

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING TRUANCY: CAUSES  
AND EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Teacher's Perceptions Regarding Truancy: Causes, Preventions, and Intervention Strategies

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The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of elementary school teachers, in a school district in west central Wisconsin, regarding the causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences and prevention and intervention strategies utilized to address these issues. The subjects of the study were 34 teachers who voluntarily completed a survey developed by this researcher for the study. The subjects of the study were selected based on this researcher's familiarity with the area and out of convenience of locality to this researcher. The elementary schools were located in a city with a population of approximately 60,000, in west central Wisconsin. Since the district has 15 elementary schools, a sample population was selected from these schools based on the socioeconomic status of the population attending the

school. Socioeconomic status was determined based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch at each particular school. Therefore, the schools selected represented the two top, the two middle, and the two low socioeconomic areas in the school district.

The survey consisted of a demographic section and nine questions. The first four questions were asked to provide an understanding of the teacher's awareness of their school district's policies and procedures for addressing truancy and high rates of excused absences. The next two questions were asked to gain an understanding of the teacher's perceptions regarding the causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences. The last two questions were asked to provide an understanding of the teacher's awareness of their school's prevention and intervention services for addressing the same issues.

The data from the surveys was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Also, lists of responses regarding services were generated by this researcher. The results show that the majority of the teachers in the sample population were aware of their school's policies and procedures for addressing truancy and high rates of excused absences. They were also aware of the social causes of truancy but were not as aware of the psychological and educational causes. And, only half of the teachers in the sample population were aware of their school's prevention and intervention services for addressing attendance issues.

Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that the school district offer this survey to the entire district teaching staff, that a needs assessment be conducted to determine the educational needs of the teachers in relation to these issues for in-services, and that a follow-up study be conducted after implementation of the in-services.

In order to effectively deal with issues of absenteeism, it is critical to understand the causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences, as well as their prevention and intervention strategies.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Children have been skipping school for years. Since 1872, truancy and absenteeism have been problems within the school systems (Dougherty, 1999). And, school professionals have been working on addressing this issue ever since. The reason, as times change, so do the policies and procedures regarding truanancies, which are unexcused absences. According to research, when children miss school, they miss out on learning, which leads to poor grades and feelings of failure, which in turn leads to more absences (Phillips, 1995). It would seem then that school attendance is essential to one's academic success. However, according to the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (2000), 15,600 students or 1.6 %, of the total student enrollment in the Wisconsin public schools are truant or absent without an excuse each day. Also, during the 1998-1999 school year, 31.1 % of total absences in Wisconsin public schools were because of truancy. As a professional guidance counselor just entering the educational arena, with an undergraduate degree in social work and 10 years experience working with children who have struggled with issues of juvenile delinquency and truancy, these numbers are alarming.

In July 1996, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice issued the *Manual to combat truancy*. The manual reported that not only is truancy “the first sign of trouble” for children, but that truancy is “the gateway to crime” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, p. 1). It reported that there is a correlation between truancy and daytime crimes involving burglary and vandalism. The manual also reported that truant students are more likely to drop out of school. All of this places extra costs on not only the student, but on the community as well. The costs are both financial and personal.

Without an education, the student limits him or herself to the types of work that he or she could do and that is if he or she can even find a job. “In 1995, high school dropouts were almost twice as likely to be unemployed as high school graduates” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, p. 1). Unemployment is then a financial burden to both the welfare and unemployment systems. Another financial burden to the community is from the truants who committed the crimes. This creates increased costs on the court systems, county human service systems, and insurance agency systems, just to name a few.

According to Wisconsin law, all children between the ages of 6 and 18 must attend school. Each school is charged with the responsibility of determining which student absences are excused and which are not excused. In 1998, the 1997 Wisconsin Act 239 took effect. This law reduced the number of trancies accrued by students considered to be habitually truant from 10 to 5 (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). This act also allowed municipalities to establish ordinance violations for a single act of truancy, as well as habitual trancies. However, whether a student is referred to juvenile court or municipal court for truancy intervention and/or sanctions, the response is usually punitive. For example, the student may have his or her driver’s license suspended, be given a \$500 fine towards the student and/or parent, be placed on home detention, or have his or her work permit revoked. In addition to being punitive, most of these options are geared towards older middle and high school students. And research shows that punitive measures do not decrease the incidences of truancy (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

So what happens or needs to happen before a court referral is even made? Before a school can even refer a student to court for habitual truancy, the school has to document their

efforts in addressing the student's lack of attendance. According to the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (2000), these efforts are clearly defined steps which include:

...attempting to meet with parents and/or guardians regarding the truancy, providing an opportunity for educational counseling and determining whether a change in the student's curriculum would resolve the truancy, evaluating the student to determine whether learning problems are contributing to the truancy, determining whether social problems are contributing to the truancy, and taking appropriate action if necessary.

(p. 4)

Each of these steps is very involved and time-consuming, yet very important when trying to understand the student's truancy. The very nature of each step dictates a community effort between the school, the parents, and the student to identify the cause of the student's absences.

It appears then that truancy is only an issue of the middle and high school levels of education. However, according to the research this is not true. Baker and Jansen (2000) cite a study conducted by Barth, in 1984, which showed that a student in first grade "who misses 11.8 days during the year will miss an additional .7 days each year after until junior high school," and, "the first graders who miss fewer than 11.8 days, increased attendance by .2 days each year over the same time" (p. 46). Attendance patterns during the elementary years do have an impact on attendance patterns later in life. During elementary school, students have more excused absences than unexcused absences and therefore have higher rates of excused absences than truancy. However, it is many of the same causes of high rates of excused absences that further lead to truancy when it is left unidentified and untreated. Therefore, prevention and early intervention services that foster a sense of caring and support towards students with high rates of absenteeism are necessary.

This study is important because it is necessary to know the causes of truancy, as well as the prevention and early intervention strategies. This study will survey a sample of elementary school teachers in a school district in west central Wisconsin regarding their perceptions of the causes of absenteeism and the prevention and early intervention strategies utilized within their schools.

Each child has his or her own unique set of strengths and needs. As a school counselor, along with other school professionals and parents, it is our job to build upon those unique strengths so that each child has the opportunity to experience academic success.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of elementary school teachers in a school district in west central Wisconsin regarding the causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences and the prevention and early intervention strategies utilized within their schools. Since the district has 15 elementary schools, a sample population will be selected from these schools based on the socioeconomic status of the population attending the school. Socioeconomic status will be determined based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch at each particular school. Therefore, the schools selected will represent the two top, the two middle, and the two low socioeconomic areas in the school district. Data will be collected through surveys during the spring semester 2003.

### **Research Objectives**

This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To determine elementary school teacher's, in a district in west central Wisconsin, awareness of their school district policy and procedures regarding student attendance, including both excused and unexcused absences.

2. To determine the most common causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences as perceived by the elementary school teachers in a district in west central Wisconsin.
3. To determine the most commonly perceived truancy and high rates of excused absences and prevention and early intervention strategies utilized by the elementary schools in a school district in west central Wisconsin.

### **The Definition of Terms**

These are the terms that need to be defined for clarity within this study:

**Absenteeism** – all student absences including excused and unexcused absences.

**A School District in west central Wisconsin**– elementary schools located in a district in west central Wisconsin.

**Truancy** – any unexcused absence from school.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

These are the assumptions of this study:

1. All teachers in the sample group will answer each survey item honestly.
2. All teachers in the sample group will return their survey.
3. The sample of the population of teachers selected will be representative of the total elementary school teacher population in the school district in west central Wisconsin.
4. All teachers in the sample group will interpret each survey item the same.

These are the limitations of the study:

1. Teachers may answer the survey items the way that they think this researcher would like the items answered.
2. Teachers from the sample group may not return their survey.

3. The sample of the population of teachers selected may not be representative of the total population of teachers in the school district in west central Wisconsin.
4. Teachers may not interpret each survey item the same.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

As school professionals, we want to create a school environment that promotes a feeling of community, a place where the school, the parents, and the students work together towards a common goal of promoting lifelong learning. In order to accomplish this, we need to recognize each student's individual needs and meet those needs by building upon his or her strengths. For students, these needs may be academic, social, emotional, or physical in nature. They may stem from the child's genetic makeup or even his or her family, community, or school environment. For some students these needs manifest into excessive absences and even truancy. Once again, this makes a case for not only understanding the causes of truancy, but the prevention and early intervention strategies for addressing truancy and absenteeism. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the causes of truancy, the prevention and early intervention strategies used in combating truancy and absenteeism.

#### Causes of Truancy

Just as every child is a unique individual, so are the causes of why he or she becomes truant. And, in most cases, it is not one single cause that leads to truancy, but rather a combination of risk factors that lead to some sort of school failure, which then leads to truancy (Reid, 1999). This section of the literature review will describe the social, psychological, and educational causes of truancy.

##### *Social*

Studies have shown that a relationship exists between truancy and social risk factors, like home environment and socioeconomic status (SES) (Reid, 1999). Home environment includes

all aspects of the home environment, such as the number of parents in the home, the types of parenting styles, and the climate of the home. To begin with, the home environment risk factors of parenting style, parental lifestyle, and family conflict will be identified as causes of truancy. Then, SES risk factors will be identified.

Parenting style, or how one parents, contributes to truancy (Dougherty, 1999). Parents who as children had bad experiences in school may not value the importance of being in school and getting school work done. They may allow their child to stay home every time the child requests to stay home. And, they may make excuses for school work not getting done. Parents who have a neglectful style of parenting are not involved in their child's education. The neglect may include not getting their child the necessary supplies in order to be able to do their work, not getting their child to school, or not coming to meetings set up to address the attendance concerns (Woolfolk, 1995). Students who are victims of parental neglect may also miss school because their parent is gone and they have to care for themselves and/or their siblings. Students who are victims of physical abuse by their parents may miss school because of injuries, thus making it critical to be able to identify the signs of abuse and neglect.

Included with home environment causes is parental lifestyle, which includes the risk factor of parents who abuse alcohol and/or drugs (Reid, 1999). Once again, these parents are unavailable to support their children in their education. These children may miss school because their parents are unable to get them to school because they are already drunk or high in the morning. Or, these children may have to stay home and take care of their younger siblings because the parent is too drunk, high, or hung over to do it him/herself. There are even occasions when these children have to stay home to take care of the drunk or high parent by getting them meals or cleaning up after them.

Family conflict is another home environment risk factor, which includes arguing, violence, divorce, and poor sibling and parent – child relationships (Reid, 1999). In these cases, the child may miss school as a direct result of any one of these situations. Or, they may fall behind in their academics because of their situation, which then causes them to avoid school.

A second social risk factor that can cause truancy is low SES (Reid, 1999). SES is defined as one's "relative standing in the society based on income, power, background, and prestige" (Woolfolk, 1999, p. 160). Although low SES is not a high risk factor in itself for truancy, when you combine low SES with other risk factors, the risk of truancy dramatically increases. These other risk factors include low self-esteem, learned helplessness, and resistance culture. Some children from families with low SES have low self-esteem because of their economic situation, which leads them to believe that they are not "good at schoolwork" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 162). These same children become "victims of learned helplessness" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 163). They see family members working hard, but never getting ahead. Soon, they come to believe that it is a hopeless situation and drop out of school, which is a normal family pattern. Woolfolk (1995) cited a study conducted by Bennett, in 1990, which reported that the school dropout rate for children from low income families is about one in four. One last social risk factor associated with low SES is resistance culture, which is defined as "group values and beliefs about refusing to adopt the behaviors and attitudes of the majority culture" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 163). This means that some low SES students will do whatever it takes to keep their group identity and not rise above poverty. They "reject the behaviors that would make them successful in school – studying, cooperating with teachers, even coming to class" (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 163).

### ***Psychological***

Some anxiety and fear is a normal part of childhood development. These feelings do not interfere with the student's everyday functioning. However, for some children their fear is a phobia regarding some specific event, person, or situation at school which is irrational and interferes with their attendance (Rettig & Crawford, 2000). School phobia is usually seen when a child first begins kindergarten or during the transition from elementary to middle school. Symptoms of school phobia include prolonged absences from school and physical outbursts. Students may complain of headaches or stomachaches to avoid going to school or to get sent home once at school.

School phobia has two origins, heredity and environment (Rettig & Crawford, 2000). Some students who are school phobic inherited this disorder through genetics, meaning that one or both parents had an anxiety disorder. Environmental factors that contribute to school phobia are family issues like death, divorce, substance abuse, child abuse, and/or bad school experiences, like being bullied. As you can see, there is some overlap here between social and psychological factors when looking at the causes of truancy and excused absences.

### ***Educational***

In order to really be able to understand absenteeism, even the school needs to be able to recognize the ways in which education itself contributes. Educational issues may include enforcement of attendance policies, teacher – student relations, student – peer relations, the rate of bullying at school, and curriculum, to name a few (Reid, 1999). Teachers and other school personnel need to be able to look at and evaluate each child's situation. Perhaps it isn't the home environment that has been impeding the child, but rather the educational environment. A teacher needs to be able to reflect on his/her style of teaching and classroom management and assess it's

effectiveness with that student who is not attending. Also, the student needs to be observed in other classrooms and on the playground to help determine the source of conflict or to identify the issues that are preventing the child from attending.

### **Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

Just as there are many causes of absenteeism and truancy, there are equally as many prevention and early intervention strategies. The difficulty comes with assessing a specific school's environment or a specific student's attendance pattern and determining which one to use since there is no magic formula (Reid, 1999). This section of the literature review describes various prevention and early intervention strategies utilized to combat absenteeism and truancy.

#### ***Well-developed policies***

According to the research, it is absolutely essential to have well-developed school policies regarding student attendance (Dougherty, 1999). And, of equal importance is that everyone, meaning teachers, parents, and students, understand the attendance policy and that the policy is consistently enforced. Attendance policies need to be reviewed periodically and revamped when daily attendance for the school begins to decline. When developing new policy, it is crucial to know what the causes of absenteeism are in that particular school or district. This would include teacher's, parent's, and student's perspectives of causes. In addition, Dougherty (1999) cited the work of Poston, Stone, and Muther, done in 1992, recommending a policy with clear definitions of excused and unexcused absences and procedures for how to deal with each type of absence.

#### ***Parent involvement***

According to the *Manual to combat truancy* (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996), parents are the most influential when it comes to getting children

to school. Therefore, it would seem then that developing a relationship with parents built on trust and respect is essential. Research supports this relationship development as well as other strategies for involving parents in order to reduce absenteeism and truancy (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). One of these strategies is communicating with every parent. Although this is an overwhelming task, especially when language can be a barrier, the study found that when schools communicated with parents via phone, mail, newsletters, or in person, attendance improved. Another strategy identified in the study as having a positive effect on attendance was having a designated contact person for parents to talk with about attendance concerns and other issues.

### ***Community involvement***

Community awareness of resources to support the parents and students exhibiting risk factors associated with truancy is another strategy (Dougherty, 1999). School professionals need to not only be aware of, but also know how to access these resources, which may include mental health counseling, parent training, or tutoring.

### ***School environment***

Students are motivated to succeed when they are surrounded by a positive school environment. Therefore, school professionals need to provide a safe environment that not only recognizes student successes, but one that challenges their individual learning style as well (Reid, 1999).

### ***Attendance incentive programs***

Studies show that schools that reward students for attendance have improved attendance records (Dougherty, 1999; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Many different models are presented in the literature; however they all have the same basic components. Students are rewarded when

they have perfect attendance for a predetermined amount of time, usually no more than a quarter or trimester, so that goals seem obtainable. The rewards vary. Some school districts enlist the help of the community by getting local restaurants to donate free meal vouchers or roller skating rinks to donate free admissions for skating sessions, while other schools create their own reward certificates for extra recess time, special recognition, and prizes like a bookmark or pencil (Haslinger, Kelly & O'Lare, 1996).

### ***Tutors and mentors***

Tutors and mentors have been used in community and school organizations for hundreds of years. However, research shows that tutors and mentors are not used as much as they could be as prevention and early intervention strategies for truancy (Reglin, 1997). Tutors assist with academic learning, whereas mentors become a student's friend and advocate. These roles would seem to meet the needs of those students with social and educational risk factors for truancy as identified in the previous section. Tutors and mentors can have an enormous impact in other areas of student's lives as well.

### ***Small groups***

Using small groups facilitated by the school professionals trained in small group therapy is another early intervention strategy for students with high rates of absenteeism and truancy. The small group experience gives the students the opportunity to identify their barriers or causes of truancy and empowers them to creatively problem solve (Baker & Jansen, 2000). Small groups often have other residual effects like teaching appropriate social skills, building relationships, and connecting with others with similar experiences.

## **Summary**

It is evident from the review of literature that there are many risk factors that contribute to the causes of high rates of student absenteeism and truancy. In fact, there are so many that a list could never identify all of them. The same is true for prevention and early intervention strategies. However, what is clear from the research is that there is no magical formula for identifying and treating all of the causes of absenteeism and truancy. The research also makes it very clear that each individual school district needs to look at the district's individual needs and most importantly the identified student's individual needs when creating a plan to combat absenteeism and truancy.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology utilized for this study. It includes a description of the subjects, as well as describes the process for selecting the subjects. Another section is devoted to the development of the survey for the study, as well as sections related to the data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the survey design.

#### **Subject Selection and Description**

The subjects of the study were selected based on this researcher's familiarity with the area and out of convenience of locality to this researcher. The subjects were 34 elementary school teachers in a school district, located in a city with a population of approximately 60,000, in west central Wisconsin. Since the district has 15 elementary schools, a sample population was selected from these schools based on the socioeconomic status of the population attending the school. Socioeconomic status was determined based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch at each particular school. Therefore, the schools selected represented the two top, the two middle, and the two low socioeconomic areas in the school district.

#### **Instrumentation**

The survey used for this study was developed by this researcher for this study (Appendix A). The questions were developed by this researcher and then refined and approved by the research adviser and the school district director and executive director of pupil services. In addition, the survey was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of

Human Subjects in Research (IRB) at the University of Wisconsin-Stout and received approval (Appendix C).

The demographic questions which include gender, age, years of teaching experience, and highest level of education completed, were asked in order to give this researcher a picture of who was participating in the survey. The questions in the survey were developed based on research regarding the causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences.

1. *Are you aware of the school district policy regarding student attendance?*
2. *If you are, does the policy clearly define what absences will be excused and what absences will be unexcused?*
3. *Does your school have a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences?*
4. *In your class, what is the most number of days that a student has missed this year?*
5. *In your opinion, which of the following contribute to truancy?*  

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>low socio-economic status</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>single parent family</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parenting style</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parental abuse of alcohol/drugs</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>child abuse/neglect</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>domestic violence</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parent-child relationships</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>learned helplessness</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>school phobia</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-teacher relations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-peer relations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>teaching styles</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>curriculum</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>attendance policies</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i>
6. *In your opinion, which of the following contribute to high rates of excused absences?*  

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>low socio-economic status</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>single parent family</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parenting style</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parental abuse of alcohol/drugs</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>child abuse/neglect</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>domestic violence</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>parent-child relationships</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>learned helplessness</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>school phobia</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-teacher relations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-peer relations</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>teaching styles</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>curriculum</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>attendance policies</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i>
7. *Does your school have prevention services to address attendance?*
8. *Does your school utilize intervention services to address truancy?*
9. *Does your school utilize intervention services to address high rates of excused absences?*

Questions one through four are specifically related to the school district's policy regarding student attendance. In questions five and six, all of the listed options are causes identified in the research. And questions seven through nine are specifically related to the services that each

school provides to prevent and treat issues of truancy and excused absences. According to the research, it is essential to know and understand each of the questions asked in the survey in order to effectively deal with these issues.

Since this instrument was designed for this study, there were no measures of validity or reliability.

### **The Data Collection**

After receiving permission from the school district's executive director of pupil services and each building principle, the data collection began. First, the survey packets for each school were assembled. The packets included the surveys, consent letters, return envelopes, collection envelopes, and a letter to each building principle. The surveys were copied onto three different sets of colored paper: blue, yellow, and buff. This was done so that this researcher could differentiate between the socioeconomic statuses of the population of the schools. The two schools with the highest percentage of children receiving free and reduced lunch received surveys copied on the blue paper. The two schools with the middle percentage of children receiving free and reduced lunch received surveys copied on yellow paper. And, the two schools with the lowest percentage of children receiving free and reduced lunch received their surveys copied on the buff colored paper. Then, the surveys were attached, with a paper clip, to the consent letters and return envelopes. The consent letter (Appendix B) provided the instructions for the survey and asked the teacher to voluntarily complete the survey. The return envelope, a number 10 business-size envelope, was provided so that confidentiality could be maintained. In addition, a large 10" by 13" manila envelope was provided to each school for collecting and storing the returned surveys. The final item in the packet was a letter addressed to each building principal regarding the instructions and timelines for the survey, as well as a thank you.

Once the packets were assembled, they were hand delivered to each school. For this survey, each building principal requested that this researcher give the packet to the building secretary for her to deliver the surveys to each teacher's mailbox. During this visit, this researcher explained the procedures for collecting the returned surveys and storing them in the provided envelope in a locked area for confidentiality. The surveys were then hand collected by this researcher one week later.

### **Data Analysis**

The data from this study was derived from the survey developed by this researcher for the study. There were 34 surveys returned of the 84 delivered. The data was analyzed with frequency counts and percentages by Christine Ness, at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, who utilized a computerized software package called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 11.0. The data was also crosstabulated to compare data between high, middle, and low school populations receiving free and reduced lunch. In addition, this researcher generated some lists of teacher responses to questions 7, 8, and 9.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this survey is that since it is being created for the study, there will be no measures of validity or reliability. Also, participants may not interpret the survey questions the same, and some participants may not even answer the questions truthfully. It is important to note that just the process of surveying changes what is actually being measured. Another limitation is that not everyone in the sample may choose to participate. And, finally since the survey is limited to a sample population in one school district, the results cannot be generalized to the population at large.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Introduction

This chapter will report the results from this study. The demographic information and item analysis will be presented. Then, the chapter will end with an analysis of the study's objectives.

#### Demographic Information

They were 84 teachers who were given the opportunity to participate in this study. Of those 84, 34 completed and returned their surveys, which is a 28.56% participation rate. Of the 34 teachers who participated, 27(79.4%) were female and 7(20.6%) were male. 17 (50%) were age 50 or older. And the remaining 50% broke down into the following age categories: 10 (29.4%) were 40-49 years old; 5 (14.7%) were 30-39 years old; and 2 (5.9%) were 20-29 years old. Also, of the 34 teachers, 25 (73.5%) had 10 or more years of teaching experience and only 6 (17.6%) had one to four years. However, the teacher's level of education seemed to be more balanced. 16 (47.1%) had a master's degree plus advanced studies and 13 (38.2%) had a bachelors degree.

Based on this demographic information, this researcher concluded that the majority of the participants in the study were female, who were age 50 or older, and had completed a masters degree or masters degree plus advanced studies.

#### Item Analysis

##### *1. Are you aware of the school district policy regarding attendance? \_\_yes\_\_no\_\_unsure*

The first question of the survey asked for the teacher's awareness of the school district policy regarding student attendance. Of the 34 teachers, 27 (79.4%) answered yes that they were

aware of their district policy. Only one (2.9%) person was not aware of the policy and six (17.6%) were unsure.

**2. If you are, does the policy clearly define what absences will be excused and what absences will be unexcused? \_\_yes \_\_no \_\_unsure**

The second question asked that only the teachers that had answered yes to question number one that they were aware of their district policy, answer question number two. Question two asked if the district policy clearly defined what absences would be excused and what absences would not be excused. Of the 34 teachers, 4 (11.8%) did not answer the question, 6 (17.6%) were not sure and 24 (70.6%) answered yes that they felt the policy clearly defined which absences would and would not be excused.

**3. Does your school have a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences?  
\_\_yes \_\_no \_\_unsure**

The third question asked the teachers if their school had a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences. 23 (67.6%) responded yes that their school had a procedure for addressing these absences and 5 (14.7%) stated no that they did not have a procedure. 6 (17.6%) were unsure.

**4. In your class, what is the most number of days that a student has missed this year?  
excused absences\_\_ unexcused absences\_\_**

Question four asked each teacher to write in the most number of days the student had missed excused and unexcused so far that school year. For excused absences, only 14 (41.2%) of the 34 teachers responded. The answers given ranged from 4 excused absences to 25 excused absences. The median score was 12.5 and the data was multimodal. For unexcused absences

only 12 (35.3%) of the teachers responded. Here the answers ranged from 0 -75 unexcused absences. However, the median score was 3.5 and the mode was 3.

**5. In your opinion, which of the following contribute to truancy?**

- low socio-economic status*       *single parent family*       *parenting style*  
 *parental abuse of alcohol/drugs*       *child abuse/neglect*       *domestic violence*  
 *parent-child relationships*       *learned helplessness*       *school phobia*  
 *student-teacher relations*       *student-peer relations*       *teaching styles*  
 *curriculum*       *attendance policies*       *other*

Question five asked the teachers to check which of the listed issues contributed to truancy. There was not one single issue that all 34 teachers agreed contributed to truancy. The results are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: Teacher's Perceptions Regarding the Causes of Truancy**

<b>Causes of Truancy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Parenting Style</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>82.4</b>
<b>Parental Abuse of Alcohol/Drugs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>64.7</b>
<b>Parent-Child Relations</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>64.7</b>
<b>Child Abuse/Neglect</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>61.8</b>
<b>Low Socioeconomic Status(SES)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>52.9</b>
<b>Learned Helplessness</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47.1</b>
<b>School Phobia</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38.2</b>
<b>Student-Peer Relations</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32.4</b>
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29.4</b>
<b>Single Parent Families</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26.5</b>
<b>Student-Teacher Relations</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20.6</b>
<b>Attendance Policies</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<b>Teaching Style</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8.8</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.9</b>

Consensus was parenting style, where 28 (82.4%) of the teachers checked yes. Actually, according to the sample of teachers in the school district, the top five reasons that children were truant from school were related to the student's home environment. They were as follows: 1) parenting style – 82.4%; 2) parental abuse of alcohol and/or drugs – 64.7%; 3) parent-child relations – 64.7%; 4) child abuse/neglect – 61.8%; and 5) low SES – 52.9%. It was interesting to note that the schools with the highest percentages of students receiving free reduced lunch and therefore having more families with low SES, did not view low SES as great as an issue as those schools with middle and high SES. The results are reported in Table 2.

***Table 2: Contributes to Truancy: Low Socioeconomic Status***

<b>Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58.3</b>
<b>Middle</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>60.0</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.7</b>

Not as many teachers contributed school issues to truancy. The results are reported in Table 3.

***Table 3: Teacher's Perceptions Regarding School Related Causes of Truancy***

<b>School Related Causes of Truancy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Student-Teacher Relations</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20.6</b>
<b>Attendance Policies</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<b>Teaching Style</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8.8</b>

6. *In your opinion, which of the following contribute to high rates of excused absences?*
- low socio-economic status*       *single parent family*       *parenting style*  
 *parental abuse of alcohol/drugs*       *child abuse/neglect*       *domestic violence*  
 *parent-child relationships*       *learned helplessness*       *school phobia*  
 *student-teacher relations*       *student-peer relations*       *teaching styles*  
 *curriculum*       *attendance policies*       *other*

Question 6 asked teachers to check the issues that contributed to high rates of excused absences. Again, there was no single item that every teacher agreed contributed to the high rates of excused absences. However, there was one issue, curriculum, that all 34 teachers agreed did not contribute. Although the issues and percentages vary a little, the categories remain the same. At the top were the issues related to the student's home environment and at the bottom were issues related to the school environment. Again, the number one issue was parenting style. These results are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4: Teacher's Perceptions Regarding High Rates of Excused Absences**

<b>Causes of High Rates of Excused Absences</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Parenting Style</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>76.5</b>
<b>Parent-Child Relations</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Low Socioeconomic Status (SES)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38.2</b>
<b>Learned Helplessness</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38.2</b>
<b>Parental Abuse of Alcohol/Drugs</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32.4</b>
<b>Child Abuse/Neglect</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26.5</b>
<b>Single Parent Families</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23.5</b>
<b>School Phobia</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17.6</b>
<b>Attendance Policies</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Student-Peer Relations</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Student-Teacher Relations</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5.9</b>
<b>Teaching Style</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**7. Does your school have prevention services to address attendance?**  
*yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services \_\_\_\_\_*

Question seven asked the teachers if their school had prevention services to address attendance. They were then asked to list those services. Of the 34 teachers in the sample population, 33 answered the yes/no/unsure portion of the question. Only 17 (51.5%) answered yes that their school utilized prevention services and 12 (35.3%) were unsure. The results are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5: Has Prevention Services to Address Attendance**

<b>HAS PREVENTION SERVICES TO ADDRESS ATTENDANCE</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	17	50.0	51.5	51.5
	no	4	11.8	12.1	63.6
	unsure	12	35.3	36.4	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

And, only 17 of the teachers listed examples of these prevention services. The responses varied and are reported in Table 6.

*Table 6: Teacher Responses to Survey Question 7*

Responses	Frequency
Parents contacted by school social worker	4
Parents contacted by teacher	3
Letter sent home	3
Parents contacted by guidance counselor	3
Attendance policy is given to parents at the beginning of the school year	2
Student referred to Needs Assessment Team	2
Students receive awards for attendance	2
Home visits	2
Parent receives phone call from office that student is absent	1
Teacher in-services	1
School Nurse contacts student and parent	1
Student/parent referred to Family Support Team	1
Parent Involvement Programs	1

8. *Does your school utilize intervention services to address truancy?*  
 yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_ *If yes, please list a few of these services* \_\_\_\_\_

Question 8 asked the teachers if their schools utilized intervention services to address truancy. For this question, all 34 teachers responded. 19 (55.9%) answered yes that their school utilized intervention services and 10 (29.4%) were unsure. The results are reported in Table 7.

*Table 7: Utilizes Intervention Services to Address Truancy*

**UTILIZES INTERVENTION SERVICES TO ADDRESS TRUANCY**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	19	55.9	55.9	55.9
no	5	14.7	14.7	70.6
unsure	10	29.4	29.4	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

The teachers were also asked to list these intervention services. Again, 17 teachers provided these examples, which are reported in Table 8.

**Table 8: Teacher Responses to Survey Question 8**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Letter sent home</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Parent receives phone call from the office regarding the student's attendance</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Home visit</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Student referred to the department of human services</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Parent-Teacher conference</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Parents contacted by the guidance counselor</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Student referred to the Needs Assessment Team</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>School personnel goes and gets the student and brings him/her back to school</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Parents contacted by the school social worker</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Student and parents referred to the Family Support Team</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Breakfast Program</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Before and after school programming</b>	<b>1</b>

**9. Does your school utilize intervention services to address high rates of excused absences?**

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services \_\_\_\_\_

And finally, question nine asked the teachers if their school utilized intervention services to address high rates of excused absences and then list those services as well. All 34 teachers responded. This time, 10 (29.4%) responded yes that their school utilized these intervention services and 16 (47.1%) were unsure. The results are reported in Table 9.

**Table 9: Utilizes Intervention Services to Address High Rates of Excused Absences**

**UTILIZES INTERVENTION SERVICES TO ADDRESS ABSENCES**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	10	29.4	29.4	29.4
no	8	23.5	23.5	52.9
unsure	16	47.1	47.1	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

For the listing portion of the question, only 10 teachers participated and provided the intervention services utilized, which are reported in Table 10.

**Table 10: Teacher Responses to Survey Question 9**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Parent-Teacher Conference</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Letter sent home</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Parents contacted by the principal</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Parents contacted by the school social worker</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Student and parent referred to the Family Support Team</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Student referred to the department of human services</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Attendance policy given to parent at the beginning of the school year</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Home visit</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Parent contacted by the guidance counselor</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>School provides parent with an alarm clock</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>School requires a doctor's note after three absences</b>	<b>1</b>

It is also worth noting that of the teachers who responded no to survey questions 7, 8, and 9, 3 (8.8%) wrote that they felt that these issues of absenteeism were not addressed or followed through with at their school.

### **Research Objectives**

Research Objective #1 – To determine elementary school teachers, in a school district in west central Wisconsin, awareness of their school district policy and procedures regarding student attendance, including excused and unexcused absences.

Survey questions 1-4 dealt with this objective.

1. *Are you aware of the school district policy regarding student attendance?*  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_\_
2. *If you are, does the policy clearly define what absences will be excused and what absences will be unexcused?*  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Does your school have a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences?*  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_\_
4. *In your class, what is the most number of days that a student has missed this year?*  
excused absences \_\_\_\_\_ unexcused absences \_\_\_\_\_

The results indicated that 79.4% of the teachers in the sample knew their district policy. In addition, 80% knew that the policy had a clear definition of what constituted excused and unexcused absences. And 67.6% of the teachers knew that their district had a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences.

Research Objective #2 – To determine the most common causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences as perceived by the elementary school teachers in a school district and west central Wisconsin.

Survey questions five and six were based on Objective 2.

5. *In your opinion, which of the following contribute to truancy?*

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>low socio-economic status</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>single parent family</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parenting style</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parental abuse of alcohol/drugs</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>child abuse/neglect</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>domestic violence</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parent-child relationships</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>learned helplessness</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>school phobia</i>     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-teacher relations</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-peer relations</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>teaching styles</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>curriculum</i>                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>attendance policies</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i>             |

6. *In your opinion, which of the following contribute to high rates of excused absences?*

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>low socio-economic status</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>single parent family</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parenting style</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parental abuse of alcohol/drugs</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>child abuse/neglect</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>domestic violence</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>parent-child relationships</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>learned helplessness</i>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>school phobia</i>     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-teacher relations</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>student-peer relations</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>teaching styles</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>curriculum</i>                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>attendance policies</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i>             |

The results indicated that the students home environment, including parenting style, parent – child relationships, parental abuse of alcohol and/or drugs, child abuse/neglect, and low SES were the most common causes of students missing school. For truancy, these five issues were identified by 50% or more of the teachers as causes. The results were reported in Table 1. For excused absences, parenting style and parent-child relations were identified by 50% or more of the teachers as causes. The results were reported in Table 4. For both categories the number one cause for each was parenting style.

Research Objective #3 – To determine the most commonly perceived truancy and high rates of excused absences and prevention and early intervention strategies utilized by the elementary schools in a district in west central Wisconsin.

Survey questions 7-9 were based on Objective #3.

7. *Does your school have prevention services to address attendance?*  
*yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services \_\_\_\_\_*
8. *Does your school utilize intervention services to address truancy?*  
*yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services \_\_\_\_\_*
9. *Does your school utilize intervention services to address high rates of excused absences?*  
*yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_ unsure \_\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services \_\_\_\_\_*

Of the teachers that answered this question, 50% or more answered yes that their school had prevention and intervention services for truancy. However, only 29.4% answered yes that their school had intervention services for high rates of excused absences. From the limited number of responses, a list was generated by this researcher. The results were reported in Tables 6, 8, and 10. The most common responses were sending home a letter, calling home, having a parent-teacher conference, going on home visits, and referring to the department of human services.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

## **Introduction**

This chapter is a conclusion to the study. It contains a discussion of the findings of the study, including a comparison between its findings and the research reported in Chapter 2 of this study. It also contains some general conclusions regarding the results. The chapter ends with recommendations regarding this study and for future studies.

## **Discussion**

Based on the study conducted by this researcher, 79.4% of the teachers in the sample population were aware of their district policy regarding student attendance. And, 80% of those same teachers reported that they felt the district policy clearly defined which absences were excused and unexcused. Also, 67.6% of the teachers reported that their school had a procedure for addressing high rates excused absences. These findings were consistent with what Dougherty (1999) reported in Chapter 2 of this study as being absolutely essential to addressing absenteeism. School districts not only need well-developed policies regarding attendance, but they also need everyone to understand and consistently enforce these policies. Although this researcher's findings show that the elementary schools, which participated in the survey, in this west central Wisconsin district have built a good foundation in order to combat truancy and high rates of excused absences, caution must be taken. The sample population was taken from six of the fifteen different elementary schools within the district. And, of the 84 teachers invited to participate, 34 completed and returned their surveys. Therefore, the sample is small and cannot be generalized to the larger population.

The results of the study showed that teachers in the sample population were aware of the social, psychological, and educational causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences. However, the frequency with which each issue was selected varied greatly. And, in reality,

according to the research from Chapter 2, all of the issues listed in questions five and six of the survey could have been selected by each teacher. For this study, the most frequently identified issues were those that were related to the student's home environment, like parenting style, parental lifestyle, and family conflict. And, parenting style was the most frequently identified cause for both truancy and high rates of excused absences. When looking at frequency, psychological issues were about in the middle and educational issues were way at the bottom, which is concerning. According to Reid (1999), in order to really address absenteeism schools need to recognize the ways in which education itself contributes to truancy and high rates of excused absences. Education regarding all of the causes of truancy would be beneficial to the sample population.

According to the data of this study, a little more than half (51.5%) of the teachers answered yes that their school had prevention services to address attendance. Of the responses given regarding these types of services, most were not prevention services but intervention. These results were reported in Table 6. The prevention services that were listed included making parents, students, and staff aware of attendance policies through the student handbooks, offering teacher in-services, parent involvement programs, and giving awards for attendance, were all recommended and supported by the research presented in Chapter 2.

As it related to truancy, 55.9% of the teachers reported that their school had intervention services. This list generated many more intervention services as reported in Table 8. However, the list was missing some services that had been identified in the previous question. For example, parent involvement programs are interventions as well as preventions. According to the *Manual to combat truancy* (1996), parents are the most influential at getting children to school. And, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) suggested having a designated contact person for

parents to talk to about attendance concerns. Unfortunately, only one teacher even identified parent involvement programs as a strategy.

Only 29.4% of the teachers reported that their school had intervention services to address high rates of excused absences. Again, the list of interventions generated was consistent with the research. Although the sample population was small and could not be generalized to the rest of the population, this researcher was concerned with the lack of preventive services identified by the sample population. Therefore, these results should be utilized with caution.

### **Conclusions**

According to this study, the sample population of teachers in a school district in west central Wisconsin were aware of their school districts policy and how it defined excused unexcused absences. Also, the teachers were aware of the social causes of truancy and high rates of excused absences. However, not as many teachers identified the psychological causes and even fewer identified the educational causes. And, only slightly more than half of the teachers stated that they were aware of their district prevention and intervention strategies for addressing truancy and high rates of excused absences. Then, some of those who answered yes that they were aware of these strategies did not list these on the survey. Others listed intervention strategies for prevention strategies. It would appear that education regarding the types and purposes of the strategies would be beneficial to the sample population and district-wide.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Study*

As it relates to the study, there are a couple of things that I would have done differently. To begin with, I believe that the study was too broad. If I were to do it differently, I would focus

on a specific category, like causes of absenteeism, prevention strategies, or intervention strategies. I would also consider doing a correlation study to look at the relationships that may or may not exist between a specific strategy and reduced rates of absenteeism.

The other change that I would make is in relation to the timing of the survey. The surveys were given with two weeks to go in the school year, and I believe that many teachers were too busy to even bother with them. I had approached the district in late February to begin the survey design process. However, the wait for their approvals was longer than I had anticipated. Final approval of the survey by the district was not granted until mid-May. Had I known or anticipated this, I would have started the process one month earlier.

#### ***School district***

The sample group appeared to know the district policies related to attendance. However, it appears that some education through an in-service and/or staff meeting regarding all of the causes of truancy and absenteeism would be beneficial. As well as some education regarding the prevention and intervention services that the district has available. At least half of the sample population reported that they were either unsure or did not have the resources identified by the other half of the population. This awareness appears needed and is essential to combating absenteeism.

#### ***Further research***

In addition to what was already recommended in the survey section, I recommend that this same survey be given to the entire district. I would also recommend a district-wide needs

assessment in order to plan for the educational in-services. And lastly, I would recommend a follow-up study after the educational in-services.

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APPENDIX A

**Survey**

TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS REGARDING TRUANCY: CAUSES AND  
PREVENTION/INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Jodi Hubbard

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Your Gender: Male \_\_\_ Female\_\_\_

Your Age: 20-29\_\_\_ 30-39\_\_\_ 40-49 \_\_\_ 50&Older\_\_\_

Years of Teaching Experience: 1-4 \_\_\_ 5-9 \_\_\_ 10 or more\_\_\_

Highest Level of Education Completed: Bachelor Degree \_\_\_ Masters Degree\_\_\_ Masters +\_\_\_

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1. Are you aware of the school district policy regarding student attendance?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_
2. If you are, does the policy clearly define what absences will be excused and what absences will be unexcused?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_
3. Does your school have a procedure for addressing high rates of excused absences?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_
4. In your class, what is the most number of days that a student has missed this year?  
excused absences \_\_\_\_\_ unexcused absences\_\_\_\_\_
5. In your opinion, which of the following contribute to truancy?  

___low socio-economic status	___single parent family	___parenting style
___parental abuse of alcohol/drugs	___child abuse/neglect	___domestic violence
___parent-child relationships	___learned helplessness	___school phobia
___student-teacher relations	___student-peer relations	___teaching styles
___curriculum	___attendance policies	___other
6. In your opinion, which of the following contribute to high rates of excused absences?  

___low socio-economic status	___single parent family	___parenting style
___parental abuse of alcohol/drugs	___child abuse/neglect	___domestic violence
___parent-child relationships	___learned helplessness	___school phobia
___student-teacher relations	___student-peer relations	___teaching styles
___curriculum	___attendance policies	___other
7. Does your school have prevention services to address attendance?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Does your school utilize intervention services to address truancy?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services\_\_\_\_\_

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9. Does your school utilize intervention services to address high rates of excused absences?  
yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ unsure\_\_\_ If yes, please list a few of these services\_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX B

**Cover Letter**

Dear Teacher:

As part of my graduate studies in the Guidance and Counseling Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, I am conducting a field study regarding teacher's perceptions of the causes of truancy and the high rates of excused absences in elementary school-age children, as well as the prevention and intervention services that your school utilizes to address these issues. For this study, I have developed the attached survey and I am asking for your help in completing it.

You are not required to complete this survey and you may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice. However, the benefit for completing this survey is that there will be a better understanding of your perceptions as to why children miss school and as to what services may benefit the students in your school district. It is not anticipated that completing this survey will present any physical, social or emotional risks to you.

All information about you, the participant, will be kept strictly confidential. Group results of this research will be written in a report, however, names and any other identifying information will not be used. Your district will be referred to as a school district in west central Wisconsin. Therefore, names should not be written on the surveys. Once you have completed the survey, please fold it and seal it in the provided envelope. Then, return the sealed envelope to the large envelope in the main office of your school. **The surveys are due Friday, May 30, 2003.**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study, please call me at (715)836-9192, or my research advisor, Dr. Amy Schlieve, at (715)232-1332. Questions about the rights of research subjects should be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, Wisconsin, 54751, phone (715)232-1126.

By returning this completed survey, you are indicating your informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study.

Thank you so much for your time, support, and commitment to education.

Sincerely,

Jodi L. Hubbard

## IRB Letter



**Stout Solutions • Research Services**  
11 Harvey Hall

University of Wisconsin-Stout  
P.O. Box 790  
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

715/232-1126  
715/232-1749 (fax)  
<http://www.uwstout.edu/rps/>

**Date:** April 30, 2003

**To:** Jodi L. Hubbard

cc: Dr. Amy Schlieve  
Psychology

**From:** Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human  
Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional  
Review Board for the Protection of Human  
Subjects in Research (IRB)

**Subject: Protection of Human Subjects--Expedited Review**

Your project, "Teacher Perceptions Regarding Truancy: Causes and Early Intervention Services," has been approved by the IRB through the expedited review process. The measures you have taken to protect human subjects are adequate to protect everyone involved, including subjects and researchers.

This project is approved through April 27, 2004. Research not completed by this date must be submitted again outlining changes, expansions, etc. Annual review and approval by the IRB is required.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

**\*NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

SF:ls