteeism. Kearney (2008) determined six reasons for student absenteeism including child, parent, family, peer, school, and community. Research by Mahoney (2015) and McConnell and Kubina (2014) support the connection between family influences and absenteeism. By deciding to focus on a similar categories, the researcher lends support to the findings of Kearney, Mahoney, and McConnell & Kubina.

The findings of Strand & Cedersund (2013) support the need to develop interventions based on student input, collaboration with families, and an introspective approach to change. By conducting the research study and surveying students and staff, the researcher attempted to understand student concerns and influences on absenteeism. Understanding the reasons why different student populations are absent may help develop future interventions. Interventions require time and resources which often have consequences on school and public funding streams.

By considering the connection between interventions and funding, the researcher supports findings by Smink & Heilbrun (2006). The results of the research study indicate that students respond to interventions that include phone calls home concerning absenteeism. This supports findings by McConnell & Kubina (2014) who indicated that direct parent contact produced the most promising results concerning a decrease in absenteeism. Mahoney (2015) also reported on the importance of developing strong family connections and on-going communication between parents and school staff. The results of the research study indicate a need for more services related to health and well-being due to the influence of student stress, family conflict, student-teacher relationships, and tension in the community on absenteeism. The services may include an increase in support from social workers, school counselors, and other applicable related service providers. This supports findings by Mallett (2016) who reported on the importance of programs that involved social workers' ability to be proactive in establishing positive relationships between families and school staff resulting in a decrease in absenteeism and an increase in positive school culture.

Implications for Future Research

The topic of student absenteeism is far reaching and applicable to today's concerns regarding student achievement and post-secondary college and career readiness. In order to prepare students for the future, they need to be present in schools today. Further research into the reasons why students are absent from school may include a closer look into the specific reasons within each of the following categories: peer, family, school-based, and community influences. Special focus should be given to the topic of personal motivation and individual goal-setting for all populations. The research study focused on one small population within a large suburban

school system. It may be beneficial to consider student and staff perceptions concerning absenteeism at other schools and various programs throughout Baltimore County Public Schools in order to compare and contrast perceptions and the level of effectiveness of existing interventions on a systemic level.

The results from this research study indicate a need for more intervention and collaboration with social workers, school counselors, and other applicable related service providers. Illness is a main reason for student absenteeism, but personal motivation, being too stressed to attend school, family conflict and stressful situations, school culture, and community influences contribute to the overall problem. Future research may include implementing a new program specifically designed to address the social and family issues contributing to absenteeism. This would include studying existing attendance data prior to, during, and after the implementation of the program to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

The results also indicate a need for more professional development concerning school culture and the development of positive student-teacher relationships. Multiple studies can be conducted to determine if professional development in a variety of applicable topics contributes to a decrease in overall student absenteeism.

There is a known disproportionality between the levels of absenteeism within the two groups: students receiving services such as an IEP or a 504 Plan and non-disabled students. Further research may include a study that strives to understand the influences of individual disabilities as they relate to absenteeism and corresponding interventions for each population. It is imperative to understand the barriers to school attendance for the special education population. Community outreach including health and wellness services along with specialized tutoring may make a difference. An increase in disability awareness within the community and school

environment may also contribute to a decrease in student absenteeism. Absenteeism is an ongoing problem for many school systems. The topic itself is rich in opportunity and ideas for future research and study.

Summary

Students and staff were given the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns through the research method and instrument. The survey was voluntary and anonymous contributing to a level of honesty and openness in response. The results indicate a need for dialogue concerning the difference in perceptions between students and staff on the topic of absenteeism. School-based professional development should be created to address the social and emotional issues centered on absenteeism such as conflict and stressful family situations, personal motivation, and feeling too stressed to come to school. Community outreach addressing tension in the community, school safety, and transportation options may help decrease absenteeism. Overall, the results indicate a need for more student-centered interventions that are created with student input and reflection. In order to encourage effective and positive change toward a decrease in student absenteeism, it is imperative to listen to the student voices and develop programs, incentives, and interventions that address their immediate concerns.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Student and Staff Survey

Student Survey

Absenteeism Survey EDLP: _____

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to gather information on the reasons for student absenteeism. All of the information gathered will be used to develop positive interventions for student absenteeism.

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. What is your grade level?

☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12

3. Do you think it is important to attend school regularly?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Does your family think it is important to attend school regularly?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. How often are you absent from school?

☐ I am never absent ☐ 1-2 days per quarter ☐ 3-5 days per quarter ☐ 6-10 days per quarter ☐ 10+ days per quarter

6. What is your main form of transportation to your EDLP?

☐ Parent/Guardian ☐ Friend ☐ I drive myself ☐ School Bus ☐ Public Bus System ☐ Other, please specify _____

7. When you are absent, what is **your** most common reason for being absent? **Choose only one answer.**

☐ Illness ☐ Peers: Peer pressure to skip school ☐ Family/Personal Reasons
☐ School-based factors: School climate or environment ☐ Employment ☐ Community: Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood
☐ Personal Motivation ☐ Transportation ☐ Other, please specify _____

8. What do you think are the most common reasons for a student being absent? Please **rank** the following selections in terms of highest to lowest. 1 is the most common reason, 8 will be the least common reason. **Write the numbers 1-8 in the boxes.**

<input type="text"/>	Illness
<input type="text"/>	Employment
<input type="text"/>	Personal Motivation
<input type="text"/>	Family/Personal Reasons
<input type="text"/>	Transportation
<input type="text"/>	School-based factors: School climate or environment
<input type="text"/>	Community: Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood
<input type="text"/>	Peers: Peer pressure to skip school

9. From the selection below, what are the most common concerns that contribute to your absenteeism? **Please check all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/> School is too challenging	<input type="checkbox"/> School is not challenging enough
<input type="checkbox"/> I often feel too stressed/upset/overwhelmed to come to school	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel valued at school
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not prepared for school (supplies, clothing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> I am concerned about my safety at school
<input type="checkbox"/> I am concerned about my safety on the way to/from school	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel accepted at school
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not worried about consequences for being absent	<input type="checkbox"/> I can easily make up any missed course work
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above

10. Family influences can contribute to our ability to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **family influences** on your absenteeism? **Please check all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Access to transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Family values concerning school and attendance
<input type="checkbox"/> Family work schedules interfere with transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Living situation (relocation, uncertain living situations)
<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for a younger sibling or other family member	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict or stressful family situations that interfere with attendance
<input type="checkbox"/> Need to be employed to contribute to family finances	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above	

11. Our peers can influence our decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **peer influences** on your absenteeism? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ Peer pressure to skip school ☐ Need for more positive peer relationships or friends ☐ Bullying
☐ Other: Please specify _____ ☐ None of the above

12. Our experiences with school in general can influence our decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **school-based influences** on your absenteeism? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ School environment (facilities, technology ...) ☐ School culture (Positive or negative place to be)
☐ Student-teacher relationships ☐ Course content ☐ Inadequate responsiveness to diversity issues
☐ Course selection ☐ Other: Please specify _____ ☐ None of the above

13. The community can indirectly influence our decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **community-based influences** on your absenteeism? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ Tension in the community ☐ Difficult public bus routes (transfers, unsafe bus stops) ☐ Unsafe neighborhood
☐ Concern over school policies concerning absenteeism ☐ Other: Please specify _____
☐ None of the above

14. When you have been absent, what do you find difficult about coming back to school? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ I don't have difficulties ☐ Feeling lost ☐ Having trouble with school-based relationships (Peers)
☐ Having trouble with school-based relationships (Administrators, Teachers, Staff) ☐ Catching up on missed work
☐ Other: Please specify _____

15. What are your top **three** reasons for coming to school? **Check only three answers.**

- ☐ I think education is important ☐ My parent/guardian encourages me to attend ☐ My friends encourage me to attend
☐ My classes are interesting and challenging ☐ I want to avoid court/truancy charges
☐ I want to graduate on time and complete my missing credits ☐ Coming to school helps me stay out of trouble
☐ Other: Please specify _____

16. Who notices if you miss school? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ My teachers ☐ My principal or administration ☐ My school counselor ☐ Another family member
☐ My friends ☐ My parent or guardian ☐ No one notices ☐ Other: Please specify _____

17. Do you or your family member(s) receive a phone call from someone at your school (EDLP) when you are absent?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know

18. Schools develop programs that encourage regular student attendance. From the selection below, which school-based programs or activities encourage you to attend school? **Please check all that apply.**

- ☐ Graduation ☐ PBIS –Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Programs
☐ Phone calls home from school personnel (administrator, counselor, or teacher) ☐ Adult-to-student mentoring programs
☐ Peer-to-peer mentoring programs ☐ Other: Please specify _____

19. Does the location of your EDLP center influence your attendance?

- ☐ Yes If yes, which center is better for you? _____ ☐ No

20. In the space below, please write suggestions for programs or activities that will help increase attendance.

*** Thank you for your time and participation in this survey!

Staff Survey

[Absenteeism Survey EDLP: _____]

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to gather information on staff perceptions concerning student absenteeism. All of the information gathered will be used to develop positive interventions for student absenteeism.

1. How long have you worked for EDLP in your current position?

- ☐ 1 year
 ☐ 2 years
 ☐ 3-5 years
 ☐ Over 5 years

2. How long have you worked in the education field?

- ☐ 1-5 years
 ☐ 6-10 years
 ☐ 11-15 years
 ☐ 16-20 years
 ☐ 21+ years

3. At your EDLP center, do you work directly or indirectly with students?

- ☐ Directly
 ☐ Indirectly

4. What are the most common reasons for a student being absent? Please **rank** the following selections in terms of highest to lowest. 1 is the most common reason will be the least common reason. **Write the numbers 1-8 in the boxes.**

- ☐ Illness
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Personal Motivation
- ☐ Family/Personal Reasons
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ School-based factors: School climate or environment
- ☐ Community: Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood
- ☐ Peers: Peer pressure to skip school

5. From the selection below, what are the most common student concerns that contribute to absenteeism? **Please check up to three answers.**

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School is too challenging | <input type="checkbox"/> School is not challenging enough |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I often feel too stressed/upset/overwhelmed to come to school | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel valued at school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not prepared for school (supplies, clothing, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> I am concerned about my safety at school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am concerned about my safety on the way to/from school | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel accepted at school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not worried about consequences for being absent | <input type="checkbox"/> I can easily make up any missed course work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ | |

6. Family influences can contribute to the ability to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **family influences** on student absenteeism? **Please check up to three answers.**

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Family values concerning school and attendance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family work schedules interfere with transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Living situation (relocation, uncertain living situations) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for a younger sibling or other family member | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict or stressful family situations that interfere with attendance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need to be employed to contribute to family finances | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____ |

7. Peers can influence decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **peer influences** on student absenteeism? **Please check up to three answers.**

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure to skip school | <input type="checkbox"/> Need for more positive peer relationships or friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____ | | |

8. Experiences with school in general can influence decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **school-based influences** on student absenteeism? **Please check up to three answers.**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School environment (facilities, technology ...) | <input type="checkbox"/> School culture (Positive or negative place to be) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student-teacher relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Course content | <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate responsiveness to diversity issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Course selection | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____ | |

9. The community can indirectly influence decisions to attend school on a regular basis. From the selection below, what are the most common **community-based influences** on student absenteeism? **Please check up to three answers.**

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tension in the community | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult public bus routes (transfers, unsafe bus stops) | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe neighborhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern over school policies concerning absenteeism | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____ | |

10. Schools develop programs that encourage regular student attendance. From the selection below, which school-based programs or activities are the most effective? **Please check all that apply.**

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation | <input type="checkbox"/> PBIS –Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone calls home from school personnel (administrator, counselor, or teacher) | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult-to-student mentoring programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer-to-peer mentoring programs | <input type="checkbox"/> In my experience, the programs and activities are ineffective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify _____ | |

*** Thank you for your time and participation in this survey!