A Collaborative & Strategic Approach To Improve School Achievement Through Effective Attendance/Truancy Policies And Procedures

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A COLLABORATIVE & STRATEGIC APPROACH TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE ATTENDANCE/TRUANCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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DIGITAL COMMONS DOCUMENT ORIGINATION STATEMENT

This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership Ed.D. is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the Program Evaluation candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the Change Leadership Plan candidates a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the Policy Advocacy Document candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

Works Cited


ABSTRACT

The purpose of this program evaluation was to review the current attendance/truancy policies and procedures of Mountain West High School (MWHS), identify gaps and concerns, analyze data, and make actionable recommendations that would foster improvement in academic achievement through attendance efforts. A growing body of research indicates that missing 10% or more of the school places students at risk of failing general education courses, having low grade point averages (GPA), and performing poorly on standardized testing in relation to peers with “good” attendance (i.e., 95% average daily attendance [ADA] or better). In addition, students who miss this much school time also are shown to be more at risk for juvenile crime and loss of opportunities (Alabaso, Sprick, & Yore, 2015; Isquierdo, 2004; Roby, 2003). Moreover, several states in America, including Illinois, incorporate ADA in their school funding formula; thus, educational leaders must address attendance in order to maximize resources received from the state.
PREFACE

Early in the summer of 2015, I assumed a new role as assistant principal of Mountain West High School (MWHS); having previously served as an advanced placement (AP) consultant to the district in 2014. I joined a school going through major changes in culture and academic expectations. Before the current visionary and passionate principal arrived, the school had few AP opportunities, the graduation rate was in the mid 80s, and low academic expectations were the norm (IIRC, 2015). Within three years of his tenure at MWHS, however, AP opportunities rose dramatically—36 students were enrolled in an AP course in 2011, while 205 students were in 2015. In addition, 54 AP exams were taken by students in 2011, and only 8 AP courses were offered; in 2015, 17 AP courses were offered and 409 exams taken. What is more, in 2015, the graduation rate shot up to 97%. With all of those accomplishments, the school was named the most improved high school in the state of Illinois and one of the top high schools in America by the three major ranking organizations: US News & World Report, Newsweek, and the Washington Post. Having experienced this, I thought everything was perfect and nothing needed changing; however, when analyzing average daily attendance (ADA) over the past few years and seeing the average performances on standardized testing, I identified an issue that required further exploration.

The ADA at MWHS had been decreasing by about 1% for each of the last three years, to an all-time low of 90%. In addition, the percent of chronically absent students had been rising by 2%, to an all-time high of 6.3% (IIRC, 2015). Furthermore, performance on standardized tests by a student cohort that has taken all of the examinations revealed alarming statistics: only 42% of students who took the Partnership
for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in 2015 met or exceeded standards in English language arts (ELA), and of the 11 Black or Latino students who took the PARCC examination (out of 83 total), none met the standard.

The 2015 PARCC assessment scores set a new baseline. A trend line of information will be available in the fall of 2016 after the next administration of the PARCC assessment (IIRC, 2015). Moreover, only 50% of students on the same cohort scored a 21 or higher on the ACT, and just 40% met grade-level expectations in the Northwest Education Assessment (NWEA)/Measure of Academic Proficiency (MAP) examination.

In addition to education concerns, the school faced financial issues. With the budget crisis in the state and the possibility of a property tax freeze in the community, no “new” money would be coming in. As a result, current and local resources needed to be maximized and sustained.

This is concerning for two reasons. First, the demographics of the school have been changing dramatically over the last few years. Minority students, especially those who are Latino or Black, have been increasing by 2% over the last several years. Today, 27% of the student population are minority students; five years ago, that number was only 10% (IIRC, 2015). This change in demographics may be exposing an achievement/opportunity gap, never really seen or dealt with before, since the state has adopted a new assessment. Thus, it is invaluable to investigate possible causes of underperformance.

Second, the academic success of students at MWHS has been due in large part to the work of specialists, consultants, and coaches who were hired. But, with no new
money coming in, those services may cease to exist. Trends require actions, and here is an issue I sought to improve.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. iv
PREFACE ..................................................................................................................... v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................. VIII
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... xi
LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................... xii
SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................ 1
  Purpose of Evaluation ............................................................................................... 1
  Rationale ................................................................................................................... 5
  Goal .......................................................................................................................... 7
  Research Question ................................................................................................... 8
    Primary Research Questions .................................................................................. 8
    Secondary Research Questions ............................................................................ 9
SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................. 10
  History of Compulsory Attendance ....................................................................... 10
  School Funding and Attendance ............................................................................ 11
  Student Achievement and Attendance .................................................................. 15
  School Policies and Attendance ............................................................................. 16
  Factors Beyond School Control Affecting Student Attendance .............................. 21
    Social Factors ...................................................................................................... 21
    Economic Factors ................................................................................................ 21
    Home Background Factors .................................................................................. 22
    Community Factors ............................................................................................. 22
    Psychological and Individual Factors ................................................................... 22
    Institutional Factors ............................................................................................ 23
  Every Student, Every Day: A Virtual Summit on Addressing and Eliminating Chronic
  Absenteeism .............................................................................................................. 23
SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY ....................................................................... 25
  Research Design Overview ..................................................................................... 25
  Participants .............................................................................................................. 27
  Data Gathering Techniques .................................................................................... 29
  Data Analysis Techniques ....................................................................................... 31
SECTION FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS .......................................... 34
Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool Analysis Findings & Interpretations ... 34
Defining Respondents ........................................................................................................... 34
Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Survey Findings & Interpretations ....................37
Defining Respondents ........................................................................................................... 37
Stakeholders Interviews Findings & Interpretations ................................................................. 39
Defining Respondents ........................................................................................................... 39
Focus Group Interview Findings & Interpretations ................................................................ 40
Defining respondents ............................................................................................................. 40
Quantitative Data Findings & Interpretations ....................................................................... 43
Defining Respondents ........................................................................................................... 43
Unintended Results ................................................................................................................ 47
Daily, Weekly, and Monthly Documentation of ADA and Absences ....................................... 47
SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS ...................................................... 52
Judgment ................................................................................................................................ 52
How is attendance/absenteeism addressed at MWHS? ......................................................... 52
What are the current attendance policies and procedures at MWHS? ................................. 53
How well are the policies and procedures known and understood by all stakeholders? ...... 53
How is attendance monitored? .............................................................................................. 54
How are students with good ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test
scores? .................................................................................................................................. 54
How are students with poor ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test
scores? .................................................................................................................................. 55
How much funding is MWHS subject to gaining or losing, according to its ADA? ............ 55
Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 56
REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 51
APPENDIX A: ATTENDANCE TEAM TASK FORCE (ATTF) INVITATION .............................. 51
APPENDIX B: ANNOUNCEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN VOLUNTARY SURVEY ................. 54
APPENDIX C: SURVEY FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTED BY GOOGLE FORMS
.............................................................................................................................................. 55
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS: STUDENTS,
TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS, BOARD MEMBERS, POLITICIANS AND
LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS ......................................................................................................... 56
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS: INTERVIEWS ............ 57
APPENDIX F: FOLLOW-UP LETTER OF SURVEY FOR INTERVIEWS &
ANNOUNCEMENT .................................................................................................................. 59
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Survey ........................................ 38
Table 2. IIRC ADA and chronically absent student rates ........................................... 48
Table 3. Weekly excused/unexcused tardy data per student ....................................... 49
Table 4: Daily, weekly, and monthly grade-level ADA data ....................................... 50
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Effectiveness Tool Survey. .......................... 35
Figure 2. Survey respondents’ identified roles. .............................................................................. 37
Figure 3. Stakeholders/interviewees. ................................................................................................. 39
Figure 4. PARCC ELA data based on ADA. ..................................................................................... 43
Figure 5. NWEA/MAP reading results based on ADA. ................................................................. 44
Figure 6. ACT scores based on ADA. .............................................................................................. 45
Figure 7. GPA of students with 95% or higher ADA................................................................. 46
Figure 8. Pass/fail results among students with 95% or higher ADA....................................... 47
SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Evaluation

Since compulsory attendance became law starting in the mid to late 1600s in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and in the state of Illinois in 1883, schools have faced challenges in getting students to attend on a regular basis (ISBE, 2004; Katz, 1975). One hundred years ago, many students did not come to school because of work obligations, poor sanitary conditions, or lack of equitable access to the public educational system. Today, many of those challenges have been overcome, but there is more work to be done, as noted by Balfanz and Chang (2013):

Nationwide, 5–7.5 million students are chronically absent each year, a problem that contributes to higher dropout rates and wider achievement gaps. We know that more than a million teenagers drop out of high school each year in the United States, and millions more fail to develop the language and learning skills needed to sustain themselves as adults, let alone live to their full potential. (p. 1)

In today’s educational environment, where local and federal laws are obligating schools to close the achievement/opportunity gap and improve standardized test scores, schools are putting attendance issues and chronic absenteeism (a term defined differently from state to state) aside.

Chronically absent students are pupils who have missed at least 10% of school days—whether excused or unexcused—in a year. This equates to 18 days in the typical 185-day school year in the state of California (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Excused absences are days missed due to sickness, religious observance, family emergency, hospitalization, or a judicial hearing (ISBE, 2014). Unexcused absences are days missed
due to not wanting to attend school, skipping school, falsified sickness, or extended family vacation (ISBE, 2014). Truant students are those who have missed 10% of schools days with unexcused absences (Alabiso et al., 2015). The Illinois General Assembly (2015) defined \textit{chronic absenteeism} as a student who has missed 5% of school days (i.e., nine or more), whether excused or unexcused, in the 185-day school year.

Students need to be present and accounted for if schools are to overcome the achievement/opportunity gaps, meet or exceed state and federal standardized assessment goals, and prepare all students to be successful in college and careers (Chang, 2011; Isquierdo, 2004; Roby, 2003; Sanchez, 2012). Moreover, policies and procedures need to be put in place to prevent students from being absent and especially becoming chronically absent.

This program evaluation was designed to understand the attendance/truancy policies implemented at Mountain West High School (MWHS)\textsuperscript{1}. In addition, my research aimed to effectively document the average daily attendance (ADA) of students in order to examine the possibility of a relationship between student attendance and student achievement, as demonstrated by grade point average (GPA), pass/fail rate in classes and on national and state standardized assessments: Northwest Evaluation Association/Measure of Academic Proficiency (NWEA/MAP) Reading, American College of Testing (ACT) Reading, and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) English Language Arts (ELA), implemented for the first time in the spring of 2015 and first reported to schools and districts all over the state of Illinois in November 2015.

\textsuperscript{1} MWHS is a pseudonym.
MWHS is a traditional and comprehensive high school in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Moreover, it is a Title I school, with 40% of students on free or reduced lunch. The school has a student body of almost 500 pupils, of which 25% are ethnic minorities (IIRC, 2015). Title I is a federal grant awarded to schools with at least 40% of the student body population coming from low-income families and on the free or reduced lunch program (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Patton (2008) would categorize the purpose of this program evaluation under monitoring, which entails managing the program, processes, or procedures with routine reporting—both present and archival—to look for trends and intervene when possible.

The purpose of this study was to transform the current situation and develop a strategic approach that would begin to reverse the trend of chronic absenteeism, which has increased by 1.5 and 2% over each of the past three years to an all-time high of 6.3%. Meanwhile, the ADA has dropped by 1% annually over the last three years, to an all-time low of 90%. Furthermore, ACT results have remained stagnant and MAP scores are pedestrian. PARCC results are promising for students with “good” ADA, however (IIRC, 2015).

Although the primary purpose of this study was to evaluate how MWHS addresses absenteeism as it relates to student achievement, I also hoped to shed light on how the ADA rate affects school funding through general state aid (GSA) received by MWHS.

In the state of Illinois, GSA represents 66% of schools’ overall budget for schooling; the rest comes from local property taxes, local wealth, and federal grants (GSA, 2015). In other words, two-thirds of school funding come from the state. GSA,
created in December 1997 and implemented in fiscal year 1999, is a financial package awarded to schools and districts for support of educational services (GSA, 2015). These funds or financial packages are distributed to school districts through two grants (GSA, 2015).

The first grant is the equalization grant, which assures the combination of state and local funding meets the minimum foundation level of $6,119 set by the state since FY10 (GSA, 2015). This minimum foundation level is what the state of Illinois considers proper or adequate funding for students to receive a good education; however, that precise quantity is debatable (GSA, 2015). The second grant is the supplemental GSA grant for low-income students, which is based on the proportion of low-income students in a district. This grant increases or decreases depending on the low-income student population (GSA, 2015). However, even given the existence of these grants, meeting the foundation level is based on the legislators and the governor appropriating the necessary funding. When appropriations fall short to fully fund the GSA claim, payments to districts are prorated and paid at the maximum percentage possible (GSA, 2015). For FY16, the prorated GSA claim is at 92.1% (GSA, 2015). In other words, schools can only receive a maximum of 92% of the GSA available (GSA, 2015).

Furthermore, for the majority of school districts, the equalization portion of GSA is distributed by the foundation formula, which is directly impacted by ADA (GSA, 2015). These districts receive the foundation level minus their local resources per pupil. For example, consider a district with local wealth per pupil of $4,000 (GSA, 2015). That results in a claim amount of $2,119—the amount required to allow that district to spend,
at a minimum, the foundation level\(^2\) of $6,119 per student (which is multiplied by the ADA of the past three years) (GSA, 2015).

The second formula for determining funds distribution is the alternate method formula\(^3\) (GSA, 2015). Districts qualifying for this formula have available local resources per pupil of at least 93%, but less than 175%, of the foundation level. Alternate method districts receive 5–7% of foundation level, or approximately $306–428 per pupil, which, similar to the foundation formula, is multiplied by the ADA of the past three years (GSA, 2015).

The third formula is the flat grant formula.\(^4\) Districts qualifying for this formula have local resources of 175% or more of the foundation level. Such districts receive $218 per pupil, which is multiplied by ADA of the past three years (GSA, 2015).

MWHS falls under the flat grant Formula. However, and more important, ADA is a variable included in the calculations of all the formulas described above. Thus, the better the ADA, the more a school or district can claim.

Rationale

MWHS is one of the most academically challenging high schools in the state of Illinois—number 18, according to the Washington Post (Matthews, 2014). It is also highly ranked by US News & World Report, as well as Newsweek. These are the three publications that rank schools based on students’ access to a challenging curriculum and students’ academic success. In addition, MWHS has a 99% graduation rate and is one of the most improved advanced placement schools in the state; however, the ADA has been

\(^2\) Authentic State example can be found in appendix W.
\(^3\) Authentic State example can be found in appendix X.
\(^4\) Authentic State example can be found in appendix Y.
steadily decreasing by 0.5 to 1% annually over the last three years, to an all-time low of 90% in 2014 (IIRC, 2015). Also, the chronic absenteeism rate has increased by 2% annually over the last three years, to an all-time high of 6.3% in 2014 (IIRC, 2015). In other words, 6.3% of students missed at least 5% of school days last year (i.e., nine or more days) (IIRC, 2015). Moreover, the number of students meeting the ACT average and reading at grade level (as reported by NWEAP/MAP) has remained stagnant, while PARCC results are disappointing for almost half of the students who took the examination. These figures are unacceptable, if the mission of MWHS is to have all students succeed and uphold the solid academic reputation the school has earned nationally.

Furthermore, I am the assistant principal at MWHS, a role I assumed in the summer of 2015. My main responsibilities are to improve learning, create opportunities for disenfranchised students in AP programming, and better the current state of attendance.

This issue is important to me because being present maximizes students’ learning opportunities (Isquierdo, 2004; Reid, 2014). Also, high school attendance correlates to positive school behavior, participation in extracurricular activities, and higher grades (Isquierdo, 2004; Reid, 2014). I am a living example of a student who attended school more than 95% of the time, participated in a plethora of extracurricular activities, and graduated with top honors. Also, I am Latino male who grew up in a low-income family and in a community where drugs and crime ran rampant; yet, I manage to persevere and earn perfect attendance in junior high school and high school while earning outstanding grades and attending one of the best public research universities in the world.
Students who are not present miss out on opportunities to develop the skills necessary to be successful in primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. With today’s challenges of an ever-changing differentiated curriculum, common core standards and high-stakes testing, there is not a minute to waste in addressing absenteeism, if students are to be adequately prepared for college and careers.

Goal

The intended goal of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the attendance/truancy policies and procedures at MWHS as it relates to ADA and student achievement. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has set the standard for ADA at 92%. Smink and Reimer (2005) stated that schools can use attendance to demonstrate adequately year progress (AYP) if they hit the 92% benchmark as prescribed by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In other words, in order to be considered an institution with good attendance by the state of Illinois and the federal government, the school must meet or exceed that 92% benchmark. Meeting the attendance component of AYP ensures the school districts avoid the risk of losing federal funding.

The key components to meet the goals of NCLB are the benchmarks for reading and mathematics. Studies show a strong correlation between students having 95% attendance or better and students having 85% or higher on standardized language arts tests (Isquierdo, 2004). This is evident from the primary grades to high school.

An analysis by the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that absences had consequences for fourth- and eighth-graders: 56% of eighth-graders who performed at the advanced level in NAEP reading in 2011 had perfect attendance in the month before the test, compared with 39% of students who
performed below the basic level; in contrast, nearly one in five eighth-grade students at the basic level and more than one in four below basic in reading had missed three or more days in the previous month. The trends were similar for fourth graders. (Balfanz & Chang, 2013)

As described above, there is a strong correlation between student attendance and achievement on national standardized test scores. This calls for educational leaders to investigate seriously the potential ramifications of missing days, in relation to both student achievement and NCLB.

NCLB allows primary and secondary schools to claim AYP if the school has achieved 92% or higher ADA. If schools miss that target, as well as benchmarks in English and mathematics, they could lose federal funding, allow students to transfer schools at the local district’s expense, and face personnel change or lost accreditation. Thus, attendance is clearly a core issue if schools are to meet AYP.

What is more, despite the efforts of most schools to track attendance using modern software, there are limited examples of schools effectively addressing chronic absenteeism and student achievement (Attendance Works, 2014). Therefore, I hoped to deepen the inquiry about what may need to be done to get students back in school, reduce absenteeism, increase students’ academic success, and meet one of the nation’s national standards.

Research Question

Primary Research Questions

For this program evaluation, the primary research question that drove the focus was, how is attendance/absenteeism addressed at MWHS?
Secondary Research Questions

The secondary and supporting questions are:

- What are the current attendance policies and procedures at MWHS?
- How well are the policies and procedures known and understood by all stakeholders?
- How is attendance monitored?
- How are students with good ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test scores?
- How are students with poor ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test scores?
- How much funding is MWHS subject to gain or lose according to its ADA?
SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to begin the journey of solving the issue of attendance and truancy, I introduced a brief history of compulsory attendance its early challenges. Second, I examined a diverse set of literature from throughout the United States explaining school funding as it relates to school attendance. Third, I examined literature based on standardized assessments results as they related to school attendance. Fourth, I highlighted external factors out of school control, but not vision, such as homelessness, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and individual foibles that impact student attendance. Next, I examined internal factors such as policies, procedures, and interventions implemented at other institutions that yielded success toward improving attendance. Through this review, I developed a conceptual framework to understand the political, financial, and academic impact of attendance and factors that influence students’ ability to attend school on a regular basis.

History of Compulsory Attendance

The first compulsory attendance laws were passed even before the country was founded. The Massachusetts Bay Colony passed the first compulsory attendance law in the late 1600s to teach children how to be good Puritans and parents how to rear obedient children (Katz, 1975). Unfortunately, colonists faced many obstacles in complying with the law, due to the plethora of settings and individuals allowed to educate, as well as the lack of attendance requirements already in existence. Education could be held in kitchens, churches, or homes, and be led by clergymen, housewives, or tradesmen for indeterminate amounts of time (Katz, 1975). As long as education took place, compliance
was reached. This ambiguous environment made it challenging to monitor and enforce attendance expectations.

Fortunately, things started to change by the mid to late 19th century, when some states began to define laws and expectations of attendance. In Connecticut, for example, students were expected to attend school for at least six consecutive weeks. If a student missed more than one week in a row, he was classified as a truant and sent to reform school (Katz, 1975). Compliance of compulsory attendance began to have some success; however, that success was relatively small, and only found in metropolitan areas of the United States. In rural areas and territories of the country, compliance was seen as a dead end by many educational leaders due to the lack of personnel and resources available to develop educational systems and enforce the law (Katz, 1975).

Opportunely, by the end of World War I, most states had clearly defined compulsory attendance laws. Child labor laws had been established, required days and times for school attendance were clearly defined and established, attendance policies and procedures were clearly articulated, and educational roles—teachers, administrators, superintendents and truant officers—were established to carry out daily duties involving the enforcement of compulsory attendance (ISBE, 2014; Katz, 1975). Also, attendance was tied to school funding, thus putting pressure on the educational leaders to get students to come to school on a regular basis (Katz, 1975).

**School Funding and Attendance**

It is no secret that attendance directly impacts school funding. This is exemplified by the evolution of the public educational system and compulsory attendance laws in the United States. Most school districts throughout the country receive funding from three
major sources: the federal government, the state, and local property taxes (Brimley & Garfield, 2005). Federal funding, which represents the smallest source of funding for school districts, provides targeted resources to schools such as Title I and general grants for students with special needs, such English language learners (ELLs) or students with cognitive and physical disabilities (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Verstegen, 2011). State funding, which represents the second biggest source of funding for most school districts, is similar to the federal level in that it provides grants for transportation, low-income students, students with disabilities, and bilingual education programming (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; IIRC, 2015). In addition, states provide a foundational level of funding or flat grants—a fixed amount of money—for operational and instructional costs per pupil (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; IIRC, 2015; Verstegen, 2011).

The 2005 United States Census Bureau reports that the nation’s average yearly spending in 2003 to educate one child was $8,019—the District of Columbia had the highest spending rate at $13,328 per child while Utah had the lowest per pupil expenditures of all states at $4,860 per child. (Toomer-Cook, 2005, p.15)

Lastly, the third and biggest source of funding for schools is local property taxes, which differ from county to county and state to state (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

In DuPage County in Illinois, Community Unit School District 201, approximately 80% of the school budget comes from property taxes, 10% from state funds, 7% from the federal government and 3% from other sources (CUSD 201, 2015). Meanwhile, in Chicago Public School District 99, approximately 40% of the school budget comes from property taxes, 40% from state funds, 16% from the federal
government and 4\% from other sources (CPS, 2015). This type of discrepancy can be seen all over the entire state and across the nation.

For instance, in the Dallas Independent School District, 65\% of the school budget comes from local property taxes and sources, 24 \% comes from state fund, and 10\% comes from federal sources (DISD, 2014). In California, approximately 56\% of the school funding comes from local revenues sources, 28\% comes from the state fund, and 17\% comes from federal funds (Harris, 2015).

State funding, which represents the second biggest source of income for schools, is directly impacted by school absenteeism. However, the manner in which attendance affects that funding differs all around the United States (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

While most states fund schools based on their average daily resident membership (ADRM) or total school enrollment, states like California, Idaho, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, Illinois, and Texas fund schools based on ADA, or the percentage of students present on any given school day, which is then averaged out monthly using a variety of operational systems (Baker, 2015).

Local learning education agencies (LEA) or schools submit the monthly ADA report to the state educational agencies for the entire year. The state then takes the mean of the best three months and uses it as foundational funding for the following school year (ISBE, 2015a). This funding formula tends to favor wealthier districts, which have smaller enrollments and higher attendance rates compared to large urban schools with minorities and lower ADA (Baker, 2015). This funding formula also raises the issue of equitable funding, a polemical issue currently being discussed throughout America that deserves further exploration. However, one thing that is known in states where school
districts suffer from a lack of funding is that “school absenteeism costs taxpayers billions of dollars each year in lost revenue and greater loss in human capital” (Garman & Brown, 2014, p. 4).

In the state of California, $1.4 billion is lost annually due to low daily attendance (Cooper & Shute, 2014; Harris, 2014). In addition, a report by Kamala D. Harris, California’s attorney general, estimated that dropouts cost the state $46 billion each year, including $1 billion in juvenile services alone (Harris, 2014). Unfortunately, California is not the only state plagued by lack of funding due to absenteeism.

In Texas, public schools are reimbursed for actual in-seat student attendance. Moreover, the state law provided that students who attend school during any part of the school day will generate state revenue, so long as they are not marked absent for the entire school day (E3 Alliance, 2012; Moreno, 2012). Consequently, this law has led central Texas, including the Austin area, to lose over $34 million in 2011 (E3 Alliance, 2012). Fortunately, some states have been able to recover or regain lost funding due to improved attendance. In Oregon, for example, a mid-sized school was able to recover almost $500,000 in funding by having almost 300 students return to school a regular basis (Railsback, 2004).

Furthermore, research from a west suburban high school in Illinois showed that an increase of 4% in ADA yielded $1.1 million in additional revenue for the school (Isquierdo, 2004). That is because, in the state of Illinois—the second most regressive public school system in the country, which has benefitted the more affluent school districts and hurt low-income communities—schools receive funding through GSA based on factors such as local property taxes, special needs, and the ADA of the school’s best
three months (ISBE, 2015a). In other words, the higher the ADA, the more resources the school district receives from the state. The inverse, of course, is also true.

School absenteeism is also affecting school funding in other countries. In the United Kingdom, $885 million was spent over the past seven years on issues focused on fighting absenteeism, such as truant officers, attendance clerks, juvenile services, and software operational systems (Cooper & Shute, 2014; Reid, 2014). By curbing school absenteeism, schools would be able to allocate the majority of funds, time, and energy to the issue at the forefront of almost every school improvement plan: school achievement.

**Student Achievement and Attendance**

The results of the 2013 National Association of Educational Programs (NAEP) offered an interesting insight on attendance and student achievement in math and reading. In the study, students who reported missing three or more days of school in the prior month had lower scores in math than students with fewer absences, in some case by as much as 12 points. Results were similar in reading, in which 28 percent of students who missed three or more days scored proficient or better, as compared to 38 percent of those who had missed no days in the prior month (Chang & Romero, 2008).

In the state of Ohio, a statewide, multi-grade, longitudinal study suggested a strong positive correlation between student attendance and student achievement in fourth, sixth, ninth, and twelfth grade (Roby, 2003). The study suggested that throughout a child’s entire educational journey from elementary to high school, students with higher ADA outperform those with lower ADA as reported on the state’s annual proficiency assessment (Roby, 2003). What is more, if extended for one more year, this longitudinal report would lead any interested educationalist to the question of how student
achievement is impacted by attendance beyond secondary school to the first year of college. What is more alarming is that the report suggested that attendance and achievement are most strongly correlated at the beginning of high school, in ninth grade, which coincides with the population of this study.

In Illinois, research from a large urban high school suggested that, due to change in attendance policies and procedures, a 4% increase in ADA for one academic school year led to more than 800 students being on the honor roll (earning a GPA of 3.0 or higher) compared to zero the year before. In addition, this increase in ADA led to a 5% drop in failure rate, 1,400 fewer dropped courses, a 75% reduction in dropouts, and 600 students with perfect attendance (Isquierdo, 2004). Once again, evidence like this suggests a strong positive correlation between school achievement and school attendance.

**School Policies and Attendance**

Research shows that states, local districts, and schools with exceptional attendance take a number of steps: they have policies in place that require attendance to be monitored on a daily basis; they have established attendance committees, made of a variety of stakeholders, that analyze and evaluates attendance issues; they eliminate punitive consequences for students missing school; they establish interventions for students that are absent regularly; and they create incentives for students to be at school on a daily basis (Blumenthal, 2008; Isquierdo, 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2004; OUSD, 2012; Reeves, 2008; Reid, 2014; Smink & Reimer, 2005).

A large urban high school in the western suburbs of Chicago implemented the following attendance reforms that yielded positive school achievement (Isquierdo, 2004). First, the principal created an attendance task force. The task force’s main responsibility
was to review existing policies on truancy and attendance, identify gaps and concerns, and find solutions to attendance problems (Isquierdo, 2004). Furthermore, all school documentation regarding attendance was produced in two languages, since a majority of the parents spoke Spanish (Isquierdo, 2004). The school also adopted a software system that monitored dropped courses (Isquierdo, 2004). The school also hosted a special event, called *family university*, in which they informed parents of attendance (Isquierdo, 2004). The attendance task force also decided to eliminate the 10-day drop policy, in which students with 10 or more days of unexcused absences were dropped from the class and given study hall (Isquierdo, 2004). The school also stopped pushing students out of high school after a third dropped course; previously, students were dropped from school providing they were 16 years of age. Moreover, instead of suspending students for excessive absences, students were given in-school suspensions with opportunities to continue their academic work or given Saturday detentions (Isquierdo, 2004). Lastly, the school created a progressive intervention system that explicitly detailed what was done to a student after 1 to 10 absences, whether it included parent contact, counselor contact, or in-school consequences. This system reserved punitive measures (e.g., truancy referrals to courts) only for extreme cases (Isquierdo, 2004).

Also, in Illinois, excused absences (e.g., sick days, religious holidays, or extended family vacations) don’t count toward truancy, but they also don’t count toward claimable ADA (ISBE, 2014). In other words, if a student was legitimately sick, the state of Illinois does not count that as a claimable day of ADA, because there was no instruction. School funding is hurt by not only sick days, but also school suspension days.
In California, 113,000 days were missed due to out-of-school suspensions, and Black and Latino students were suspended almost four times more than their White peers (Harris, 2014). Suspension days do not count toward ADA since the student is not present in school or receiving an alternative form of instruction. Thus, suspensions are harmful in promoting attendance (ISBE, 2014).

Further research from the Massachusetts Department of Education recommended that school policies should prohibit schools from turning away tardy students (Isquierdo, 2004). Doing so hurts ADA, exacerbates school funding issues, and does not constructively solve attendance problems (Isquierdo, 2004).

In Oakland, California, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has implemented the following processes that has yielded success with student attendance. For any day missed, the school makes a personal phone call, documents the absence, and verifies accuracy of contact information. For three days of absence, they take the aforementioned steps, but in addition, the school encourages teachers to call home and flag students for the first notice of truancy for unexcused absences and refer family to school-based resources/support agencies. For six days of absence, they take all of these steps and consult with the school counselor, implement strategies outlined in site attendance support plans, send a second letter home, hold a student attendance review team meeting, notify the school nurse if absences are health-related, and schedule a parent conference. For 10 days, a home visit is conducted; daily monitoring of student attendance becomes the focus, as well as all of the previous stated procedures. For 14 or more absences, all of the previous steps are taken, as well as referral to the School
Attendance Review Board (SARB). The SARB then refers the student to the district attorney’s office.

OUSD does not drop students for being absent or chronically absent. In addition, for students with long periods of absence due to family emergencies or health issues, OUSD assigns independent study or home schooling, which allows schools to claim ADA. Lastly, and most important, each school in OUSD has an attendance team, which meets every other week to assess effectiveness of policies/procedures, review attendance for the entire school, and modify/create individual plans for students struggling with attendance.

In summary, OUSD has a leadership team of stakeholders that constantly evaluates attendance and monitors attendance policies and procedures, as well as a systematic and specific plan to address absenteeism, communicate with students and parents, and build a school climate that rewards and acknowledges attendance.

Barnes Elementary in Washington state took a multitiered approach to absenteeism that led to a 10% decrease in chronic absenteeism and a 16% increase in regular attendance in just one school year (Alabiso et al., 2015). This astonishing improvement began when teachers showed the number of chronically absent students in their classroom at a schoolwide presentation. The data highlighted an important term not very familiar to the staff and administration—chronic absenteeism—and prompted the leadership to address the issue immediately and in a collaborative manner. The term was defined using the Washington State Board of Education definition: a chronic absentee is a pupil missing school for 10% of the calendar days (i.e., 18 days), whether excused or unexcused (Alabiso et al., 2015). This term has helped to target a vulnerable population
at risk of academic failure, limited opportunities, and delinquency that had not been universally known in the school.

Subsequently, Barnes Elementary began to mine attendance data for all students during the school year. They began to monitor beyond the two most common attendance metrics, ADA and truancy. ADA is the number of school days a student attends divided by the total number of days of instruction (Alabiso et al., 2015; Harris, 2014). Truancy refers to unexcused absences. Barnes Elementary began to track chronic absenteeism, which combines excused and unexcused absences and suspensions. The school also began to track regular attendance, with the goal for every student to be absences of fewer than nine days (5% of total days), which is about one day a month.

Following this, the school developed a multitiered approach, which started with an analysis of the school’s data systems capabilities. The data system was discovered to be able to track the percentage of the following:

- Students who attended school regularly
- Students with chronic absences
- Attendance rate by month and days of the week
- Attendance by grade level

Consequently, the school created an attendance team, composed of administration and support services personnel, counselors, and social workers, that would meet every two weeks to analyze data and work on schoolwide prevention efforts. In the classroom, every teacher received an updated list of students organized by attendance categories: regular, at-risk, and chronic absences. They also received ADA reports for every month and at the end of the school year. Lastly, during attendance team meetings, the team
looked at data on individual students to identify support and recommend students for ongoing monitoring.

Now with effective data and clearly defined systems of support in place, what remained was meaningful action. Barnes Elementary did the following. First, the school spread the message about the importance of attendance through regular classroom meetings, schoolwide assemblies, letters home, back-to-school nights, and social media. They also engaged the community by publishing an article about school attendance in the local paper and presented the initiative to the school board. The school also put up posters about attendance in local businesses, churches, clubs, and parks, as well as key areas in the school building. Events were organized for students (and their parents) who had 95% or more attendance; at the schoolwide level, attendance data were posted in hallways, and students were given awards and recognition for good attendance.

Factors Beyond School Control Affecting Student Attendance

Social Factors

Black and Latino students tend to have much lower attendance rates, as well as higher chronic absenteeism rates, than their White peers (Chang, 2011; Reid, 2014; Cooper & Shute, 2008). For all these reasons, documenting the progress of these student groups and analyzing their success is very important.

Economic Factors

Students who live in low-income households, are eligible for free or reduced lunch, or live in areas with high levels of unemployment tend to have much lower attendance and higher chronic absenteeism rates than students in middle- to upper-class homes, in areas with low levels of unemployment and highly educated residents (Chang,
That is why bringing jobs to low-income communities is so important.

**Home Background Factors**

Students in one-parent families, those living in overcrowded or decrepit homes, those with little parent interest or support in education, and those unfamiliar with the native language tend to have lower attendance rates and higher chronic absenteeism rates that students in a “traditional” family, with a well-maintained home, who are familiar with the native language (Alvarez, Bye, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Reid, 2014). That’s why the preservation of family is so important.

**Community Factors**

Pupils in households with high mobility; violence or mistreatment; and drug abuse or general chaos tend to have much lower attendance rates that students in stable homes with general peace (Alvarez et al., 2010; Reid, 2014). Partnering with local law enforcement agencies to reduce crime in the community and working with other governmental social welfare agencies that combat drug abuse may lead to more students attending school on a regular basis.

**Psychological and Individual Factors**

Students with low self-esteem, those who are bored, and those with fewer friends, or antisocial or other behavioral issues tend to miss more days that students who have high levels of self-worth, larger friend groups, participation in extracurricular activities, and general social acceptance (Reid, 2014; Alvarez et al., 2010). Having opportunities for students with similar interests to interact or allowing students to create and seek their own unique experience in schools may yield better attendance.
Institutional Factors

Learners who are disengaged from school, have poor relationships with teachers, attend schools that do not place high value on regular school attendance, or are members of a dysfunctional school culture tend to be absent more often than students who are engaged in school and go to institutions that value attendance and have a positive school culture (Alvarez et al, 2010; Reid, 2014). Thus, schools must do everything in their power to foster a positive school environment that prides itself on student recognition.

Every Student, Every Day: A Virtual Summit on Addressing and Eliminating Chronic Absenteeism

On November 12, 2015, I had the opportunity to partake in the first national forum on addressing and eliminating chronic absenteeism. The virtual forum was attended by 2,600 educators and administrators from 30 states (Breen, 2015). The forum featured two of the leading experts in attendance, Robert Balfanz of John Hopkins University and Hedy Chang of Attendance Works (Breen, 2015). These two leading experts in attendance are cited throughout this research project.

The forum presented practical ideas on what educational leaders can do to improve attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism. These suggestions were developed through current research and successful practices highlighted by administrators who had enjoyed success in this area. Overall, the panelists and the forum recommended the following multitiered approach:

- **Tier 1.** All students are a priority. Monitor attendance data, educate and engage students and families, recognize good and improved attendance, clarify
attendance expectations and goals in policies and procedures, and establish a positive and engaging school climate.

- **Tier 2.** Students exhibiting chronic absences are a priority. Provide personalized early outreach, meet with students and families to develop plans, and offer an attendance mentor.

- **Tier 3.** Students exhibiting severe chronic absences are the priority. Intensive case management with coordinators of public agencies, as well as a legal response, is needed.

This multitiered approach is addressed in its own unique way throughout this study. Moreover, many of the suggestions above were incorporated in the ethnographic interviews, surveys, and data collected artifacts.
SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

To begin the program evaluation, it was important to first decide what model would present the best methodology for investigating a pervasive educational dilemma: school absenteeism (Patton, 2008). At our initial meeting, I informed the primary stakeholders of the paradigmatic options available, as well as their potential advantages and disadvantages (Patton, 2008). Two primary methods are most common in utilization-focused evaluations: the quantitative/experimental method (the gold standard to some) and the qualitative/naturalistic method, a viable alternative (Patton, 2008).

The quantitative/experimental method has been labeled by early and current researchers as the gold standard because of its experimental design and sophisticated statistical techniques (Patton, 2008). What is more, its design received the highest quality rating because of its use of systematic random sampling, quantitative data analysis, multivariate statistical procedures, and randomized control trials (Patton, 2008). This method worked well with early medical experimentation and agricultural improvement investigations. Any other models were considered of less quality.

The qualitative/naturalistic method is a viable alternative to others because it emphasizes attention to the meaning of human behavior, the context of social interaction, and the connections between subjective states and behavior (Patton, 2008). This is accomplished through direct observations, open-ended interviews, surveys, and case studies. These approaches were derived from early works in anthropology, sociology, and psychology.
Together with the Attendance Team Task Force (ATTF)—a group of stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, administrators, local entrepreneurs, and board members invited to participate in the study—we chose the mixed-methods approach, which uses the quantitative/experimental method and qualitative/naturalistic method (Patton, 2008). It was decided that statistics (e.g., attendance records, standardized test scores, procedures, and policies) were just as important as interviewing and observing students with varying levels of attendance. We used interviews, surveys, and observations as qualitative data and attendance numbers as our quantitative data.

This mixed methodology helped the ATTF and I answer the research questions by allowing us to observe trends in attendance; gain perspective on procedures from students, teachers, administrators, and the community at large; and hear the voices of students both succeeding at and struggling with attendance. Also, the methodology allowed the ATTF and I to see the policies and procedures currently in place (as well as those that were not) to address absenteeism.

Furthermore, interviews of school leaders provided insight on what procedures and policies may need to be refined to better serve the students. Also, hearing from students with different levels of attendance allowed the ATTF and I to understand the challenges that face students with poor attendance face and the reasons successful students come to school every day. Any school that wants to improve attendance should involve students in identifying reasons behind their attendance or absence (Railsback, 2004).
Lastly, surveying the students, administrators, and stakeholders helped the ATTF and I understand the perceptions of larger populations by capturing people’s experiences and opinions (Buckham, James, & Milenkiewicz, 2008).

**Participants**

The research questions for this study were addressed by all stakeholders. Engaging community partners or stakeholders in the research process can produce more usable and convincing results along the way than might be gained by looking only at outcomes; thus, I included stakeholders in this process through a committee (Buckham et al., 2008). I created the ATTF, consisting of one teacher, one administrator, one student, one parent, and one board member, to participate in the interpretation of the research outcomes. We would meet once a month for two hours to discuss the updates of the investigation.

The participants in the program evaluation were students and stakeholders of MWHS. They were chosen using purposeful sampling. Patton (2008) acknowledged that when the goal of a study is to understand a problem in great depth, it is acceptable to choose specific stakeholders. Also, purposeful sampling is subjective and the responses generated by those participants may not be applicable in other circumstances (Patton, 2008). Random sampling, however, may allow for generalizations, since everyone has a fair chance of being chosen, but may leave out specific stakeholders from the study.

Also, quota sampling was used for this study. Quota sampling requires the researcher to select a certain number of participants from a group or groups (Patton, 2008). In this case, I wanted to include at least one member of each stakeholder group:
teachers, administrators, parents, board members, entrepreneurs and politicians. For this reason, quota sampling served best.

A total of five students participated in the interviews. The students were high school students, male and female, between the ages of 12 to 18. Two were Black, one was Latina, one was White, and one was Asian. Two students who participated were chronic absentees during the 2014 academic school year and three had good attendance (i.e., 95% ADA or higher). Almost 100 students participated in the survey.

A total of 19 adults participated in the interviews: four administrators, five teachers, two board members, two extracurricular sponsors, and six parents. The adults ranged from ages 25 to 65, of both sexes. Of the group, 14 were White, one was Black, three were Indian, and one was Latina.

The community represented here is middle-class and 30% minority, primarily Black and Latino. Annual income (as self-identified by adult interviewees) was between $20,000 and $80,000 a year. There are a combination of homes and apartments in the community, with and rents and mortgages ranging from $750 per month for a one-bedroom apartment to a $3,000 monthly mortgage payment for a home of $300,000.

The stakeholders included in the project were parents, teachers, administrators, students, local entrepreneurs, board members and politicians. One parent was personally recruited by me to participate in the ATTF. The principal recommended her specifically based on her active involvement in school activities (for instance, as head cheerleading coach) and unbridled will to participate in anything that will benefit students. She is also a local business owner, thus fulfilling more than one stakeholder role. The other stakeholders were chosen voluntarily after an email was sent out briefly describing the
purpose of the study and the responsibilities involved. Recipients were offered the opportunity to participate.

This population had the potential to shed light on policies and procedures that could affect student attendance, what school leadership could do to curb chronic absenteeism, as well as others’ roles, because this population represented both the intended users and the representative data (Patton, 2008).

**Data Gathering Techniques**

I collected seven types of data for the program evaluation:

- Attendance policy/procedures
- Attendance records
- Standardized test records
- School and state records
- Surveys
- Committee minutes/agendas
- Ethnographic interviews

First, I gathered information on MWHS’s current attendance policies and procedures. More specifically, I downloaded the board policies related to compulsory attendance from the school district’s website. Also, I obtained in-house attendance policies and incentives created by the assistant principal/dean of students at MWHS, Ken Williams. His self-initiated attendance procedures served to complement what the district already had in place. These documents available to the public online; thus, it does not require confidentiality. However, the in-house supplemental attendance policies are

5 This name is a pseudonym.
private and kept on my work computer, which is password protected. These procedures
and policies were key documentation, since what is written and applied is, effectively,
how attendance is dealt with. I wanted to see the exact steps and procedures the school
was taking (or not taking) related to attendance and chronic absenteeism.

Secondly, I gathered archival attendance data. These data were accessed using the
Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC), a public database cocreated by Northern Illinois
University (NIU) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) that publishes schools’
instructional, demographic, and operational data annually. Similar to Williams’ policies
and incentives, this is a public website and does not require confidentiality. Also, to
obtain standardized test results, I used Skyward, the in-house operations software engine
that tracks attendance, discipline, schedules, demographics, and grades. I kept these
records on my work laptop, which is password protected.

Third, I collected the daily, weekly, and monthly ADA data using Skyward. At the end of each school day, each week, and each month, I would run an ADA report.
These reports were kept in a folder on my password-protected work computer. I also
shared the reports with the entire school and posted them on the school’s data wall.

Fourth, I surveyed students, parents, teachers, board members, local
entrepreneurs, and extracurricular staff members. This was done using Google Forms, an
online survey creator. The survey asked questions about policies, ADA, student
achievement, and school funding. The survey was open for two weeks and students were
afforded the opportunity to complete it on their own or during recess. The survey link
was posted on the whiteboard in the cafeteria. In addition, the survey was sent via
ParentLink, an internet-based program with the capability to send a mass email to all
parties registered under the system (a group that includes almost all parents, teachers, and administrators in the district). The survey was also posted on the school’s Facebook page, with a Google Forms link to the survey as well as a QR code symbol that would take the participant directly to the survey when scanned with a QR code reader on a smartphone.

After the survey closed, Ken Williams made a school announcement asking students and staff interested in continuing with the study to participate in a one-time interview. Five students, five teachers, four administrators, two board members, one local entrepreneur, and six parents accepted. The interviews were conducted in my office after school for four weeks. The interviewees’ responses were recorded in a Google spreadsheet live during the interview by me. The questions asked in these interviews can be found in the appendix. Each interviewee needed to turn in a signed consent form to participate in the interview.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The process of analyzing data with the intended users may be just as powerful as the outcomes themselves (Patton, 2008). This is why the ATTF and I met monthly, for two-hour sessions to analyze the data, surveys, and interviews related to chronic absenteeism and ADA.

On November 9, 2015, the ATTF met for a second time after being notified of the time, date, and purpose of the second meeting via email. At this meeting, I shared three documents that shed light on schools that have turned around their attendance, which are cited in this study. I also shared the Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool, which I created. During this meeting; the ATTF analyzed the attendance policies and procedures, the surveys, interviews, and focus group data. The task force also
analyzed the archival and current attendance data. This analysis of quantitative and qualitative data yielded central statements.

The analysis of policies and procedures was the most straightforward part of my study. The ATTF and I read and analyzed the policies to see the exact language (or absence thereof) on chronic absenteeism and attendance, and compared it to the policies of two schools in the same county with high ADA: Kroy and Uppers North High Schools\(^6\).

I also needed to analyze the survey data, a task I went about doing by creating frequency tables for each survey question. This permitted me to describe how responses to the surveys were distributed along different categories of questions. After this, I engaged in tabular analysis of the questions to describe potential relationships between items in the survey (Patton, 2008). The key to this part of my analysis was to prioritize essential questions, items, and group categories based on the individual item analysis I conducted. Lastly, I looked for relationships between certain answers and common characteristics of the participants.

Moreover, at our monthly meetings, the ATTF and I would analyze the daily, weekly, and monthly attendance trends generated from the Skyward software system used for in-house operations.

Last but not least, I needed to analyze the interviews, which I did through coding, or “labels put on data that summarize the data’s content or highlight a primary idea” (Buckham et al., 2008, p.88). It was necessary to code the interviews in order to look for common, specific, and relatable themes or central statements. In addition, I transcribed

\(^6\) Both names are pseudonyms.
the interviews on a Google spreadsheet as they occurred. After the data were transcribed, I searched for themes using coding and interpreted the meaning of those themes with the ATTF. All of the data were stored in my personal laptop, which is password protected.

Since ADA has been decreasing and chronic absenteeism increasing at MWHS, I wanted to make sure the decisions made were data-driven ones. The concept of participatory action research emphasizes making data-driven decisions to improve schools (Buckham et al., 2008). This research project was data-driven and participative through the involvement of the ATTF. These two key elements should create an educated culture willing to make all the changes necessary to improve the current state of attendance at MWHS.
SECTION FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

To begin the journey of unpacking the findings, I introduced the respondents/participants in the study before introducing the qualitative and quantitative data artifacts under analysis.

I began with the Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool, which I created to see how effective the current attendance policy and procedures are at addressing attendance as compared to similar and high attendance institutions. In other words, it serves as an audit tool and baseline marker that brings to light what is effective and what needs to be changed. Next, I presented the Attendance Policy and Procedures Survey, which asked a series of questions on attendance as it relates to school funding and academic achievement. Furthermore, I presented the stakeholder interviews and focus group interviews, which presented participants with series of questions dealing with attendance. Lastly, I presented the quantitative data as they related to “good” ADA (i.e., 95% or higher): GPA, pass/fail rate, NWEA/MAP scores, and PARCC scores. Through these findings and interpretations of the study, I was able to discover how MWHS addressed attendance issues, what areas required improvement, and how school achievement is correlated to school attendance and school funding.

Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool Analysis Findings & Interpretations

Defining Respondents

Overall, 75% of the ATTF members (six of eight) completed the Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool Survey. The surveys were completed between October 25th and November 9th, 2015. The tool was created by the researcher and aligned
to best attendance practices according to the literature review. This was necessary because there is no such tool currently available.

Prior to the second meeting, ATTF members were instructed via electronic correspondence to complete the Attendance Policy and Procedures Effectiveness Tool Survey based on the attendance policies and procedures of three high schools: Mountain West, Kroy, and Uppers North. The latter two were selected because of their long history of achieving ADA of 95% or above and are comparable schools in the same county with similar demographics.

*Figure 1. Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Effectiveness Tool Survey.*

![Figure 1](image_url)

As seen in Figure 1, respondents agreed unanimously that MWHS does not articulate or state attendance goals in its attendance policies and procedures, have “good” ADA, or state the benefits of attending school on a regular basis, since there are no “yes” responses by MWHS (blue bars) for those questions. Moreover, when compared to Kroy

35
and Uppers North High School, MWHS has the least amount of pertinent information on attendance in its policy, as observed by the ATTF.

Positively, MWHS does have reporting procedures for absences that are easily found, as well as consequences for unexcused absences are clearly defined to some. In addition, MWHS’s policies do not mandate lowering students’ grades for being absent. Furthermore, according to one respondent, MWHS defined the three important terms associated with attendance.

The ATTF generated the following central statements/themes during its collaborative efforts and analysis of the attendance policies and procedures of MWHS:

- MWHS has clear procedures on what to do when your son or daughter is sick; however, highlighting or bolding the contact information may make it more visible.
- There is no documentation regarding acknowledgement and celebration of good attendance.
- Excused and unexcused absences are stated and clearly defined; however, Kroy and Uppers North have more robust descriptions.
- Attendance policies and procedures do not punish students academically by withholding grades, dropping courses from students’ schedules, or lowering grades.
- Consequences for unexcused absences are somewhat clear; however, Kroy and Uppers North have more robust descriptions.
- ADA is monitored daily, weekly, and monthly, as well as each semester and annually (this is a recent practice).
• Attendance recording codes were entered incorrectly.

• A brief statement regarding the importance of attendance is not included in attendance policies and procedures.

• MWHS was the only school with a monolingual handbook; Kroy and Uppers North made their handbooks available in Spanish and English.

• Policy does not define *truant, chronic absentee, or regular attendee*.

**Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Survey Findings & Interpretations**

**Defining Respondents**

Overall, 114 surveys were completed by 18 certified teachers and administrators, 70 students, 21 parents, 1 board member, 2 local entrepreneurs, and 1 politician.

Respondents self-reported their perceived roles.

*Figure 2. Survey respondents’ identified roles.*

As noted in Figure 2, every stakeholder was represented in the survey; however, the student stakeholder group represented 62% of survey participants. This proved advantageous, because students would be the group most directly affected by any change in attendance policies or procedures.
Table 1. Attendance/Truancy Policy & Procedures Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How familiar are you with the school’s Attendance/Truancy Policies and Procedures?</th>
<th>How familiar are you with academic achievement as it relates to school attendance?</th>
<th>How familiar are you with school funding as it relates to school attendance?</th>
<th>Is attendance celebrated at school?</th>
<th>From your perspective, is there a need to improve attendance?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Familiar/Yes</td>
<td>13 (11.6%)</td>
<td>20 (17.9%)</td>
<td>63 (56.3%)</td>
<td>61 (54.5%)</td>
<td>40 (35.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Familiar/No</td>
<td>66 (58.9%)</td>
<td>44 (39.3%)</td>
<td>30 (26.8%)</td>
<td>26 (23.2%)</td>
<td>72 (64.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Familiar/Not sure</td>
<td>33 (29.5%)</td>
<td>48 (42.9%)</td>
<td>19 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (22.3%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 1, an absolute majority of respondents have little to no knowledge of MWHS’s attendance/truancy policies and procedures. Moreover, a majority of the respondents have some or no knowledge of the relationship between academic achievement and school attendance. Lastly, about 45% of respondents have little to no knowledge of how school funding relates to school attendance. What is more, almost half of the respondents believe attendance is not celebrated or are unaware of its recognition. Lastly, more than one-third of respondents believe there is a need to improve attendance.

The ATTF determined that creating awareness among stakeholders regarding school attendance as it relates to school funding, academic achievement, and incentivizing attendance—as was done at the second ATTF meeting—is a must at board meetings, registration meetings, Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, and other functions. Once stakeholders are aware of the current status improvement becomes more likely.
Stakeholders Interviews Findings & Interpretations

Defining Respondents

Overall, a total of five students were interviewed, two of whom were chronically absent last year. In addition, a total of five teachers, six parents, four school administrators, two board members, and two extracurricular activity sponsors were interviewed. Below, the breakdown of interviewees according to their role is documented.

*Figure 3. Stakeholders/interviewees.*

At the second ATTF meeting, the following central statements/themes were generated from the qualitative interview data.

- Almost no stakeholders except administrators know what ADA means as it relates to the field of education.
- An absolute majority of stakeholders consider “good” ADA between 90 and 95%.
- All stakeholders except administrators are not familiar with MWHS’s ADA.
- Only administrators have access to the school’s ADA. Moreover, teachers have access to their local daily attendance.
- All stakeholders understand their role. Parents just focus on their kids.
• Stakeholders do their part, but rarely go outside their roles. Students suggest that they can recruit their friends.
• Almost all stakeholders believe students come to socialize, learn, and be with their friends.
• Parents blame other parents for students’ poor attendance.
• Students, teachers, and other stakeholders believe that illness and random occurrences (e.g., family emergencies) are the main reasons students are absent.
• All stakeholders, including administrators, are benighted of school funding as it relates to school attendance.
• All stakeholders have a general understanding that good attendance equals good academic performance.

Focus Group Interview Findings & Interpretations

Defining respondents

All the ATTF members participated in the focus group interview held during the group’s first meeting on October 21, 2015. In the meeting, the invitation letter was discussed, during which time the researcher reiterated that all ATTF members would serve as a focus group. The group consisted of one student, one teacher, two administrators, two teachers, a board member, one local politician, and one parent. During the meeting, all team members were presented the opportunity to answer questions found in the appendices.

At the second ATTF meeting, after analyzing the focus group interview, the group generated the following central statements/themes:

• All focus group members identified a “good” ADA as 95% or above.
• Focus group members identified the following places to locate ADA data:
  o The school website
  o The school report card
  o The state website
  o Assemblies

• All focus group members lack awareness of state and federal attendance goals.

• All focus group members, except for the administrators, are unaware of MWHS’s ADA.

• All focus group members, except for the administrators, are unaware of how ADA is calculated.

• All focus group members agree on the need to improve attendance.

• All focus group members state that attendance is currently being celebrated, but it has not been the norm.

• All focus group members have some awareness of the attendance policies and procedures.

• Focus group members would enhance the current policies by adding the following:
  o Earlier phone calls
  o Parent attendance contract
  o Attendance procedures posted around school

• All focus group members have access to individual attendance reports but not school wide reports.
• All focus group members believe students come to school to socialize and learn.

• Focus group members state the following reasons for students missing school:
  o Laziness
  o Illness
  o Vacations
  o Apathy
  o Unstable home life

• Focus group members agree that the lack of school attendance may lead students to a life of crime, fewer opportunities, low-paid employment and decrease of property values.

• Focus group members identified the following practices that they believe may improve attendance.
  o Recognition
  o Daily attendance monitoring

• All focus group members have little to no knowledge of school funding as it relates to school achievement.

• All focus group members understand that the more students are in school, the more they will likely learn.

• All focus group members feel that they should expand their role to promote school attendance.
Quantitative Data Findings & Interpretations

Defining Respondents

Overall, 83 students’ scores, represented by their NWEA/MAP results in reading, ACT scores, PARCC scores, GPA, and ration of passed/failed classes were documented in the quantitative report. This cohort of students was selected because they were the only group that had taken all of the aforementioned state and national standardized tests.

Figure 4. PARCC ELA data based on ADA.

As reported in Figure 4, here are the numbers of students who scored a Level 4 or 5 on the PARCC ELA exam, based on their ADA:

- 95% or higher: 25 students
- 90–94.9%: 4 students
- 85–89.9%: 3 students
As one can see, students’ ADA was directly related to whether they scored a Level 4 or Level 5 on the PARCC ELA, or what the Illinois State Board of Education has defined as meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations. Attendance seems to have an effect on student achievement, at least as it relates to PARCC ELA scores.

*Figure 5.* NWEA/MAP reading results based on ADA.

As noted in Figure 5, the following number of students met or exceeded the growth target on the NWEA/MAP reading test, based on their ADA:

- 95% or higher: 25 students
- 90–94.9%: 6 students
- 85–89.9%: 4 students
- 80–84.9%: 3 students
• 80% or less: 0 students

The NWEA/MAP reading grade-level score indicates the level at which students of a specific age group should be reading compared to their peers nationally. Thus, similar to PARCC score, the higher the ADA, the better the chances of a student reading at grade level.

Figure 6. ACT scores based on ADA.

As noted in Figure 6, the following numbers of students scored at least a 21 (the national average) on the ACT, based on their ADA:

• 95% or higher: 20 students
• 90–94.9%: 5 students
• 85–89.9%: 3 students
• 80–84.9%: 2 students

A 21 is the national average ACT score, according to the company that administers the exam. Also, a 21 is a score accepted by many public and private
universities for admission. (However, other more elite and internationally known public and private universities look at a 28 or higher.) Again, as with the previous metrics, the higher the ADA, the more students scored in the 21 or higher.

Furthermore, as noted in Figure 7, students with higher ADA achieved generally higher grade point averages, as well. Of students in the study with 95% or better ADA, 23 had a GPA of 3.0–4.5, nine had a GPA of 2.5–2.9, and three had a GPA of 1.9–2.4 (the lowest reported GPA of a student with 95% or better ADA). This continues the previous trend, suggesting a strong correlation between GPA and ADA.

*Figure 7. GPA of students with 95% or higher ADA.*

As noted Figure 8, among students who had 95% or higher ADA, 44 did not have any failed classes, and only two students had one or more failing courses. This continues to reinforce the idea that attendance is positively correlated with passing or failing general education classes.
Figure 8. Pass/fail results among students with 95% or higher ADA.

**Student Body Cohort**

- **44, 96%**: Students with no failing courses
- **2, 4%**: Students with one or more failing courses

**Unintended Results**

While exploring how attendance is related to school achievement and standardized test results, it was discovered that approximately 50% of students who took the PARCC/ELA examination did not score at levels 4 or 5 (IIRC, 2015). That is concerning for several reasons, and has revealed possibly deeper challenges in curriculum and instruction that require further exploration beyond the scope of this study.

**Daily, Weekly, and Monthly Documentation of ADA and Absences**

Since the beginning of the 2015–2016 school year, ADA and absences have been monitored daily, weekly, and monthly, for both individual students and grade levels. This practice is new to MWHS; it was developed when Ken Williams (the attendance coordinator/assistant principal), the school principal, and I met in early September 2015 to discuss school goals. In our meeting, we established three areas that we wanted to improve: school attendance, AP opportunities and success, and NWEA/MAP scores.
Addressing the first area began when Williams and I teamed up with the data specialist to see what attendance data was available through Skyward, the schoolwide software system. The data specialist discovered that Skyward had the capability to report ADA per student and per grade level on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis. Beyond that, the system could also report the type of absences. Upon this discovery, we agreed on two things: first, that ADA and absence types would be documented daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. Second, that all decisions to improve student attendance needed to be data-driven.

At the second meeting with the ATTF, members began looking at archival attendance data. Table 2 displays the ADA and chronically absent rates for MWHS over the past five years (IIRC, 2015). As the table shows, since 2010, ADA has dropped by 0.5% to 1.6% annually to reach an all-time low of 90%. Moreover, since 2010, the chronically absent rate has risen by almost 2% every year to an all-time high of 6.3%.

Table 2. IIRC ADA and chronically absent student rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ADA</th>
<th>Chronically Absent Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After examining this data, the ATTF concluded that action needs to be taken to curb these dangerous trends. Also, stakeholders asked many questions about what could be causing these patterns. Members pointed to many possible culprits:
Maybe it’s a record keeping issue, considering all the attendance codes; maybe the school needs to do more in terms of monitoring or incentivizing attendance, phone calls; maybe the school needs to involve parents [if] their kids aren’t caring as much.

These statements parallel reasons in the literature review for why students are absent. Moreover, many members of the ATTF expressed gratitude for being able to see this data before it was “too late,” as stated by the board member on the task force.

In addition to analyzing the archival attendance data in Table 2, the ATTF analyzed the weekly list of students with excused and unexcused absences. This data was classified as important because it allowed the ATTF members to see what kind of absences are being documented to each student, how many students can be classified as chronically absent or truant (two terms defined in the introduction), and potential interventions.

*Table 3. Weekly excused/unexcused tardy data per student.*
The ATTF valued the data in Table 3, stating that it is important to know what kind of absences are reported; nevertheless, explicit identifications of students as chronically absent or truant are missing from the data. The ATTF recommended the following:

- Add a column to the Excel document that identifies a student’s attendance status—chronically absent or truant
- Expand the list to included students with 95% or better ADA

In addition, ADA is presently tracked daily, weekly, and monthly in an Excel spreadsheet similar to the one below here. This is a new practice that began at the outset of the 2015–2016 school year. Taking this step allows the school to see the ADA per grade level and thus identify which grade level may need interventions. These percentages were also used to establish the 95% goal, which would allow seniors an off-campus lunch.

**Table 4:** Daily, weekly, and monthly grade-level ADA data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>MWHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Oct. 5th 2015</td>
<td>98.06</td>
<td>95.67</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>94.35</td>
<td>95.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Oct. 6th 2015</td>
<td>98.06</td>
<td>94.95</td>
<td>97.68</td>
<td>96.43</td>
<td>96.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Oct. 7th 2015</td>
<td>99.51</td>
<td>97.12</td>
<td>93.04</td>
<td>96.43</td>
<td>96.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Oct. 8th 2015</td>
<td>96.15</td>
<td>97.48</td>
<td>95.36</td>
<td>96.02</td>
<td>96.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, Oct. 9th 2015</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Ending 10/08/2015</strong></td>
<td><strong>97.94</strong></td>
<td><strong>96.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>94.44</strong></td>
<td><strong>95.74</strong></td>
<td><strong>96.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen, the freshman grade level had the highest ADA every day, and as a result, for the entire week. Also, the ADA is 4–9% higher during the 2015-2016
school year than the annual ADA for the 2014–2015 school year, as reported by the IIRC. This sharp increase could be because of the school’s decision to focus on attendance as one of its improvement goals; monitoring attendance, prioritizing record-keeping, and incentivizing attendance have all played a role.
SECTION FIVE: JUDGMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Judgment

Before rendering judgments and recommendations to the readers, society, MWHS, and the intended users of this research project, I first introduced the primary and secondary research questions before providing in-depths answers that would address the questions and provide context for the recommendations on how to best improve the current status of attendance at MWHS.

How is attendance/absenteeism addressed at MWHS?

Over the past three years, average daily attendance at MWHS has been steadily declining by 1 to 1.5% each year to reach an all-time low of 90%. Furthermore, chronic absences have increased by 2% each year, to hit an all-time high of 6.3%. However, after implementing the practice of monitoring ADA on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis; addressing ADA in a schoolwide team; and having students re-engaged with attendance incentives during the 2015-2016 school year, ADA at MWHS is on the rise and very close to meeting the state standard of 92%. Also, the school has a passionate and driven administrator in Ken Williams, who has been open to my suggestions. We have made the improvement of attendance a schoolwide priority. The foundational systems and best practices for accomplishing this goal are partly in place; nevertheless, current practices could be enhanced.

In order to effectively address attendance, one must:

1. Obtain the right attendance data—move beyond ADA and collect data on truant students, chronically absent students, and regular attendees.
2. Establish an attendance committee that meets regularly.
3. Create incentives/celebrations for attendance.

4. Create in-school and community-wide awareness regarding attendance, as well as its benefits and impact on schooling.

**What are the current attendance policies and procedures at MWHS?**

As referenced in the appendices, the current attendance policies and procedures include a two-page description of what to do when your son or daughter is absent, the description and limits of excused and unexcused absences, and procedures for when a student misses a certain amount of days. The procedures also included an attendance contract, which students and parents must agree to once a student becomes chronically absent.

To enhance the current attendance policies and procedures, the following should be included:

- Goals and benefits of having good attendance
- Direction on how to access attendance information
- Broader definition of excused and unexcused terms, with examples of each
- Definitions of truant, chronically absent, and regular attendee
- Cited state law

**How well are the policies and procedures known and understood by all stakeholders?**

As referenced in Section Three, all stakeholders are at least somewhat familiar with the attendance policies and procedures. Unfortunately, finding the way to find those policies and procedures is not readily known to most stakeholders, other than
administration. Furthermore, policies are not visible throughout the school and are difficult to find on the district’s webpage.

It is recommended that attendance policies and procedures be made visible throughout the community and the school, as well as available on the school website or via a personal inquiry.

**How is attendance monitored?**

Attendance is monitored daily. Individual teachers mark attendance every hour through the Skyward management system, and that data is observed in weekly, monthly, and categories through data mining performed by the data specialist, Ken Williams, and me. Ken Williams and I generate daily, weekly, and monthly ADA reports, as well as a weekly excused/unexcused list. (Examples were provided in Section Four.) Also, attendance is monitored by the data team, a committee that meets weekly to discuss students struggling with grades, social emotional learning (SEL) needs, attendance, or behavior.

It is recommended that the data be expanded to include students with regular/good attendance of 95% or higher and that the excused/unexcused reports identify truant and chronically absent students. These data suggestions, exemplified in the literature review, should maximize all the attendance data available and give an accurate picture of what’s really happening in the school.

**How are students with good ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test scores?**

As reported in Section Four, students with “good” ADA (i.e., 95% and above) have vastly outperformed their peers with lower ADA on state and national assessments:
ACT, NWEA/MAP, and PARCC. In addition, students with at least 95% ADA tended to earn a GPA of 3.0 or above and not fail any classes. This local example echoes that of the Roby (2003) study out of Ohio, in which students’ attendance and standardized exam scores were monitored every three years, from elementary to secondary school. In that study, students with good attendance outperformed their peers by as much as 18 points in English language arts, thus increasing the achievement/opportunity gap.

It is recommended that MWHS do everything it can to increase ADA since there is a positive correlation between academic achievement and school attendance.

**How are students with poor ADA doing academically, as measured by standardized test scores?**

Students who have missed 5% of days (nine in total) are truant according to state law, at risk of performing poorly on state and national standardized assessments, have lower GPAs, and are at risk of failing classes. Also, students with ADA below 95% perform worse than their classmates with 95% or more ADA.

It is recommended that MWHS identify students with poor ADA, students who are truant or chronically absent, and students with good attendance to see if any patterns emerge.

**How much funding is MWHS subject to gaining or losing, according to its ADA?**

As reported in Section Two, MWHS is in the flat grant category of state funding based on school attendance. Thus, if MWHS and its district (which is a unit district) achieve 100% ADA for the next three years, based on the flat grant formula ($218.00\times1,374\times100\%\ =$299,532), the school district will generate approximately $30,000 more in school funding than in previous years.
It is recommended that the monetary gains possible through the improvement of ADA be known to all stakeholders in order to create awareness of how school attendance impacts school funding and spur stakeholders to action. For example, parents who are aware of ADA’s impact on school funding would be more motivated to have their child attend school on a regular basis, take sick days more seriously, and plan vacations around school schedules. In addition, by making the students—who are the most impacted by school funding—aware of this relationship, it would highlight the potential financial gains that could be used for learning resources, technology, and high-quality teachers. Moreover, teachers and administrators need to be informed of the opportunities possible through an increase in ADA, such as the ability to hire specialists, consultants, and coaches to enhance teaching and learning. Consequently, making all stakeholders aware of the impact ADA has on school funding gives them the opportunity to become part of the solution.

**Recommendations**

- Make attendance known to all stakeholders.
- Post attendance policies and procedures in the school and throughout the community.
- Continue with celebrations and recognitions; award perfect attendance certificates.
- Enhance current policies by adopting what Uppers North High School and Kroy High School have done.
- Continue to highlight the dangers of missing school.
- Inform all stakeholders of school funding as it relates to school attendance.
• Monitor data beyond ADA and type of absence; identify truants, chronic absentees, and regular attendees (Martinez, 2006).

The recommendations suggested here are products of participatory action research, literature review, and the hard work of the ATTF, stakeholders at MWHS, and its school district. If implemented with fidelity, MWHS will have an opportunity to complement its recent academic success with heightened attendance rates.
REFERENCES


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*Education World.* Retrieved from 
http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin442.shtml


From: Assistant Principal Héctor Freytas
To: Students, Administrators, Teachers, Parents, Board Member, Politicians and Local Entrepreneurs.
Date: October 7th, 2015

Greetings! As part of my dissertation work, I would like to form a committee composed of a variety of stakeholders. In my opinion, everyone both in and outside of school can play a crucial role in impacting a student’s educational journey. My dissertation will focus on attendance and is supported by a recent study in Minneapolis, which found that students who were in class 95% of the time were twice as likely to pass state language arts test as students with 85% attendance rates. Moreover, in the state of Illinois and Texas, average daily attendance is directly connected to the funding schools receive from the state in the form of General State Aid (GSA).

I would like to invite you to participate in the Attendance Team Task Force (ATTF), initial meeting at the Westmont High School Library, on Wednesday, October 21st, from 3:30 to 5pm. The size of the group will be limited to 8 stakeholders: one student, one teacher, one board member, one administrator, one local entrepreneur, one parent, one politician and myself. Membership of the ATTF will be based on first come first serve basis and to stakeholders who can commit to the following:

- Meet monthly for 1 1/2 hours.
- Participate in a Focus Group, Interview and Survey
  - 15 minutes for Survey at initial meeting.
  - 1hr. Focus Group at initial meeting
  - 30 min. Interview per participant.
- Analyze data, research best practices and present to others
  - 1hr. per meeting
- Respecting all members’ opinions and keeping information discussed in group confidential.

The purpose of this meeting, this committee and future meetings will be to review our current Attendance/Truancy Policies and Interventions, identify gaps and concerns, analyze data, and strive to create a plan that would lead to improvement in the average
daily attendance and reduction of absenteeism. I hope you are willing to be part of this very important committee.

Furthermore the minutes, recordings, focus group responses, interview responses and surveys taken by the ATTF members will be used as data. To ensure confidentiality, the surveys are anonymous, focus groups will adhere to an honor code of honesty and privacy, and interviews will be conducted individually, outside of the ATTF meeting, at the participant’s discretion.

To ensure that there are no risks for the participants of this study, the following will be done. Meeting dates and locations, after the initial meeting, will be communicated only to members via email, phone call or in person. Also, the interviews will be conducted at the participant’s leisure time, either before or after school in a location of their choice. Since I am the Assistant Principal, and pride myself in being in at almost every function both in and outside of school, it is normal for me to be talking to students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in any place before and after school. I will also use pseudonyms for school documentation and participants during the interviews; thus, they will be unidentifiable.

One of the greatest benefits for the participants in this study is the opportunity to contribute to the field of education and make a difference for the intended users, their peers. Also, by participating in this study, participants partake in a doctoral level work, which can serve as motivation and information in their future decisions to pursue and doctoral degree. Lastly, the participants will get the opportunity to collaborate with all stakeholders and for students; this may be a unique experience since their interactions with adults are limited to the classroom instruction, extracurricular opportunities and work.

If you have any questions about the research project or are interested in participating, you can call Hector Freytas, Assistant Principal at 708-415-7715 or hectorfreytas@gmail.com.

If you are a student under the age of 18, you will need your parents’ permission. If you are an adult, only your signature will be required.

You may also contact IRB Chair at National Louis University, Dr. Shaunti Knauth at 312-261-3526 or shaunti.kanuth@nl.edu.

You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson at Harrington.Gibson@nl.edu or 224-233-2290.

Thank you for your participation!

Parent Signature (Student only): ____________________  Student: ____________________
Participant Signature & Role:________________________________________________

Sincerely,

Héctor Freytes, Assistant Principal, WHS
APPENDIX B: ANNOUNCEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN VOLUNTARY SURVEY

MWHS
Office of the Assistant Principal

From: Assistant Principal Héctor Freytas
Date: September 28th, 2015.
Frequency: Daily from October 2nd through October 21st, 2015 during 2nd hr.
Announcements.

Reader: Mr. Ken Williams (pseudonym)
Are you interested in contributing to the field of education? Do you want your voice to be heard? Then you are invited to participate in a voluntary doctoral survey related to attendance. The survey is available on Google forms at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1hUneJasUSfzVb1kJwJR8BwYQZj11E29j6186g8TBX50/viewform?c=0&w=1 or scan the QR code located on this announcement. It will be open for one week, from Monday, September 28th through Friday, October 2nd, 2015. It should take no more than 10 minutes. The survey is anonymous. Thanks for your efforts!
APPENDIX C: SURVEY FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTED BY GOOGLE FORMS

Attendance/Truancy Policies & Procedures Survey: For all stakeholders

What is your role? Student, Teacher, Administrators, Board Members, Local Entrepreneur, Politician, Parent

How familiar are you with the attendance/truancy policy and procedures? *Unfamiliar, Somewhat Familiar, Very familiar*

Describe your knowledge of the attendance/truancy policy and procedures?

How familiar are you with attendance as it relates to school achievement? *Unfamiliar, Somewhat Familiar, Very Familiar*

Describe your knowledge of attendance as it relates to school achievement?

How familiar are you with attendance as it relates to school funding? *Unfamiliar, Somewhat Familiar, Very Familiar*

Describe your knowledge of attendance as it relates to school funding?

From your perspective, is there a need to improve attendance and truancy? *Yes/No*

If yes, what needs to be done to improve school attendance and reduce truancy?
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS:

STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS, BOARD MEMBERS, POLITICIANS AND LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Protocols for Students

Time: 30min each.

Location: Participant’s choice

1. What type of stakeholder are you?
2. What does ADA stand for as it relates to schooling?
3. What do you consider a good Attendance percentage? What would you want Mountain West High School’s Attendance percentage to be?
4. What was Mountain West’s ADA last year? 2 years ago?
   a. Student-What was your ADA last year?
5. Do you have access to Mountain West High School’s? Where can you find Mountain West High School’s ADA?
6. What is your role in school Attendance? What it be?
7. What do you do to promote school Attendance? What could you do?
8. Why do students go to school?
   a. Student-Why do you go to school?
9. Why do students to miss school?
   a. Student-Why do you miss school?
   b. Student-How often do you miss school?
10. What is your knowledge of school funding as it relates to school attendance?
11. What is your knowledge of academic achievement as it relates to school attendance?
12. Are attendance policies and procedures publicized? How aware are you of the attendance policies and procedures?
13. Is there a need to improve attendance?
14. What needs to be done to improve the attendance for chronically absent students?
15. Is Attendance celebrated at school? If yes, how so? Should it be?
16. What advice do you have for parents in terms of attendance?
You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by Héctor Freytas, Doctor of Education candidate from National Louis University and Assistant Principal of Westmont High School CUSD 201.

The project focuses on analyzing data, policy & procedures related to attendance/truancy. The researcher is particularly interested to evaluate the effectiveness of the current policies & procedures of attendance/truancy and finding solutions collaboratively to improve the average daily attendance (ADA) and reduce chronic absenteeism.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview. This will be conducted at a convenient time and place for you. The interview should take only 30 minutes of your time. Participation in the project is completely voluntary.

If you do not want to participate in the project, you may withdraw at any time. Your confidentiality will be protected throughout the study. Any recordings of interviews and any other data obtained from you will be kept confidential and will not be viewed by anyone but the researchers. All recordings or videotapes will be retained in a locked cabinet or other locked storage area. The recordings will be erased at the completion of the project.

To ensure that there are no risks for the participants of this study, the following will be done.
The interviews will be conducted at the participant’s leisure time, either before or after school in a location of their choice. Also, since I am the Assistant Principal, and pride myself in being in every classroom on a daily basis as well as in community events, athletic contest and extracurricular presentations it is normal for me to be talking to students, staff, board members, parents and support personnel in any place before and after school. I will also use pseudonyms for participants during the interviews; thus, they will be unidentifiable.

One of the greatest benefits for the participants in this study is the opportunity to contribute to the field of education and make a difference for the intended users, their peers. Also, by participating in this study, participants partake in a doctoral level work, which can serve as motivation and information in their future decisions to pursue a doctoral degree. Lastly, the participants will get the opportunity to collaborate with all
stakeholders and for students; this may be a unique experience since their interactions with adults are limited to the classroom and extracurricular activities.

If you have any questions about the research project, you can call Hector Freytas, Assistant Principal at 708-415-7715 or hectorfreytas@gmail.com. You may also contact IRB Chair at National Louis University, Dr. Shaunti Knauth at 312-261-3526 or shauti.kanuth@nl.edu. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson at Harrington.Gibson@nl.edu or 224-233-2290. Thank you for your participation!

Students, this form must be sign for you to participate in the interview.

Parent Signature (Student Only): ___________________________ Student Signature: ___________________________

Participant: __________________________________________

Date: ___________________________
MWHS
Office of the Assistant Principal

From: Assistant Principal Héctor Freytas

Reader: Student

Frequency: Read Daily from Tuesday, October, 13th through Friday, October 16th during second hr. Announcements.

Interview follow-up

Were you intrigued by the survey questions? Are you looking for further participation? If so, you may sign-up for confidential interviews related to the survey and attendance. This will be done on a first come, first serve basis. We need students and staff from all ethnic backgrounds, genders and ages. The interviews will be conducted one on one, for approximately 30 minutes at participant’s earliest convenience and preferred public location. If you are interested, email Mr. Freytas at hectorfreytas@gmail.com or stop by his office anytime. Also, you must sign a consent form in order to participate in the interviews. Student will require an additional signature from their parents. Forms will be available at Mr. Freytas’s office.

Sincerely,

Héctor Freytas
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ATTENDANCE TASK FORCE

(ATTFT) (FOCUS GROUP)

1. What does ADA stand for?
2. What is a good ADA?
3. Where can you find a school’s ADA?
4. What is your knowledge of ADA as it relates to State Goals and NCLB?
5. What was Westmont High School’s ADA last year? 2 years ago?
6. Is there a need to improve school attendance? If yes, why and how?
7. Is there a need to celebrate attendance at Westmont? If yes, what would you do to celebrate attendance?
8. How aware are you of the attendance policies and procedures?
9. What are the current attendance policies and procedures?
10. Are there any policies and procedures that you would change? If yes, what and why?
11. Do you have access to attendance data? Would you like access to attendance data? How?
12. Why do students come to school?
13. Why do you believe students are absent from school?
14. How does absenteeism affect our community?
15. What do other schools and communities do to address absenteeism?
16. What can you do in your role as STAKEHOLDER to improve attendance?
17. What is your knowledge of school funding as it relates to school attendance?
18. What is your knowledge of school achievement as it relates to school attendance?
APPENDIX H: GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP

I. Every participant is encouraged to speak.

II. State your role and answer the question to best of your ability.

III. If you are not sure what to respond, you may simply state, “I don’t know”
APPENDIX I: ILLINOIS INTERACTIVE REPORT CARD (IIRC) SCREEN

SHOT OF SCHOOL PROFILE
APPENDIX J: ABSENCE/TARDY POLICY REFERENCE SHEET

MWHS
Absence/Tardy Policy Reference Sheet

EXCUSED ABSENCES

- **Student illness** up to 7 times with parent/guardian contact; 3 consecutive days may require a physician’s excuse.

- **Student illness** beyond 7 times with medical documentation or determination by school nurse.

- **Quarantine** as imposed by health official.

- **Student medical appointments** with physician documentation.

- **Death** in the immediate family (parents, siblings, grandparents) – Additional information may be requested by administration.

- **Family emergency** – Additional information may be requested by administration.

- Observance of a **religious holiday**.

- **Court appearances** with documentation

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES/TARDIES

- Any absence or tardy that the parent/guardian has **not reported** to school in a timely manner.

- Any absence or tardy that the parent/guardian has **not consented** to.

- **Student illness beyond 7 times w/o medical documentation**, even with parent/guardian contact.

- **Family vacation**.

- **Court appearances without documentation**.

- Any instance of truancy is not excused.
- Absence or tardiness due to **oversleeping, transportation, or family issues** other than emergency.

MWHS works in conjunction with the Mountain West Police Department and DuPage Regional Office of Education to support student attendance.

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOLS**

- Teachers must enter student attendance within the first 5 minutes of each class period. This is a safety requirement. Students late to first period without a pass must be sent to the front office to get a late pass.

- If you mark a student absent from class and he/she enters late, Skyward is to be updated to “L” (late without a pass) or “C” (excused late with a pass).

- Teachers should refer to MWHS Tardy Plan regarding students coming late to class; see below

- 1st period attendance/tardies will also be tracked and monitored by the front office in addition to the tracking and monitoring by 1st period teachers.

- Email the Dean of Students (Mr. Williams) with any questions/concerns or assistance with any particular student.

- Teacher visibility in the hallways during passing periods provides the greatest impact for on time behavior by students.

**MWHS Tardy Intervention**

Taking accurate attendance is essential for providing effective interventions for student success. All classroom interventions (teacher detentions, phone calls home, and loss of privileges) are encouraged prior to administrative intervention plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tardy #9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tardies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX K: MOUNTAIN WEST HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

CONTRACT

MWHS
909 WoodOak Drive,
Mountain West, Illinois, 60000

Attendance Contract

_______________________ has accumulated numerous excused and unexcused absences during the 2014-2015 school year.

“My excused and unexcused absences indicate that I have not yet demonstrated my ability to comply with the attendance policy of Mountain West High School. I have read and discussed this document with my dean/counselor and am fully aware of its contents. I understand that further absences to school listed above will result in one or more of the following:”

1. Loss of school privileges (i.e. dances, parking, athletics)
2. Detention(s) after school, Friday Detentions, Parent Conferences, and Truancy Referral
3. Truancy ticket

At this point, **I understand that the only way I will be excused from school is with a doctor’s note.**

My signature indicates my willingness to change my behavior in order to maximize my potential as a student at Westmont High School.

STUDENT_______________________________________________________________

PARENT/GUARDIAN_____________________________________________________

COUNSELOR___________________________________________________________

DEAN__________________________________________________________________

DATE______________________________
**APPENDIX L: TRUANCY INTERVENTION REFERENCE SHEET**

Community Unit School District 201  
Truancy Intervention Reference Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Attendance Team Action</th>
<th>Parent/Student Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stage 1:  
3 Unexcused Absences  
>3 Tardies | • Send initial letter with “Attendance Matters” brochure  
• Complete “Summary of Actions Taken” form  
• Add attendance data and copy of letter to student file | • Parent receives initial letter and brochure |
| Stage 2:  
6 Unexcused Absences  
>6 Tardies | • Send second letter certified mail  
• Contact parent and arrange a conference or home visit.  
• Update “Summary of Actions Taken” form  
• Add information from this stage, including attendance data to student file | • Parent receives second letter  
• Parent receives a phone call  
• Parent and student attend conference or receive a home visit  
• Parent and/or student sign attendance improvement plan |
| Stage 3:  
9 Unexcused Absences  
>9 Tardies | • Send third letter certified mail  
• Arrange parent conference and complete “Attendance Improvement Plan”  
• Update “Summary of Actions Taken” form  
• Contact DuPage ROE Truancy Team.  
• Add information from this stage, including attendance data to student file.  
• Contact the Westmont Police Department | • Parent receives and signs for third letter  
• Assistance from DuPage Truancy Team.  
• Possible truancy ticket issued by the Westmont Police Department |
## APPENDIX M: DATA TEAM INTERVENTION PLAN: INTERVENTION TRACK

Data Team Intervention Plan  
Intervention Track

Student Name: ____________________  
Date: ____________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second letter home (certified)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone call home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home visit/Conference with parent and student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Assessment completed (Social Worker)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Improvement Plan signed and dated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROE Truancy contacted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School Detention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday Detention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmont Police Department notified and warning issued to student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule Change/Adjusted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Incentive/Recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX N: MWHS/ATTENDANCE LETTER

Monday, December 8, 2014

Jane Doe
308 E 555 St APT 4
Mountain West, Illinois
6000

Ms. Jane Doe

To date, Havanna has accumulated the following:

____ 9.0 ______ Excused Absences
____ 2.5 ______ Unexcused Absences

This letter has been sent to you to help communicate how important attendance is for your child at MWHS. This letter provides suggested actions you can take to help them successfully attend school. Attached with this letter is the MWHS attendance policy. We would like the opportunity to work with you and your child to develop a plan of action that will help improve their success at Westmont High School. The continued illnesses, school refusal and other attendance issues have impeded their ability to be successful. The following interventions have been and/or will be implemented to help:

Interventions that have been attempted:
• Home visits/contacts (dean, social worker, detective)
• Phone conversations with parent
• Social worker conversations with student and parent
• Schedule modification/Academic support
• Attendance contract
• Mandatory doctor’s note to excuse all absences/school nurse check
• Parent/Student/Administration conference
• Regional Office of Education referral for truancy

Please contact me at 630-444-8000 to schedule a conference. A doctor’s note is required for all absences from this point forward. We want to help improve your child’s success both in and out of school. The absences from school have hindered their ability to reach their full potential and we would like to develop and implement a plan to help improve their success rate.

Sincerely,

Ken Williams
MWHS
Assistant Principal/Dean of Students
630-444-8000
Dear John and Jane,

On behalf of MWHS, I would like to extend a warm welcome back to the 2014-2015 school year. As we prepare to build on last year’s success, I would like to set a time to meet with both you and Scott at MWHS on August 5th or 6th.

The purpose of this meeting is to establish goals for the school year and develop a system of support to help Scott successfully pursue those goals. Research shows that disciplinary issues and absences have an adverse effect on academic achievement. On a weekly basis, Scott will meet with me to review his progress in the following areas: behavioral referrals, attendance / tardy issues and academic progress. The purpose of the Check-In, Check-Out program is to build a positive relationship between the Dean’s Office and your child in order to increase their academic success while, at the same time, decreasing disciplinary issues.

The Check-In, Check-out program provides an additional support system to help ensure the success of Scott at MWHS. If you have any questions regarding the program, please contact me at 630-444-8000. Thank you in advance for your continued support of Scott and MWHS and your commitment to his success.

We have also set up a summer school program specific to Scott’s academic requirements. Scott will be working with Ms. Zak on Mondays through Thursdays from August 4th-August 14th from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at MWHS. Scott will be completing Algebra 1 and English to stay on track for TCD and graduation. Please contact me if there are any concerns regarding this schedule. We want to help Scott be successful at MWHS.

Sincerely,

Ken Williams
Assistant Principal/Dean of Students
MWHS
630-444-8100
APPENDIX P: MWHS PARTNERSHIP LETTER

Mountain West Community Partnership

Proposal: In service with the Mountain West community, Mountain West School District #21 would like to partner with the Mountain West Police Department to improve student attendance and increase the graduation rate.

Purpose: Students who are chronically absent from school have a higher rate of dropout, which also results in a higher rate of criminal activity. Students who graduate high school are more likely to gain employment and are less likely to be arrested.

Reasons for a village ordinance:
- Provide students who lack support at home and individual initiative with incentive for attending school every day.
- Target students who are chronically absent from school, who struggle even with all of the support systems provided by MWHS, with an additional support system as a community.
- Create a shared community effort in battling high school drop-out rates and helping students succeed after high school.
- Increase communication and support for parents and the community in helping our students attend school and pursue opportunities after high school.
- Fewer high school drop outs increases socio-economic status for all community members.
- A high school diploma matters to individuals, communities, and society. High school graduates are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable income, and aid in job generation.
- If we had already reached the Grad Nation goal, the additional graduates from a single class would have increased GDP by an estimated $6.6 billion annually.
- Graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or require social services. They have better health and longer life expectancy. High school graduates are more likely to be engaged in their communities, with higher rates of voting and volunteering.
- There is an increasing awareness that improving graduation rates is important, not only for the future well-being of individuals but also for the economic and social well-being of the states and the nation.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, on average, high school dropouts earn 28% less per year than high school graduates, and over 61% less than college graduates.
- The unemployment rate for high school dropouts is one-third higher than for high school graduates, and almost triple the level for college graduates with a Bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Over a lifetime it is estimated that a high school dropout earns over $400,000 less than a high school graduate.
APPENDIX Q: ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

MWHS
Attendance Improvement Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Basis of the Referral</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**STUDENT ACTIONS:**
For the rest of the year, I will work hard to achieve the following goals:

- I will come to school on time everyday
- I will not accumulate any additional unexcused absences or tardies
- I will join a club or activity at school or in the community. Name club/activity
- I will improve my academic standing (Subject to improve)
- I will decrease problematic behavior (Discipline referrals)
- Other action(s) I will take

**DATA TRACKING CHART:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Baseline Data Date</th>
<th>Update #1 Date</th>
<th>Update #2 Date</th>
<th>Update #3 Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tardies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline Referrals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance Team Member Actions:**
As an Attendance Team Member, I will provide the following services to assist this student in achieving his/her goals:

- Family Contacts (circle all that apply)-Home visits/Phone Calls/Letters/Conferences
- Student Contacts (circle all that apply) – School Conference/Monitor Progress
- Data Team Referral
- Contact DuPage ROE
- Refer to additional services. Please indicate
- Other
School Staff Support:
School success is a responsibility that must be shared by the student, parent, and the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator/Staff Signature</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardian Notification:</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Illinois, the law states that children MUST attend school until the age of 17 (beginning 1/05)

By signing the first line, you acknowledge that a conference has taken place and you agree that attendance services will be provided to your son or daughter.

Please remember that your child WILL be referred to DuPage County Truancy Court if he or she misses an excessive number of days whether or not you receive services from our attendance team. Per Illinois School Code 105ILCS 5/26 10, consequences may include being found guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and fined up to $500. The Mountain West Police Department will also be working in conjunction with District 201 in maintaining attendance.

I accept the services provided by the Attendance Team:

| Parent/Guardian Signature | Date |
APPENDIX R: ARCHIVAL ATTENDANCE DATA AS PRESENTED BY THE ILLINOIS INTERACTIVE REPORT CARD (IIRC)

![Image of the Illinois Interactive Report Card]

Mountain West H.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>English Learners (%)</th>
<th>With Disabilities (%)</th>
<th>Low Income (%)</th>
<th>Homeless (%)</th>
<th>Parental Involvement (%)</th>
<th>Attendance (%)</th>
<th>Mobility (%)</th>
<th>Chronic Tardiness (%)</th>
<th>High School Dropout Rate</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>8.9</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>91.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>84.3</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>35.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>91.9</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX S: ATTENDANCE POLICIES & PROCEDURES EFFECTIVENESS

TOOL SUPPORTED BY GOOGLE FORMS

Attendance Policy & Procedures Effectiveness Tool

Questions are aligned to best practices, current research and high attendance expectations

1. After initial review of Attendance Policy & Procedures of school under analysis, what was your initial takeaway? Open/Ended

2. Do the Attendance Policy & Procedures of school under analysis explicitly state attendance goals for the school or district? Yes/No
   Tip: to achieve % of ADA, to improve

3. Does the school under analysis have an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of 95% or higher? Yes/No
   Tip: 95% is the definition of "good" or "regular" attendance according to research

4. Is the importance and benefits of compulsory Attendance clearly articulated in the policy/handbook? Yes/No
   Tip: statement of importance of attendance

5. Do Attendance Policy & Procedures negatively impact grades or credits? Yes/No

6. Are credits withheld for a certain amount or type of absences? Are grades lowered? Is summer school mandated? Yes/No

7. Are excused and unexcused absences clearly defined? Yes/No

8. Are consequences for unexcused absences clearly stated? Yes/No

9. Are the terms: truant, chronically absent and regular attendance clearly defined?
   1 out of 3 terms, 2 out of 3 terms, All terms, No terms

10. Are reporting absences procedures easily found and clearly defined? Yes/No
APPENDIX T: AGENDA ATTENDANCE TEAM TASK FORCE MEETINGS

(ATTF)

Attendance Team Task Force (ATTF)
Agenda
November 16th, 2015

Present: John Von Mannderbald (Principal), Saul Jordan (Student), Louie Frei (Assistant Principal), Jim Williams (Former Mayor/Village Trustee), Maria Fire (High School Teacher), Esperanza Vail (Junior High Teacher), Susan Bygris (Parent), Michelle Paz (Parent/Local Entrepreneur), Barry Headstrong (Board Member).

I. Review Norms, Decision Making & Introductions 2min
   a. What we are?
      i. A participatory action research team/advisory board
   b. Purpose
      i. To review our current Attendance/Truancy Policies and Interventions, identify gaps and concerns, analyze data and strive to create a plan or give recommendations that would lead to improvement in the average daily attendance and reduction of absenteeism.
   c. Decision Making
      i. Consultative
   d. Norms
      i. Respect for all opinions, active participation, solution oriented.

II. Building Capacity-15min
   a. Literature Review
      i. Terms
         1. ADA
         2. Truant
         3. Chronically Absent
         4. Regular Attendance
      ii. Books/Articles
         1. IIRC
         2. Attendance Works
         3. ISBE School Funding

III. Data Analysis-45min
   a. Qualitative Data
      i. Attendance Policies & Procedures
      ii. Surveys
      iii. Interview
      iv. Focus Group
   b. Quantitative Data
      i. IIRC Data
I. Introductions and norms-10min
   a. What do effective teams do well?

II. Decision Making Style-5min
    a. Command
    b. Consultative
    c. Consensus
    d. Voting

III. Attendance Survey-20min
     a. Complete

IV. Attendance Focus Group-30min
    a. Complete

V. Dates for next meeting
   a. Late November

VI. Interview Dates-5min
    a. What works for you?

---

Attendance Team Task Force (ATTF)

Agenda

October, 2015

Present: John Von Mannderbald (Principal), Saul Jordan (Student), Louie Frei (Assistant Principal), Jim Williams (Former Mayor/Village Trustee), Maria Fire (High School Teacher), Esperanza Vail (Junior High Teacher), Susan Bygris (Parent), Michelle Paz (Parent/Local Entrepreneur), Barry Headstrong (Board Member).
VII. Independent Study - 1 min
a. Research best practices for Improving Attendance
APPENDIX U: PARENT LINK REPORT ON EMAILED INVITATION TO JOIN THE ATTENDANCE TEAM TASK FORCE (ATTF)

Email

Total recipients: 452

- **Delivered** – Email accepted by provider: 404 (89%)
- **The recipient has no email address**: 40 (8%)
- **Invalid email address**: 2 (<1%)
- **Not delivered – email address is blocked**: 2 (<1%)
- **Unknown mailbox**: 2 (<1%)
- **Email deferred by provider (will try later)**: 1 (<1%)
### APPENDIX V: FOUNDATION FUNDING FORMULA EXAMPLE

**GENERAL STATE AID ENTITLEMENT FOR 2014-2015 PAYABLE IN 2015-2016**

#### PART I - COMPUTATIONAL DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>06-016-0000-02</td>
<td>COOK ROE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Division of Funding and Disbursement Services 100 North First Street Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**A. 2013 Org. Equalized Assessed Val. (EAV)**

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<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
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<tbody>
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**B. 3% Cap (Cook County Only)**

<table>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**C. Enterprise Zone Allowances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**D. General Authority Allowances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**E. Property Tax Appeal Board Decisions**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**F. Other EAV Adjustments**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**G. 2013 Adjusted EAV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**1. EAV used for GSA calculations (lower of G or FF)**

<table>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**2. Best 3 Months Average Daily Attendance (ADA):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**3. 2013 Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) (Taxable in 2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**4. Calculation Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**5. DHS 5-Year Low Income Count Average**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**6. District Low Income Concentration (Line 4 divided by the most recent ADA from Line 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**7. Available Local Resources (Line 1 x Line 4 = Line 3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**8. Local Resources Per Pupil (Line 7 divided by Line 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**9. Percentage of Adjusted (Line 2 divided by $6,119)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**PART II - FOUNDATION FORMULA CALCULATIONS (Line 5 is less than .06)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**1. $6,119 X ADA (Part I, Line 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**2. Available Local Resources (Part I, Line 7)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**3. Foundation Formula Claim Amount (Line 1 X Line 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**4. Foundation Formula Claim Per Pupil (Line 3 / Part I, Line 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**PART III - POVERTY GRANT CALCULATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**1. LIC Conc. Level (Part I - 6) Squared X $2,700 + 294.25 = LIC Factor:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
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**2. X DHS Average:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</table>

**3. Calculated FY2016 Poverty Amount:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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**PART IV - SUMMARY OF 2014-2015 CLAIM PAYABLE IN 2015-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**1. Gross Entitlement (Poverty Grant + Formula Claim Amount)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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**Adjustments**

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**Prior Year EAV Roller**

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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</table>

**Adjustment due to prior year’s EAV certificate of error**

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<thead>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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**Proration Adjustment for prior year’s Pab and CoE**

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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**Adjustment of a field audit finding on a previous claim**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>Illinois State Board of Education</th>
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<tbody>
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**Total Adjustments**

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**Net Entitlement (Gross Entitlement - Total Adjustments)**

<table>
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<th>Code</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
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**PART V - HOLD HARMLESS GRANT**

<table>
<thead>
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**PAYMENT SUMMARY**

<table>
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<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

**Proration Percentage:** 0.920635479

**Payment Total Subtracted Via Proration:** 7,394,800.54

**Proposed Payment Total:** 6,472,246.34
### GENERAL STATE AID ENTITLEMENT FOR 2014-2015 PAYABLE IN 2015-2016

#### PART I - COMPUTATIONAL DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Formula Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2013 Orig. Equalized Assessed Val. (EAV)</td>
<td>$905,519,624</td>
<td>3,5709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>7% Cap (Cook County Only)</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>BB: 2012 Original EAV: $974,873,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Enterprise Zone Abatements</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>CC: 2012 Operating Tax Rate: 3.281006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Property Tax Appraisal Board Decisions</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>(E x E) PRIOR YEAR EAV USED FOR GAS CALCULATION: $974,873,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prior Year EAV Adjustments</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>FF: PRIOR YEAR EAV X EUR ((E x DD) - E): $952,016,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2013 Adjusted EAV</td>
<td>$905,519,624</td>
<td>3,166.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>EAV used for GSA calculations (lower of G or FF)</td>
<td>$905,519,624</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2013 Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) (incurred in 2014)</td>
<td>$217,429.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Calculation Rate</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>DHS 3-Year Low Income Count Average</td>
<td>12: 2,101.00, 13: 1,890.00, 14: 1,773.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>District Low Income Concentration (Line 5 divided by the most recent ADA from Line 2)</td>
<td>6135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Available Local Resources (Line 1 X Line 4 + Line 3)</td>
<td>$21,167,410.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Local Resources Per Pupil (Line 7 divided by Line 2)</td>
<td>$6,705.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Percentage of $6,115 (Line 8 divided by $6,115)</td>
<td>1.0908</td>
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</table>

#### PART II - ALTERNATE FORMULA CALCULATIONS (Line 9 is greater than or equal to .95 but less than 1.75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 9</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.53</td>
<td>(Part I, Line 9) minus .33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Line 1 divided by .82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.02</td>
<td>Line 2 x .02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07 minus Line 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.0650</td>
<td>Amount per ADA ($6,115 X Line 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$403.85</td>
<td>Alternate Formula Claim Amount (Line 5 X Part I, Line 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PART III - POVERTY ORIG.CALCULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Part I - L-6) Squared x $2,700 = 254,525 = DIA Factor: 1.0623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Calculated FY2016 Poverty Amount: 2,534,907.61</td>
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</table>
## APPENDIX X: FLAT GRANT FORMULA EXAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td>DUPage ROE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT NAME</td>
<td>DUPage ROE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### GENERAL STATE AID ENTITLEMENT FOR 2014-2015 PAYABLE IN 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART I - COMPUTATIONAL DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 2013 Org. Equalized Assessed Val. (EAV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 7% Cap (Cook County Only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Enterprise Zone Allowances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. General Authority Allowances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Property Tax Appeal Board Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Other EAV Adjustments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. 2013 Adjusted EAV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART II - FLAT GRANT FORMULA CALCULATIONS (Line 9 is greater than or equal to 1.75)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 9: Flattened Adjusted EAV for Fiscal Year 2014-2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART III - POVERTY GRANT CALCULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. LIC Conc. Level (Part 1 L-5) Squared X $2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. X DHS Average:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. = Calculated FY2014 Poverty Amount:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART IV - SUMMARY OF 2014-2015 CLAIM PAYABLE IN 2015-2016

1. Gross Entitlement (Poverty Grant + Formula Claim Amount) | $852,180.88 |

   Adjustments:
   - Prior Year EAV Rollover | $1,306.98 |
   - Prior Year EAV Rollover | $1,306.98 |
   - Prior Year EAV Rollover | $1,306.98 |

   Total Adjustments | $84.46 |

2. Net Entitlement (Gross Entitlement - Total Adjustments) | $852,265.13 |

### PART V - HOLI HARMLESS GRANT

HH Base: $391,062.17 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAYMENT SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provision Percentage:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment Total Subtracted Via Proration:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prorated Payment Total:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Idee 5433 65F**

**Illinois State Board of Education**

**12/07/2015**
APPENDIX Y: TERMS USED IN THE CALCULATION OF GENERAL STATE AID

CPPRT = Corporate Personal Property Replacement Taxes

EAV = Equalized Assessed Valuation

ELR = Extension Limitation Ratio

GSA = General State Aid

OTR = Operating Tax Rate

ADA = Greater of the Prior Year Best Three Months Average Daily Attendance (ADA) or Prior Three-Year Average

GSA EAV = smaller of (Budget Year EAV, Extension Limitation EAV)

Foundation Level (FLEVEL) = $6,119 for fiscal year 2016

Available Local Resources = (GSA EAV x RATE + CPPRT) / ADA

Local Percentage = Available Local Resources / FLEVEL

Where:

RATE = 2.30 percent if Elementary

1.05 percent if High School

3.00 percent if Unit

And Where: Extension Limitation EAV = Prior Year EAV x Extension Limitation Ratio (ELR)

ELR = (Budget Year EAV x Budget Year Limiting Rate) / (Prior Year EAV x Prior Year OTR)

Foundation Formula
GSA is calculated using the Foundation formula if the district percentage of local wealth per pupil is less than 93 percent of the Foundation Level. The grant is calculated as:

\[
GSA_{\text{Foundation}} = (\text{FLEVEL} - \text{Available Local Resources per Pupil}) \times \text{ADA ISBE State Funding and Forecasting.}
\]

**Alternate Formula**

GSA is calculated using the Alternate formula if the district percentage of local wealth is at least 93 percent but less than 175 percent of the Foundation Level. This formula provides between seven percent and five percent of the FLEVEL per ADA. The grant is calculated as:

\[
GSA_{\text{Alternate}} = \text{FLEVEL} \times \text{ADA} \times (0.07 - ((\text{Local Percentage} - 0.93) / 0.82) \times 0.02).
\]

**Flat Grant Formula**

GSA is calculated using the Flat Grant if the district percentage of local wealth per pupil is at least 175 percent of the Foundation Level. The grant is calculated as:

\[
GSA_{\text{Flat Grant}} = \text{ADA} \times 218.
\]