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The Relationship of Attendance (Absenteeism) to Achievement
and to *Single-Parent* and Two-Parent Home Status

by
Kristi H. Weikel

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree in the
Graduate Division of Rowan University
June 30, 1997

Approved by
M.S.T. Advisor

Date Approved

June 30, 1997

ABSTRACT

Kristi H. Weikel, *The Relationship of Attendance (Absenteeism) to Achievement and to Single-Parent and Two-Parent Home Status*, 1997, Dr. Randall S. Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a significant correlation between student attendance and overall achievement level. This study also investigated if there was a significant difference in the absentee rate of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes.

The sample in this study consisted of one hundred and thirty-five fourth grade students from an elementary school in southern New Jersey. This was the entire fourth grade population for this district. The school was located in a suburban area.

The report cards were used to determine the grade point averages for the students. Their attendance was collected from the computerized attendance record. The marital status of each student was gathered from the classroom teachers.

A Pearson R analysis was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant correlation between student attendance and overall achievement level. There was no significant correlation found between student attendance and overall achievement level.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the absentee rate of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes. There was no significant difference in the absentee rate of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes found in this study.

The results of this study did not support the two hypotheses.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Kristi H. Weikel, *The Relationship of Attendance (Absenteeism) to Achievement and to Single-Parent and Two-Parent Home Status, 1997*, Dr. Randall S. Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

Absenteeism is a problem in most schools across the United States. Studies have found that attendance and achievement are correlated. This study investigated the relationship between student attendance and overall achievement level of fourth grade students. This study also investigated the relationship between absenteeism of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes.

The results of this study found that there was no significant relationship between attendance and achievement. It also found that there was no significant relationship between absenteeism of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes.

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Chapter I

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Millions of students across America are absent from school on a daily basis. The average required attendance for students in elementary schools in New Jersey is 180 days. Across the United States of America the annual rate of absenteeism was 8 percent in 1979 and increased to 10 percent in 1994 (Herberling & Shaffer, 1995). Research has found attendance to be positively related to achievement (Herberling & Shaffer, 1995; Harte, 1995). Generally, it is assumed that students who are continually absent from school do not obtain the desirable achievement level (Dismuke, 1988; Bond and Woodall, 1993). Attending school on a regular basis is the best way to guarantee progress in education without interlude (Karlin, 1980).

The influence of the home environment can contribute to the attitude of students toward attending school. Parents play a major role in the education process of their child (Ratigan, 1993). To help reduce absenteeism, parents must be included in the role of promoting school and participating in their child's education (Ratigan, 1993). The importance of attending school must be encouraged and relayed to children through their parents to ensure them a better future (Dismuke, 1988).

The changing structure of the family in the United States might be a factor inhibiting positive attitudes toward education (Barney & Koford, 1987). In the United States nearly one in four of all family households with children under 18 are headed

by a single parents (The American School Board Journal, 1995). The single-parent family is one of the greatest single factors that affects and correlates with high absenteeism (Harte, 1995).

Significance of the Study

Student absenteeism affects the whole school operation (Ratigan, 1993). Teachers have to interrupt valuable instruction time to gather the materials the absent students have missed to bring them to the same level as the rest of the class. It is important for teachers to let students who have been absent know that they have been missed and that they must make up the work (Ratigan, 1993). This sends a message to students and parents that attending school is important. Students who are habitually absent from school do not receive the important information taught during the classroom lectures and daily assignments. When children complete assignments without in-class instruction due to absenteeism they might not receive adequate help to learn the task appropriately (Dismuke, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

This researcher observed that on any given day approximately 5 percent of the total student body from the suburban school was absent. Due to the consistent rate of absenteeism, this researcher questioned what effect the high absenteeism had on the overall academic achievement of the students in this school.

The purpose of this study was to investigate:

- 1) If there was a significant correlation between school attendance and overall achievement level for students.

- 2) If there was a significant difference in attendance between students from single-parent homes and two-parent homes.

Hypothesis

The hypotheses tested in this study were as follows:

- 1) Students with a lower absentee rate will have a greater overall achievement level than students with a higher absentee rate.
- 2) Students from single-parent homes will have a greater average absence rate than students from two-parent homes.

Limitations

There were some limitations that might have influenced the results of this study.

- 4) The population was limited to a small urban school in southern New Jersey. This is not a representation of schools in New Jersey.
- 3) The sample size was restricted to the fourth grade level only and therefore not a representative of the entire school.
- 3) The reasons for the absences of the students were unknown therefore the results of the study might have been different if the reasons were taken into account if absences were due to medical problems that would not allow the student to attend school.
- 4) Single-parent homes having a boy/girlfriend living in the home was not considered a two-parent home, which would have changed the ratio of single-parent, and two-parent homes in the study.
- 5) The grades and attendance records of the students were measured from the beginning of the year to the end of the third marking period. Including the fourth marking period might have changed the results of the study.

Definition of Terms

The researcher has defined specific meanings to the following terms:

Attendance- Attendance is defined as the number of days a student is present at school.

Absence (Absenteeism)- Absence (Absenteeism) is defined as the failure of a student to be physically present at school. This includes an excused absence (a note from a doctor, death in the immediate family, a serious illness in the family, or religious holiday) or an unexcused absence.

Higher absentee rate- Higher absentee rate is defined as ten percent or more days absent from the total number of days accounted at the end of the third marking period.

Lower absentee rate- Lower absentee rate is defined as less than ten percent days absent from the total number of days accounted at the end of the third marking period.

Overall achievement level- Overall achievement level is defined as the cumulative grade point average of a student is defined as the calculated average of grades from all subject areas for the first three marking periods.

Single-parent family- The single-parent family or home is defined as having only one parent/guardian living at the home of the student. This does not include boyfriends or girlfriends of the parent or guardian.

Two-parent family- The two-parent family or home is defined as having two parents/guardians (married) living at the home (either natural or step parents), where the student lives.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The researcher examined the possible effects of attendance and academic achievement. The study tested whether the students with a lower absentee rate will have a greater overall achievement level than the students with a higher absentee rate. Secondly, the study tested whether the students from single-parent homes would have an average absence rate that is greater than the students from two-parent homes.

Chapter II is a review of literature looking at absenteeism, the responsibilities of the school, factors effecting absenteeism, parental influences, and single-parent influences that effect absenteeism and achievement.

Absenteeism

Attendance is a major problem in most schools (Black, 1996). Schools have a difficult chore keeping children interested in staying in school. In most schools, 10 percent of the kids on any given school day are habitually absent, and most of the time their absences are unexcused (Black, 1996). Since 1979 the rate at which children are absent from school has continued to rise from 8% nationally to 10% in 1994 (Black, 1996). This increasing rate of absenteeism has effected the academic achievement of students in our schools. If children are not in school they do not learn. When they do not

learn, their chances for academic achievement are severely put at risk (Herbling & Shaffer, 1995). Thus, when children are frequently absent their grade point averages reflect this behavior. If absenteeism is lowered, learning can only climb (Kube & Ratigan, 1991). It has been found that attendance is positively and significantly related to student performance (Carruthers, Williams & others, 1993).

The Responsibilities of Schools

With the pressures of society the roles of the school have changed. They are not just institutes for learning basic academics. Schools must provide services to deal with the changes in society. Schools are now responsible for lowering the rates of absenteeism. Students can not learn when they are absent from the classroom, so school leaders have a responsibility to see that everything is done to keep students in class (Kube & Ratigan, 1991). If part of the jobs of professional educators is to teach the concept of responsibility, then they must do all they can to see to it that students attend school regularly (Karlin, 1980).

Some schools have adopted special incentive programs to keep students in the schools. One school in Iowa increased efforts to verify all absences with parents. They distributed individual student attendance reports at parent-teacher conferences. To remind parents of the strong relationship between regular attendance and academic success, they have added attendance information to the midterm progress reports. These reports are sent to all students each grading period. After implementation of these reports student achievement had greatly improved because of the efforts of the school (Kube & Ratigan, 1991).

Another school in West Columbia, South Carolina adopted a program and based the new strategy on three basic assumptions about student responsibilities: "1)

Students have to show up for school; 2) they must do their work; 3) they have to behave. The attendance incentive program touched off a flurry of in-school activities and at-home visits. School newsletters, mailed weekly to each of our students' homes, emphasized the importance of attendance. Communication to parents was key" (Bond & Woodwall, pg. 25-26, 1993). The program was successful in decreasing the rate of absenteeism (Bond & Woodwall, 1993).

In Maryland, the school district set up Attendance Courts that called on the director of the parent's academy to help parents of truants learn how to help their children at home (Trueman, 1996). This school took the responsibility of teaching children how to cope with family strife. They have set up counseling for parents to come to school for parenting classes, drug awareness programs, and workshops on communicating with children (Trueman, 1996). It is by addressing such family problems that the Attendance Court has improved attendance within the school district (Trueman, 1996).

Parents are the schools allies. They play an important part in developing a child's attitude toward attending school. "Improving attendance must be a top priority, not just another administrative concern" (Ratigan, 1993). From this basic premise, in order for schools to solve the problem of excessive absenteeism, the administration, teachers, parents, students, secretaries, clerks, board of education member, and all other concerned community groups must form political alliance with the sole intent of improving student attendance (Ratigan, 1993). Researchers have compiled a list of seven recommendations that have helped school districts decrease their absentee rates:

- ✓ Be responsible for their students daily attendance
- ✓ Form an alliance with teachers committed to reducing excessive absences

- ✍ Work with the school to attain the highest possible attendance rate for their student
- ✍ Recognize that learning opportunities missed due to absences can be exactly duplicated later in time
- ✍ Inform the school attendance office when students are absent
- ✍ Support the school in its efforts to maximize student learning.” (Ratigan, 1993)

Factors effecting absenteeism

Absenteeism is a multi-faced, multi-layered problem. Some students deliberately absent themselves from specific classes, while others miss entire days or weeks of school (NJEA Review, 1989). The reasons for absenteeism vary depending on the students. Surveys have pinpointed causes ranging from difficulties at home to inability to get along with teachers, administrators, or other students (NJEA Review, 1989). Many tend to think that when the youngest students are absent it is because they have a cold, or perhaps a common childhood disease such as the chicken pox or measles. Of course, many students are absent from school for these and other acceptable reasons. One counselor investigated the reasons behind his absences of the elementary students. He concentrated on students who had missed more than 10 days in the first semester. He found all sorts of truancy problems, such as kids whose parents kept them home to baby-sit a younger brother or sister (Black, 1996).

There is an association between attendance and academic performance. It was revealed in the performance of the CAT tests from a study where students with a higher absentee rate scored lower on the CAT test (Carruther, Williams & others, 1993). It can matter a great deal for the long-term academic prospect of a child whether they attend school regularly and are well behaved. Poor achievement patterns established early in the school career of a child tend to persist if they are not recognized and changed (Alexander, Entwisle, Sundius & Thompson, 1992). It is very common for uninterested and unmotivated students to receive failing grades as a

result of doing little or no work. It makes missing school even more inviting (Karlin, 1980). Negative personal characteristics and lack of development of social skills may account in some part for the impact of peer pressure and peer influence on student absenteeism. In schools where the subculture of a student places little or no value on regular attendance, peers may influence their behavioral choices for attending school (Harte, 1995).

Parental Influence

Parents play an important part in the education process. Participation in the education of their child can foster student achievement (Ratigan, 1993).

New Jersey State law requires:

Every parent, guardian, or other person having custody and control of a child between the ages of six and sixteen years shall cause such child regularly to attend public schools of the district or a day school in which there is given instruction equivalent to that provided in the public schools for children of similar grades and attainments or to receive equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school (NJEA Review, pg. 13, 1989).

Such an approach is needed to promote student achievement, formulate a sense of accomplishment, and create self-esteem. By enforcing such a law educators can provide the necessary education and training to assist youth to become productive members of society. The law helps develop important socialization skills and developmental skills necessary to handle life challenges. It could also decrease the opportunity/probability for involvement in delinquent or anti-social behavior (NJEA Review, 1989).

Research shows us that time and time again, that the attitudes of children toward school, their achievement, attendance, motivation, self-concept, and behaviors are directly influenced by the attitudes of their parents toward learning and school

("Extending the Learning Community," 1989). Factors emanating from the home environment of the student continue to be cited as one of the leading contributors to absenteeism and one of the greatest influences on school attendance (Harte, 1995). It is clear from research that a variety of home factors either individually or in the aggregate have a direct influence on this particular aspect of the performance of students (Harte, 1995). However, it must be kept in mind that the home is a contributor only and is only one of the agencies interacting in attendance (Harte, 1995).

Some parents describe school as a place where children should follow rules, obey the teacher, sit still, and the like, while others portray the school as a more responsive environment where students can exercise initiative and effect their own progress (Alexander, Entwisle, Sundius & Thompson, 1992). Young children are dependent on their parents for getting them to school and getting them there on time. Also, primary school children respond strongly to expectations of their parents for their school conduct, and their conduct in turn effects their performance in reading and mathematics (Alexander, Entwisle, Sundius & Thompson, 1992).

Differences in family composition are known to effect attendance patterns and manners. In a comprehensive review of research on one-parent households, Hetherington, Camarea, and Featherman (1980) found that children from single-mother households had higher rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and truancy and had more disruptive classroom behaviors, problem referrals, and suspensions than did children from two-parent homes (Alexander, Entwisle, Sundius & Thompson, 1992).

Another cause of poor attendance is a lack of parental concern or indeed, actual permission for children to remain at home for very minor reasons. For whatever

reasons, these students are not attending school, are not receiving continuous, uninterrupted instruction, and are not pursuing the best means to achieve their potential (Karlin, 1980). Marital discord and divorce, high rates of mobility, and high rates of teenage pregnancy contribute to the greatest single factors that correlate with high absenteeism, i.e., the single parent family (Harte, 1995).

Single-Parent Influence

Nearly one in every four households with children under 18 is headed by a single-parent ("A Single Parent Heads One in Four Families", 1995). The composition of American families has significantly changed over the years. Since 1970, an increase from only thirteen percent to over thirty-three percent of the families are headed by a single parent (Cuccaro, 1994). The number of single-parent families jumped from 3.8 million in 1970 to 10.9 million in 1994 (Cuccaro, 1994). The tremendous increase in single-parent families has had a major impact on the day-to-day life experiences of children, parents and society at large (Cuccaro, 1994).

By the year 2000, more than fifty percent of the children of America may live in single-parent families (Shreeve, Williams & others, 1985). Ignoring the impact of single parent-hood on school performance, or compartmentalizing solutions through a series of unrelated school agencies, will not meet the real needs of children from these families. Without an urgent effort by educators to identify and overcome the negative effects of single-parent families, a generation of children seems destined to achieve significantly less than they are capable of achieving (Shreeve, Williams & others, 1985). Educators must help its community avoid such a problem (Ratigan, 1993; Shreeve, Williams & others, 1985).

The majority of parents work, whether in a one- or two-parent home. Taking off from work is especially difficult for a single parent whose job may be jeopardized by days off for children's need and illnesses (Barney & Koford, 1987). The children are the ones who suffer because they need the support and encouragement from their parents. One problem faced with being a single parent is not having the time to attend all the school functions. Statistical analysis indicated that at each grade level students from single-parent families were absent from school a significantly greater number of times than students from two-parent families from a study addressing the relationship of living in a single-parent family and the school performance of an elementary age students (Googins, 1995).

Teachers rate children from a one-parent home more negatively on homework completion and has less effective in study skills than children from a two-parent home (Alexander, Entwisle, Sundius & Thompson, 1992). This is often due to the fact that students from single-parent families lack the amount of time to be involved with their child's school work due to the requirements of their jobs. It has been found that parents who are more actively involved in schools and their child's work have an absentee rate that is low (Bond & Woodwall, 1993).

Many teachers believe that children who come from single parent homes are at a disadvantage. The National Association of Elementary School Principals in 1989 conducted a survey to determine how well students from single-parent homes did in schools on a national level. Generally, 72% of the principals found that children from single-parent homes are at a disadvantage. The survey showed that the academic achievement level of single-parent homes was 97% lower than peers from two-parent homes. Fifty-eight percent of the single-parents wanted to be involved in their child's

education but did not have the time. The survey did find that students from single-parent homes received just as much help with their homework as students from two-parent homes. ("Meeting the Needs of Children in Single-Parent Families", 1989)

In 1984 the Eastern Washington University Department of Education conducted research to see if single-parent students achieved lower achievement scores than two-parent students. The homogeneous population of 7th through 12th grade students were administered the California Achievement Tests. A collection of grade point averages was also used in the study. In every instance but one, single-parent students scored lower than their two-parent counterparts (Shreeve, Williams & other, 1985).

In 1977 Mary G. Conyers compared schools success of students from conventional and broken homes. She found "the median absence rate was four days the first two years and three the next for those living in conventionally structured homes; 11 the first two years and 10 the third for those in unconventionally structured circumstances. The means also showed consistency, being 6.6, 6.4, and 5.5 days for those living with both natural parents and 13.0, 13.2, and 13.5 days for their counterparts. For those living in conventional homes, the median grade-point was 2.25 the first year and 2.5 the other two. Means were 2.18, 2.42, and 2.46. For those students not living with natural parents, the median grade was 1.71 the first year, followed by 1.80 and 1.78" (Conyers, pg. 647, 1977). It has also shown that parental influence and marital status can effect the attendance rate of children (Conyers, 1977).

Chapter III

PROCEDURE AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The researcher examined the correlational effects of attendance and academic achievement. The study tested whether the students with a lower absentee rate will have a greater overall achievement level than the students with a higher *absentee* rate. Furthermore, the study tested whether the students from single-parent homes will have an average absence rate that is greater than the students from two-parent homes.

Chapter III describes the sample, describes the procedures used to gather the data for the study, and explains the measurements used for this study.

Sample

The population of this study was the children who attended a public elementary school in a suburban school district in southern New Jersey. It is a lower-middle class community. There is a mix of blue- and white-collar workers. The sample chosen for this study were the students in the fourth grade from Maple Shade, New Jersey. The sample consisted of one hundred thirty-five fourth grade children. This was the entire fourth grade body within the school district. The children were between nine and eleven years old. The sample contained fifty-six females and

seventy-nine males. The students were enrolled in the district for the 1996 - 1997 school term.

Research and Design Procedure

A conference was held between the researcher and the principal at the elementary school to address the purpose of the research. A letter was drafted to confirm the verbal agreement made by the principal and researcher to grant permission for the study. (see appendix)

The researcher distributed a letter requesting the classroom teachers to identify the parental living status of each student. The researcher asked the classroom teachers for the information about the parents of the students. This information was more recent and accurate than the permanent record files. With the information gathered, the researcher separated the children into single and two parent children.

The attendance of the students was compiled from the computerized attendance program used by the school. The attendance data was obtained from the master attendance records book kept in the main office of the school. This cumulative report yielded the total number of possible days present for each student, the total days present the total days absent, and the total days tardy. The attendance dates collected were from the first day of school until the end of the third marking period. The end of the third marking period was April 16, 1997. Only the days present and days absent were considered in this study.

The overall achievement levels of the students were gathered from their interim reports. Copies of the interim reports for each student was collected from each

fourth grade teacher. The grades from the first three marking periods were averaged to find the average cumulative grade point average for each fourth grade student.

After all the data was collected for each student the information was sorted and compared. To find the relationship between lower absentee rate and greater overall academic achievement levels a Pearson R correlation analysis was used. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine there was a significant difference between the absentee rate of students from single parent homes versus two parent homes.

Description of Instruments

Each of the classroom teachers from the fourth grade used their daily lunch list to record whether or not the students had parents that were single (one parent in household) or married (two parents in household).

The school used a computer based attendance program. The print out sheet was used for the attendance records. Only the days absent were considered in the study. The report cards were used to calculate the overall achievement level. Only marking periods one, two, and three were taken into account for the overall achievement level due to the studies time constraints. Each grade given on the report card was assigned a numerical value. An A was assigned 4.0 points; an A- 3.8 points; a B+ 3.5 points; a B 3.0 points; a B- 2.8 points; a C+ 2.5 points; a C 2.0 points, a C- 1.8 points; a D+ 1.5 points; a D 1.0 points; an F 0.0 points. An average grade was calculated and assigned to each student.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Research has found attendance to be positively related to achievement (Herbling & Shaffer, 1995; Harte, 1995). The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant correlation between school attendance and overall achievement level. The study also tested whether the students who came from two-parent homes had a lower absentee rate than the students whom came from single-parent homes.

Chapter IV states the results of the study using four well-defined operations. The first operation was the mean score analysis followed by the standard deviation of both the numbers of days absent and the grade point averages for each student. The third operation was a Pearson R correlation analysis used determined to if there was a statistical significant relation between school attendance and overall achievement level of the students. A fourth operation was a Mann-Whitney U test. The test determined whether there was a statistical significant difference between the absentee rate of students from single parent homes versus students from two-parent homes.

Analysis of Data

The raw data obtained from student report cards was organized and grade point averages were calculated. The number of days absent was determined from the computerized attendance records.

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation for the grade point averages and the number of days absent for the entire sample. The sample consisted of 135 students from the fourth grade. The mean for grade point averages was 3.30 and the standard deviation was 0.552. The mean for the numbers of days absent was 6.23 and the standard deviation was 6.136.

table 1

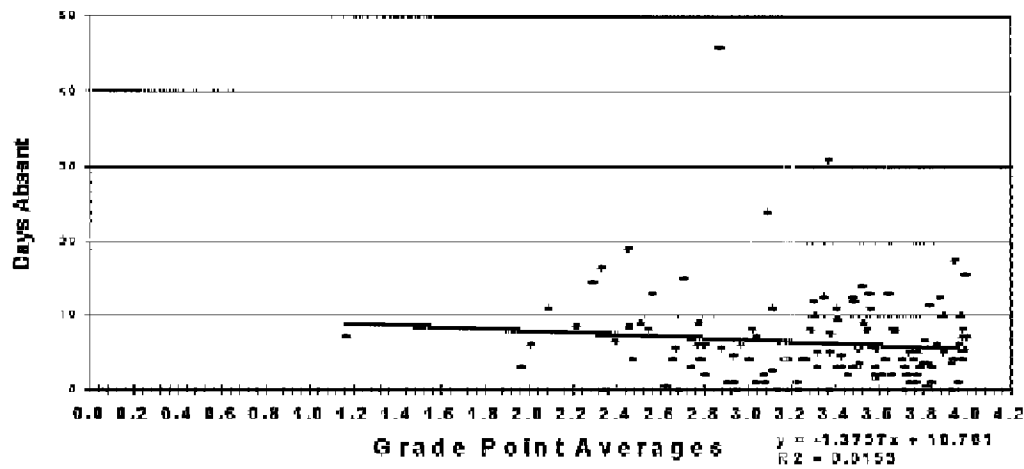
Mean and Standard Deviation
Entire Sample of 135 Students

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Grade Point Average	3.30	0.552
Numbers of Days Absent	6.23	6.136

Pearson R (r) was calculated to test the hypothesis to determine if there was a significant relationship between absenteeism and overall achievement level. Using a non-directional test with a .05 significance level, the result was $r = -.0124$. This result does not fall in the critical region. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported and it was concluded that there is not a statistically significant correlation between school attendance and overall achievement level. The results were placed on a scatter plot (see figure 1) showing a negative slope of 1.3757. The scatter plot shows that there is a negative relationship between days absent and grade point averages.

figure 1

Grade Point Averages and Days Absent



The coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.0153$ or 1.5%, means that 1.5% of grade point averages were effected by days absent.

The total number of students from the sample who lived in two-parent homes was 108. The mean grade point average for students who live in a two-parent home was 3.37. The standard deviation was 0.527. The mean number of days absent was 6.13. The standard deviation was 5.302. (see table 2.)

table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation Students from Two-Parent Homes

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Grade Point Average	3.35	0.527
Numbers of Days Absent	6.13	5.302

The total number of students who lived in a single-parent home was 27. The mean score for grade point averages was 3.07. The standard deviation was 0.603. The mean for number of days absent was 6.593. The standard deviation was 8.841. (see table 3.)

table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation
Students from Single-Parent Homes

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Grade Point Average	3.07	0.603
Numbers of Days Absent	6.593	8.841

The Mann-Whitney U test was calculated to test the hypothesis to determine if there was a significant relationship between the absentee rates of students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test was $U = 1455$. The z-score was calculated from the normal approximation formula and resulted in $z = -0.0165$. This does not fall within the critical region of ± 1.96 . Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported and it was concluded that there was not a statistical significant difference in school attendance between students from single-parent homes and two-parent homes.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Many factors contribute to the reasons why students do not attend school. Attending school plays an important part in the development of a child both intellectually and socially. Keeping children in school and attending school on a regular basis is a difficult task for many school districts. The changing structure of the family has been a factor that school districts need to deal with. Academics can not be the only learning that transpires in schools. In today's society children have more demands outside of school than in the past. Academic studies are often neglected resulting in lower achievement levels.

Chapter V summarizes the study, formulates conclusions and proposes recommendations for further research on this topic.

Summary of the Problem

Due to the consistent rate of absenteeism, the researcher questioned the effect of absenteeism and achievement. This study investigated if there was a significant relation between attendance and achievement for students. This study also investigated if there was a significant difference in attendance between students from single-parent homes and two-parent homes.

Summary of the Hypothesis

The first research hypothesis stated that students with a lower absentee rate will have a greater overall achievement level than students with a higher absentee rate. The second research hypothesis stated that students from single-parent homes will have a greater average absence rate than students from two-parent homes.

Summary of the Procedure

One hundred and thirty-five fourth grader children participated in this study. The public elementary school was located in a suburban school district in southern New Jersey.

Information about the parental marital status of each student was obtained from the fourth grade classroom teachers. The grades were gathered from the report cards of each student from the first three marking periods of the 1996-1997 school year. The overall achievement levels were calculated for each student according to the instrument developed by the researcher.

To find the relationship between overall achievement level and absenteeism a Pearson R correlation analysis was used. To find the difference in the rate of absenteeism from students from single-parent homes versus students from two-parent homes a Mann-Whitney U test was used.

Summary of the Findings

The result of the Pearson R correlation indicated that there was not a statistically significant correlation between school attendance and overall achievement level. The $r = -0.0124$ does not fall in the critical region to make the correlation

significant. The Mann-Whitney U test resulted in a z-score of -0.0165 . This result does not fall within the critical region for the difference in absentee rate between students from single-parent homes versus two-parent homes was not statistically significant.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that students with a lower absentee rate will have a greater overall achievement level than students with a higher absentee rate was not supported by the data. Therefore, the hypothesis was not accepted. The second hypothesis that students from single-parent homes will have a greater average absence rate than students from two-parent homes was not supported by the data. This hypothesis was not accepted. As a result from this study both hypotheses were not supported when applied to this sample of children. It would be concluded that absenteeism does not have a significant correlation with overall achievement level in this sample of children. It would also be concluded that the absentee rate of single-parent students is not significantly different from the absentee rate of students from two-parent homes.

Implications and Recommendations

The researcher did not find a significant relation between attendance and overall achievement level. The findings in the analysis of data did show that the average grade point average for students from two-parent homes was higher than students from single-parent homes, but the correlation was not statistically significant. The findings of this study do not concur with many of the authors cited in the review of related literature.

This study did not find students from two-parent homes to have a lower absentee rate than students from single-parent homes. In the analysis of findings the difference between the average numbers of days absent for the two types of students was about one day. This is not a significant difference.

Many of the limitations discussed in the beginning of this study might have influenced the results of this study. This study was limited to the fourth grade level only and is not a representation of the school. The results of this study would not be a valid representation for all schools in New Jersey. The results of the study might have been different if the reasons for the absences had been a factor in the study. Including the fourth marking period might have changed the results of the study.

It is the belief of this researcher that there is a great need for further investigation into the area of absenteeism and academic achievement. According to many researchers the interest of students in school lessens as students get older.

Based on this study, the following recommendations for further study are suggested:

- 1) A larger sample should be used to better insure more reliable results.
- 2) The study should be conducted in lower and higher grades to determine if there is a greater significant correlation.
- 3) The study should be conducted in a variety of school districts located throughout New Jersey to insure a more representative population.
- 4) The socio-economic status of the families should be considered to see if there is a relationship with socio-economic status and absenteeism.

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Appendix
Letter of Approval for Study

Kristi H. Weikel

*13 Stone Mountain Lane
Marlton, NJ 08053*

February 6, 1997

Betty Poley, Principal
Steinhauer Elementary School
N. Chestnut Avenue
Maple Shade, NJ 08052

Dear Mrs. Poley,

This is to confirm our verbal agreement to use information concerning students from the Steinhauer Elementary School for my thesis. The information gathered will be used in strict confidence to protect the privacy of the children and their families. My thesis topic entails students' attendance in relation to achievement. I will also analyze the students' parental marital status in relationship to student absenteeism.

I look forward to my research and want to thank you for all your support.

Very truly yours,

Kristi Weikel

Kristi Weikel

I grant Kristi Weikel permission to conduct research for her thesis in the Steinhauer Elementary School.

Betty Poley
Betty Poley, Principal

2/6/97
Date

VITA

Name:	Kristi H. Weikel
Date & Place of Birth:	September 1, 1973 Camden, New Jersey
Elementary School:	Jaggard School Marlton, New Jersey
Middle School:	Marlton Middle School Marlton, New Jersey
High School:	Cherokee High School Marlton, New Jersey
College:	University of Scranton Scranton, Pennsylvania B.S. Business Management
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