

Student and Faculty Perceptions of the Causes and Solutions to Truancy

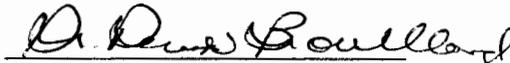
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of students and faculty regarding the possible causes of truancy, effectiveness of current methods in reducing truancy, and potential solutions for reducing truancy. The subjects in the study were 661 students ranging from 9th grade to 12th grade and 101 faculty subjects including administrators, teachers, counselors/psychologists, and other school staff.

There were two surveys used in the study, a student version and a faculty version. The student survey consisted of a demographic section and eight questions. The faculty survey also consisted of a demographic section and eight questions similar to the student survey. The data from the surveys was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. In addition, a chi square analysis was used between student and faculty data.

The results of the study indicated that there are significant differences between student and faculty perceptions at Eau Claire Memorial High School in regards to why students skip or miss class. In addition, there were significant differences between student and faculty perceptions in several other areas of the study including: the perception if parents care if students skip or miss class, if teachers care if students skip class, and perceptions in regards to what works to prevent truancy.

From the results of the study it was recommended that all the “key players” in the school district assemble to address why students may be skipping class at their respective school. Also, identify interventions that meet the needs of all individuals involved including: students, parents, school faculty, and the community.

Because truancy is often the product of four main issues related to family difficulty, school factors, community/home issues, and individual issues, it is imperative that each school identify the causes of truancy correlated to their student population.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Truancy, or unexcused school absences from school, has increased from 11.4% in 2002-2003 to 17.6% in 2003-2004 in the Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) over the last two years. According to the Manual to combat truancy published by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, truancy is the “gateway to crime” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, p. 1). Voluminous research indicates that school truancy is closely correlated to other social problems, including academic failure, juvenile delinquency, gang activity, and substance abuse (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). In addition, truancy requires schools to devote resources to contacting and meeting with parents and guardians, meeting and disciplining truant students, and preparing paperwork for referrals to the municipal and circuit court system (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). This is often time that school administrators and clerical staff could be utilizing to complete other tasks within the school.

Truancy has been an ongoing issue in the United States and in the state of Wisconsin over the past several years. In the state of Wisconsin, 1.6 % of students enrolled in public schools are truant on any given day, accounting for 15,600 students (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). The state percentage of high school students at the habitual truant level was at 15.4% in the 2002-2004 school years (Eau Claire Area School District Truancy Manual, 2004-2005). Due to these high numbers, the state of Wisconsin made significant changes to its truancy law in 1997. The new act is called Wisconsin Act 239 and went into effect July 1, 1998. The act allows municipalities to enact ordinances against simple truancy and gives them the option of issuing citations or levying other sanctions on the first occurrence of truancy, before habitual

truancy has a chance to occur (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). Furthermore, in 2004, the Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) went one step further and implemented a tougher punishment and earlier intervention. According to Ms. Robyn Criego, associate principal at Eau Claire Memorial High School, the new initiative will allow truant students to be ticketed by police after three unexcused absences and require them to report to the Eau Claire County Court (personal communication, September 13, 2004). The student will have the option to pay a fifty dollar fine or request a trial.

School attendance is an important factor in the development of a child's future. Success in school often leads to a bright and promising future for a student. However, many students stray from school and become involved in negative activities such as substance abuse, delinquent behavior, and gang activity. In an article by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention titled *Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems*, highlights that for many students, truancy may be a first step to a lifetime of unemployment, crime, and incarceration (Garry, 1996). In a quote by a California deputy assistant attorney who handles truancy cases he says "I have never seen a gang member who wasn't truant first" (Garry, 1996, p. 1). Thus it is imperative that parents, teachers, and local police agencies collaborate together to target truant students before they are involved in the criminal justice system.

Not only does truancy have an immediate effect on the student, it also extends far into the student's adult years. Adults who were truant as teenagers are much more likely to have poorer health and mental health, lower paying jobs, an increased chance of living in poverty, more reliance on welfare support, children who exhibit problem behaviors, and an increased likelihood of incarceration (Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). Furthermore, it is imperative to identify truancy at

its earliest stages and intervene before it has an impact on the student, school, community, society, and student's future adulthood.

The consequences of truancy have been recognized and are not unknown to the school and community. Not only is truancy a predictor of low achievement, delinquency, and other social problems, it also has a huge financial impact (Colorado Foundation For Families and Children, n.d.). Often the financial impact of truancy is passed on to taxpayers through the cost of court time, placement in foster care or other out of home institutions, and to personnel and fees paid to attorneys identified to represent the school in truancy proceedings. In addition, truancy costs school districts hundreds of thousands of dollars each school year in lost state and federal funds that are based on daily attendance figures (Garry, 1996). Local businesses are also impacted by truancy, often costing them additional funds and time to train uneducated workers (Garry, 1996).

Research has identified many causes of truancy including school related problems, family related problems, and individual difficulties (Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). Furthermore, truancy may occur at all grade levels, including elementary, middle, and high school. According to the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (2000), many school administrators believe that truancy during elementary school is more often the parents' or guardians' fault because they do not send their children to school. However, many middle and high school students are more often truant as a result of their own decisions.

This study is an essential first step in bringing together different stakeholders with differing perspectives with concrete methods to reduce chronic truancy. By determining the specific reasons behind truancy and the solutions to reduce truancy identified by these two

groups, Eau Claire Memorial High School can more effectively implement methodology that these two groups will stand behind and be invested in.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions by Eau Claire Memorial High School students and faculty regarding the possible causes of truancy, the effectiveness of current methods in reducing truancy, and potential solutions for truancy. Data will be collected via a survey distributed during several different meetings with students and staff during the fall of 2004. The student group will consist of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors from the general population at Eau Claire Memorial High School. The faculty group will consist of teachers, counselors, administrative staff, and other support staff.

Research Objectives

There are four objectives this study will address. They are:

1. The possible causes and factors related to truancy.
2. The degree of school staff and parental concern regarding truancy.
3. The perceived effectiveness and awareness of current methods for reducing or preventing truancy.
4. Identify possible new or unique preventative measure to reduce or prevent truancy as reported by students and faculty.

Definition of Terms

These are the terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding:

“*Acceptable excuse*” – Permission of the parent/guardian/legal custodian of a pupil, within limits of policies on truancy established by the school in which the pupil is enrolled. In the event of an emergency or unforeseeable circumstance, such permission is

expected to be communicated in writing from the parent/guardian/legal custodian to the school, prior to the absence.

Habitual Truant – Section 118.16 (1) (a) Wisconsin Statutes - Means a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of 5 or more days on which school is held during a school semester.

Municipal ordinances - A municipality may enact an ordinance prohibiting simple truancy in addition to prohibiting habitual truancy.

Truancy - Section 118.16 (1) (c) Wisconsin Statutes – Any absence of part or all of one or more days from school during which the school attendance officer, principal, or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent or guardian of the absent pupil.

Assumptions and Limitations

There are several assumptions of this study. They are:

1. All parents/guardians will sign the consent forms and return the forms to the students' homeroom teacher.
2. All students in the sample group will answer each survey item honestly.
3. All students in the sample group will return the survey.
4. All students in the sample group will interpret each survey item in the same manner.
5. All faculty in the sample group will answer each survey item honestly.
6. All faculty in the sample group will return the survey.
7. All faculty in the sample group will interpret each survey item in the same manner.

There are several limitations of this study. They are:

1. The survey pool is that of a mid-sized Midwestern school and does not include ethnically and racially diverse pools.
2. The sample population of faculty and students selected may not be representative of the total population of faculty and students in the school district in west central Wisconsin.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Students skip school every day for a variety of reasons that many teachers, counselors, and parents have not identified. Whether a student skips school because of a school related issue such as a problem with a peer or a teacher, a family issue such as babysitting a sibling, or because of an individual difficulty such as a social problem or drug problem, it is imperative that parents, school officials, and local agencies are aware of the issue and know how to address it. This chapter will discuss the causes of truancy, potential solutions to truancy, and the effectiveness of current methods in reducing truancy.

Causes of Truancy

Males and females in elementary, middle, and high school are truant everyday across the United States. Why they are not staying in school and choosing to skip class and engage in delinquent activities is a question many parents, teachers, and police agencies are trying to answer. Students skip class for a variety of reasons unique to themselves and their community. Understanding why students skip class is the first step in fighting the battle of truancy. This section of the literature review will describe the family, school, community/home, and individual causes of truancy.

Family

Ample research as shown that family issues are a huge factor correlated with truancy and school absenteeism in the United States (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). Family causes may consist of a variety of issues including lack of guidance or parental supervision, domestic violence at home, poverty, socioeconomic status (SES), drug or alcohol abuse in the home, lack

of understanding of truancy laws, differing attitudes toward education, or the need to babysit younger siblings at home (Baker, Sigmon,& Nugent, 2001).

According to Reid (1999), many truants endure a regular schedule of failure at school and a fight for survival at home and find themselves having to cope in situations where the “laws of the jungle” apply. Reid identified seventeen risk factors of one’s home environment that makes a student at risk to be truant. They include:

- A broken home in which divorce, separation, or “mixed” siblings are often the norm.
- Families where the father or father-figure is away from the home for a long period of time, either for reasons of work or any other reasons.
- Families with an above average number of children.
- Families living in overcrowded conditions.
- Families living in council-owned housing.
- Families living in poor quality and/or old housing.
- Families involved with social services, either for reasons overcoming or experiencing marital disharmony.
- Single parent families.
- Families who have poor material conditions within the home.
- Families where the parent(s) are unable to cope with a single or variety of social pathologies which threaten their lifestyles and lead to abnormal conditions within the home. Such factors may include: alcoholism, physical illness, violence, abuse, familial conflicts, and other stress factors.
- Families where the parent(s) are uncooperative and/or hostile to authority figures. Such figures may include: external support staff, teachers, and social workers.

- Families where the parent(s) are not interested in their children's progress at school.
- Families where the parent(s) do not insist their children attend school, or take no notice of their absence and often condone it.
- Families which do not insist on their offspring's prompt attendance at school as manifested by their children oversleeping, being late, and failing to catch the school bus.
- Families where the parents are passive victims of a dreadful environment and unsure of their constitutional rights.
- Families where the children are left unattended for long periods of time or where the children have minimal contact with adults.
- Families with criminal records and/or convictions.

This list does not reveal every family issue correlated to truancy, nor is every child raised in a family environment similar to the ones listed going to be a truant student. The list merely provides an idea for many to imagine what numerous students face on a daily basis before they get to school or what they have or do not have when they return home from school. It may be difficult for teachers, counselors, and support staff who have been raised with middle-class social values to appreciate the full extent and meaning of the deprivation that many of the students they teach experience (Reid, 1999).

The researcher has received a first hand experience of the deprivation that students face before school while working for a Truancy and Abatement Program in west central Wisconsin. The researcher attempted to do a home visit of a student who the school reported as unexcused for the morning. When the researcher approached the home, he was let into the home by an unknown male. As he looked around the living room, he noticed several adults sleeping on the floor and the couches. When the researcher woke the student's mother, she reported that she was

unaware of where her child was. The researcher then informed her that the school had contacted him to inform her that her child was not in school and marked down as unexcused for the morning. The mother went to check her child's bedroom, and there he was, sleeping in his bed. While the researcher transported the student to school, he reported that his mother often has people over late and does not wake him up for school. The troubling issue with this scenario is now the student will end up facing consequences from the school and the criminal justice system due to his mother's irresponsibility and poor parenting skills.

Socioeconomic status is another risk factor correlated to family and truancy (Reid, 1999). According to Reid (1999), truant students are likely to stem from socioeconomic backgrounds including:

- Families who are at the lower end of the social scale. They may possess jobs in unskilled or semi-skilled areas such as laboring or cleaning.
- Families where paternal unemployment or irregular employment is the norm.
- Families who are on a low income.
- Families where maternal unemployment, inability to find work, or full or part-time employment in low income occupations is prevalent.
- Families where the children are supplied with free school meals.
- Families on income support.
- Families with severe financial or financial management difficulties.
- Homes caught in a poverty trap in which the culture of social exclusion is the norm.
- Homes where the children eat poor, low quality food, and are poorly clothed.
- Families with transport difficulties, especially in rural areas.

This is not an exhausted list of all the socioeconomic factors correlated with truancy, but a few that Reid (1999) identified. This supports the notion that sometimes students are not in control of their environment and their future educational success. Often students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds become “victims of learned helplessness” (Woolfolk, 1995, p. 163). Students from these backgrounds may see older relatives dropping out of school to work and survive. Furthermore, the “learned helplessness” may be passed down from one generation to the next and is soon the expectation to drop out of school and work.

School

Schools may also cause a student to be truant. Such school factors may include the school climate, school size and location, attitudes of teachers, bullying and school safety, attitudes of students, and inflexibility in meeting the diverse cultural and learning styles of the students (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). Furthermore, often schools have inconsistent procedures in place for dealing with chronic absenteeism and may not have meaningful consequences available for truant youth (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001).

Oftentimes the school may be in as much fault for the level of truancy as the parents or students. A school’s disposition and policies on how they address school absenteeism can directly influence the rate of truancy. Oftentimes a school’s lack of consistency and uniformity to attendance and attendance policies can directly impact the number of students skipping class on a daily basis (Colorado Foundation For Families and Children, n.d.). Students may get lost in the shuffle of teachers reporting absences or teachers may not accurately report on a daily basis. Furthermore, students are much more likely to miss class if they believe that the classroom environment is chaotic or boring, or that the teachers do not listen to them (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Students are often much smarter than they get credit for and can sense any lack of respect

a teacher may be displaying for them. Often this lack of respect for students and the neglect or failure to meet diverse student needs may cause a student to miss class (Colorado Foundation For Families and Children, n.d.).

According to Reid (1999), school causes of truancy can be divided into three categories: school-related factors, student-related factors, and teacher-related factors. All three of the factors may play a role together in relation to a student not attending school, or one by itself may be the sole reason why a student is not attending school. Examples of school-related factors that cause students to miss school include: homework policies, bullying and teasing, local transportation issues, gender and ethnic differences, and poor relationships between home and school communication (Reid, 1999).

The community manifestation on school crime and violence including: bullying, gangs, substance abuse, and the possession of guns and weapons could be a direct cause of truancy (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998). The media appears to be very involved when an incident of violence occurs at school, thus placing fear in many students across the nation. However, the issue of fearful students and violence at school is not a matter to take lightly. In 1991 approximately 56% of juvenile victimization occurred in school or on school property; 72% of personal thefts occurred in school; and 23% of violent juvenile victimization happened in school or on school property (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). In addition, according to a report by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, between the years of 1986 and 1990, there were 71 handgun-related deaths and 201 wounded at schools across the nation (Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). From this data and such incidents as the shootings at Columbine, it is not surprising that many students fear going to school.

In addition to gangs and violence, confrontations between other students and bullies can create a sense of fear in students and hesitation to go to school. In a 1993 survey by USA WEEKEND, based on mail-in responses of 65,193 students in grades 6-12, 37% of students reported that they did not feel safe in school. Furthermore, 50% knew of a student who changed schools to feel safer (Ansley; cited in Ingersoll & LeBouef, 1997). Also, of the students involved in the study, 43% reported avoiding school restrooms, 20% avoided school hallways, and 45% avoided school grounds (Ansley; cited in Ingersoll & LeBouef, 1997).

In addition to school-related factors associated with truancy, Reid (1999) also identified several student-related factors that cause truancy. They include: issues associated with adolescences and maturation, personality issues, appearance difficulties including obesity and acne, gender identity, peer pressure, and low self-concepts including shyness and introversion (Reid, 1999). It is vital that teachers and school personnel are able to communicate with students to identify why they are missing class to address the issue before they become a habitually truant student. However, oftentimes students will not voluntarily tell teachers that they are missing class because they are obese or have bad acne. To successfully identify the reason(s) students are truant, teachers must communicate with students, other peers, and parents to help gather information to make a determination.

Furthermore, Reid (1999) recognized several teacher related-factors that may cause a student to be truant from school. They include: schools that are failing or have a long history of students underachieving, teacher absences, unsuitable teaching styles, teacher's negative attitudes toward pupils, bullying and victimization of students, and teacher disaffection (Reid, 1999). Often others are quick to point at the student, parent, or school policy to blame for

truancy, when the problem may lie with the individual who has direct contact with the student on a daily basis, the teacher.

Community/Home

The community that students live in, including home life, may be a direct factor correlated with truancy. Students who live in homes with parents who hold multiple jobs, lack affordable transportation and childcare, or are single parent homes, are at risk of becoming truant students (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001). Frequently the student will have to pick up additional responsibilities at home while the parent is working. Such responsibilities may include cooking, working extra hours to help support the family, cleaning the house, and keeping up with other household maintenance. Furthermore, due to the lack of childcare, students may have to miss school to stay home and babysit their siblings.

In addition, students who are victims of abuse, neglect, and experience other family disruptions are at risk for becoming a truant student (Colorado Foundation For Families and Children, n.d.). The student may be embarrassed to show physical signs of abuse to friends or others at school, or are too emotionally distracted to attend school. Other community/home factors may include the level of parenting skills in the truant student's life, and the presence of other siblings as rivals for parents' love and approval (Garrison, 2004).

Individual

The individual causes of truancy tend to overlap with some of the other areas including community/home, school, and family. Individual variables related to truancy may also include: drug and alcohol abuse, mental health difficulties, pregnancy, lack of social competence, and the lack of understanding of attendance laws (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001).

Potential Solutions and Interventions for Truancy

There are many interventions and preventive measures that a school can take to prevent and reduce truancy. According to the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice *Manual to Combat Truancy*, communities that have had the most success in deterring truancy not only have focused on improving procedures, but also on implementing a comprehensive strategy that accurately focuses on incentives and sanctions for truants and their parents (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). This section of the literature review describes potential solutions and interventions approaches that schools and communities may utilize to deter truancy.

Parental Involvement

Parents often have the most influence on a child, thus it is important that all parents are engaged when it comes to education and school issues. Frequently parents may not be aware that their child is truant from school or needs to improve their attendance. According to the *Manual to Combat Truancy* (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996), there must be mutual trust and communication between families and schools to solve issues like truancy. In addition, the *Manual to Combat Truancy* recommends schools to consider arranging times and neutral settings for parent meetings, starting homework hotlines, training teachers to work with parents, appointing a parent liaison, and giving parents a voice in school decisions (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996)

Incentives for Students and Parents

Incentives for students who attend school may have a positive impact on attendance rates and decrease truancy. According to Epstein & Sheldon (2002), schools that reward students for improved attendance reported positive changes in attendance from year to year. Such incentives

may include public recognition at assemblies, pizza parties, certificates, or other meaningful awards that will motivate students to attend school. Furthermore, some communities can also provide positive and meaningful incentives for responsible parents who ensure their child attends school through such things as an increased eligibility to participate in publicly funded programs (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

After-School Programs

After-school programs may also serve as an incentive for those students who attend school and rewarded by being eligible to attend a local Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, or Teen Club. Research supports the relationship between schools that offer after-school programs with an increase in average daily student attendance and a decrease in chronic absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Furthermore, after-school programs may be beneficial to parents who work after-school hours and assist in the supervision of their child. In addition, after-school programs provide a wide range of programs that may be fun and beneficial for students. The Boys and Girls Club of America has clubs located across the United States and provide programming related to: the arts, education, peer tutoring, athletics, leadership, and a variety of other opportunities that instill a sense of belonging, usefulness, influence, and competence in students.

Firm Sanctions for Truancy

Consequences for truancy may also have an influence on decreasing truancy in local communities. State legislatures have found that linking truancy to such items as a student's grades or driver's license can help reduce the problem (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). In addition, states such as Delaware and Connecticut have daytime curfews during school hours that allow law enforcement officers to question youth to determine

of their absence is legitimate (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

Small Groups

Small groups for truancy can be utilized at all levels, including elementary and middle school before truancy may become serious. School counselors and social workers can be proactive by intervening with elementary school children, before waiting until they are in middle and high school and have already learned truancy tactics (Baker, 2000). Attendance groups can be an effective way to reduce truancy by replacing the punishment for not coming to school with incentives and rewards for attending school. In addition, research has shown that applying penalties for missed school days tends to either maintain the status quo or increase absenteeism along with increasing the motivation to withdraw from the punishing source (Baker & DeAnn, 2002).

Establish Truancy Programs

Because truancy is often not the product of one single issue, but rather related to a variety of factors that the school may not be aware of including: student drug use, violence at or near school, association with truant friends, lack of family support, mental health issues, and inability to keep up with academic requirements; it may be imperative that others become involved in addressing truancy (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). Truancy programs can assist schools in addressing the unique needs of students. Such programs may offer tutoring programs, added security measures, drug prevention initiatives, mentorship efforts through community groups and clubs, campaigns for involving parents in their children's attendance, and referrals to social services agencies (U.S. Department of Education & U.S.

Department of Justice, 1996). In addition, such truancy programs can offer rides to students to get to school and to after-school programs and clubs.

Current Methods for Reducing Truancy

Truancy is a very complex and universal issue facing many students in our nation's schools. The fact that many students come to school with many additional "issues on their plate" including: family problems, mental illness, gangs, drugs, bullies, poverty, abuse and neglect, it is no wonder why children may struggle in school and dropout. According to former Attorney General Janet Reno, in a 1994 Communities in Schools (CIS) National Conference, "We cannot take just one fragment of a child's life and make a difference" (Cantelon & LeBoeuf, 1997). This section of the literature review describes the Eau Claire Area School Districts Truancy Policy along with various other preventive and intervention programs that fight against truancy.

Eau Claire Area School District Truancy Policy

According to the Eau Claire Areas School District's Truancy Manual for 2004-2005, when truancy occurs one of three responses occur: an automated phone call home, teacher/counselor call home, or student meets with the Dean of Students or Principal. The student then has the opportunity to serve a detention for the unexcused absence, per school policy. If the detention is not successfully completed, a citation is issued by the Eau Claire Police Department. However, if the student serves the detention, a citation is not issued. Furthermore, if a student acquires three detentions in a row for unexcused absences per school policy, a citation is issued by the Police Department. The manual also noted that all students, even students on county supervision, are issued a truancy citation for violation of the truancy ordinance (Eau Claire Area School District Truancy Manual, 2004).

Once the Eau Claire Police Department issues a citation for an unexcused absence, the student must appear before the Court Commissioner at the following Monday, 3:30 p.m. court hearing. According to the Eau Claire Area School Districts Truancy Manual, the student has three options at the meeting:

- Admit to the truancy. Fifty dollar forfeiture is assessed and a court order to attend school for the remainder of the school year is imposed by the Court Commissioner.
- Deny the truancy. A trial will be held immediately before the intake Judge. The Judge will decide if the student is in violation of the truancy ordinance. If the student is not in violation, the Judge dismisses the citation. However, if found in violation, the consequence listed above will apply to the student.
- If the student does not appear for the hearing, a *capias* is issued. Once the student appears before the court, either on the next Monday or another day at 1:00 p.m., the student will have the same consequences as above, plus a fifty dollar fine or trial.

The truancy manual also notes that after a student who is placed on a court order to attend school, no further citations are issued for truancy. When a student, who is not on county supervision, violates the court order by having an unexcused absence from school, the school must fill out a Truancy affidavit and Motion for Sanctions form. The documents get forwarded to the juvenile intake clerk who sets the hearing for Wednesday at 3:30 p.m., and sends out the notices. The manual explicitly notes that truancy issues for students on county supervision should be directed to the county (Eau Claire Area School District Truancy Manual, 2004)

In addition, the manual states that generally those students who ignore the city order are not brought back into court a second time for city truancy sanctions. If students violate the court

order to attend school for a second time, a referral should be made to the county for habitual truancy.

Once the judicial system is forced to take action, they have several considerations to take into account including: the student's past history, the school recommendations, and the amount of parent/guardian involvement. In addition, some of the potential recommendations that can be made to the student and parent/guardian are dependent on the community resources and may include such things as community counseling programs. Furthermore, if the student continues to be truant or fails to pay the fine, the judicial system has several options available to take into consideration including:

- Suspension of the student's driver's license.
- Revocation of the student's work permit.
- Order the student to participate in counseling.
- Impose a forfeiture of no more than five hundred dollars plus costs.
- Order the student to perform community service.
- Order home detention for the student.
- Order the student to attend an educational program.
- Order a curfew restriction.
- Place the student under formal or informal supervision for up to one year.
- Order the parent/guardian to pay all or part of forfeiture.

Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression (TABS)

The program was established in 1994 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to address truancy and juvenile crime. The program is a collaborative effort of the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, Milwaukee Police Department, Milwaukee Public Schools, and the Boys and Girls Club of

Greater Milwaukee (Ingeresoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). The program is designed to have law enforcement officers pick up juveniles who are in the community during school hours unexcused and transport them to the TABS centers at the Boys and Girls Clubs. The Clubs staff processes the truants and contact the parents/guardians. If a parent or guardian cannot come to the center or cannot be located, the center will require the juvenile to remain on site until the end of the day or have the police transport the juvenile to school (Truancy Reduction Efforts, 2000). If the parents are located, the parent and student then will work with the school counselor to set goals for regular school attendance. For chronic truants, police may issue citations to the parents and require the student to participate in counseling and diversion programs (Ingeresoll & LeBoeuf, 1997).

The TABS program started in November 1993, is open five days a week per school week, and served 3,778 juveniles in 1998-1999 (Truancy Reduction Efforts, 2000). The Milwaukee Public Schools assumed funding responsibility for TABS in July 1996 after initial federal grant funding expired. The funding amount for the 1999-2000 school years was approximately 600,000 dollars (Truancy Reduction Efforts, 2000).

Sheboygan's Truancy Abatement and Crime Suppression (TACS)

The TACS program, like the TABS program in Milwaukee, emphasizes both truancy abatement and crime reduction. The program started in August 1997 and is open an average of three days a week during the school week. The program counseled 158 juveniles during the 1998-1999 school year. The TACS program exhausted its federal funding in 1998-1999 and is now funded by the City of Sheboygan and the Sheboygan School District with an approximate budget of 60,000 dollars for the 1999-2000 school year.

Summary

Recognizing the causes of truancy and ensuring that students attend school is often a difficult task for parents, schools, and professionals around the country. From the review of literature, it is apparent that there are a variety of issues that can be correlated to a student being truant from school. In addition, the outcome of truancy can have a negative effect on the student, school, and the community as a whole. The review of literature also identifies several intervention strategies that are being utilized to address truant students. Furthermore, the research makes it evident that there is a disparity in perceptions between students and faculty regarding the causes and solutions of truancy.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used for the study. The chapter includes a description of the subjects and the process for selecting subjects. In addition, the chapter discusses survey development, data collection, and data analysis. The last section of the chapter explains the limitations of the survey.

Selection and Description of Subjects

The subjects in the study can be divided into two categories: students and faculty. The sample was selected from Eau Claire Memorial High School, located in Eau Claire Wisconsin.

Instrumentation

Both surveys used in this study were developed by this researcher (Appendix H & I). One survey was used specifically for faculty (Appendix I), and the other survey was utilized for only students (Appendix H). Both surveys were developed by this researcher with additional comments taken into consideration from the researcher's advisor and the principal at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Approval for both surveys came from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at the University of Wisconsin-Stout on October 25, 2004.

Due to the fact that both instruments utilized in this study were developed by the researcher specifically for use in this study, no measures of validity or reliability have been documented.

Both the student and faculty surveys were developed with similar questions and format. Both surveys included a demographic section for comparison purposes. The faculty

demographic section included gender, current position, and years of experience. The student demographic section consisted of two sections, gender and current grade. Both the faculty and student surveys were designed based on the researcher's personal experience working with truant students and current research on truancy. The following questions are examples of the type of questions that were asked on both the student and faculty surveys:

1. In your opinion, WHY do students skip or intentionally miss classes? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Teachers or School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> School Phobia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Other Students | <input type="checkbox"/> To Commit Delinquent Acts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies in School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult Coursework | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Marijuana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Challenge in School Work | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Other Drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> To Baby-sit Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Connection to School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Does Not Consequence Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents Do Not Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Family Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Family Problems |

2. In your opinion, WITH WHOM do students most skip or intentionally miss classes?

(Select one answer that fits best)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) Not in School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) Not in School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Same School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Same School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Other School(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Other School(s) |

Two questions were different with regard to the student and faculty surveys. Questions one and seven on the student survey pertained to how many classes per week the individual student skipped class and if the student considered him/herself to be a habitual truant. Those two questions were replaced with questions on the faculty survey pertaining to the participant's opinion on the degree of problem truancy in the school and if the participant is aware of the school district's habitual truancy policy.

Data Collection

The surveys and consent letter were attached and distributed to students and faculty. The consent letter provided a basic description of the study and consisted of seven sections including: title of study, investigator, purpose, participation and confidentiality, risks, benefits, right to refuse or withdraw, and questions. In addition, the consent letter provided contact information for the researcher, thesis advisor, and the Director of Research Services.

The surveys for the faculty population were distributed at a faculty meeting at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Since the survey was voluntary, participants had the option to complete the survey at that time and put it in a manila envelope at the end of each table. All surveys that were distributed at the faculty meeting were collected after the meeting.

The students received surveys during registration for following school year during the second week of December, 2004. A sample size of 1000 students was identified by the school randomly by class registration. The sample included students from the 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade. Once the student's class was selected by the school, the consent letter, letter of support for the study by the principal, and survey were distributed to students. Students had to obtain parental/guardian consent to participate in the study. The surveys were distributed

by the school counselors during registration for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grade by class in the designated registration room. Surveys were distributed to the 12th grade population during designated English classes. Students had one week to complete the surveys and return them along with the parental consents attached to student services. Students were not allowed to participate in the study unless they had a signed parental/guardian consent document on file with the researcher and school.

Data Analysis

The data from this study will be analyzed using a computerized statistics package called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 11.0. All 103 of the surveys that were distributed to the faculty were returned, with 101 of the surveys completed. The response rate for the faculty survey was 98%. Of the 1000 surveys that were distributed to the student population, 661 were returned completed. The response rate for the student surveys was 66%.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that it has no available measures of validity or reliability for the survey instrument used since it was developed by the researcher specifically for this study. Also, only one school participated in the study, therefore any results should be used cautiously to infer to other schools of similar size. In addition, it was assumed that students and faculty from the sample group responded honestly to the survey.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

This chapter will report the results from the study. The demographic information from both the student and faculty surveys will be discussed along with item analysis for both the student and staff surveys. The chapter will conclude with the research objectives under investigation.

Demographic Information

There were 661 students who participated in the study. Of those 661 students who completed and returned the survey, 363 (54.9%) were female and 283 (44.3%) were male, and 5 (.8%) of the students did not respond to the demographic question regarding male/female status. The current grade of the students ranged from 9th grade 220 (33.3%), 10th grade 208 (31.5%), 11th grade 135 (20.4%), and 12th grade 98 (14.8%). Sex and current grade were the two demographic questions asked of the student population.

There were 101 faculty members who participated in the study. The demographic section of the staff survey consisted of three sections including sex of respondent, current position, and years of experience. Of those who participated, 58 (57.4%) were female and 43 (42.6%) were male. The current position section consisted of five categories including administrator 1 (1.0%), teacher 88 (87.1%), counselor/psychologist 5 (5.0%), and other 7 (6.9%). Years of experience ranged from having less than 1 year of experience to 16 or more years of experience. Years of experience were broken down into 5 categories including less than one year 6 (5.9%), 1-5 years 16 (15.8%), 6-10 years 25 (24.8%), 11-15 years 18 (17.8%), and 16 years or more 36 (35.6%).

Based on this demographic information for the student and faculty information, this researcher has concluded that the majority of the student population who participated in the study were in the 9th and 10th grades and were nearly equal regarding their sex with 54.9% being female and 44.3% being male. In regards to the faculty population, the majority of the participants were teachers (87.1%) and had 16 or more years of experience (35.6%).

Item Analysis

The first part of this section will discuss the student and faculty versions of the survey. Next the researcher will compare the answers between the student population and the faculty population.

1. On an average, how many CLASSES PER WEEK do you skip or intentionally miss?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 | |

The first question on the student survey asked the students for an average of how many classes they skip or intentionally miss. Of the 661 that answered, 554 (83.8%) answered none, 56 (8.5%) answered 1-3 days, 7 (1.1%) answered 4-6 days, 10 (1.5%) answered 7-9 days, and 34 (5.1%) answered 10 days or more.

1. In your opinion, how much of a PROBLEM is TRUANCY at your school?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

The first question of the faculty survey differed from the student survey. Question one of the faculty survey asked the staff their opinion regarding how much of a problem they believe truancy was in their school. Of the 101 that answered, 1 (1.0%) not at all, 54 (53.5%) answered a little, 40 (39.6%) answered somewhat, 3 (3.0%) answered very serious, and 3 (3.0%) answered 'I'm not sure'.

2. In your opinion, WHY do students skip or intentionally miss classes? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Teachers or School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> School Phobia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Other Students | <input type="checkbox"/> To Commit Delinquent Acts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies in School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult Coursework | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Marijuana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Challenge in School Work | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Other Drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> To Baby-sit Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Connection to School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Does Not Consequence Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents Do Not Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Family Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Family Problems |

Question two of the student survey was also asked on the staff survey. However, on the faculty survey it was numbered as question three. The question asked students and faculty to state their opinion in regards to why students skip or intentionally miss classes. The students and faculty had eighteen answers to select from. The results indicate over 50% of the students perceive that students skip class because of 5 main issues including: parents not caring (56%), problems with teachers/school staff (55.4%), to use marijuana (53.6%), behavior problems (51.9%), and to use other drugs (50.8%). In addition, over 50% of the faculty reported they

believe students skip or miss class of 6 issues including: to use marijuana (59.4%), lack of family involvement (57.4%), behavior problems (56.4%), parents do not care (54.5%), to use alcohol (53.5%), and problems with teachers/school staff (51.5%). Also, there was a significant difference between student and faculty perceptions in 7 areas related to why students skip or miss class, they include: problems with other students, bullies in school, lack of connection to school, lack of family involvement, to commit delinquent acts, to use other drugs, to baby-sit siblings, and other family problems. The results are reported in Appendix A.

3. In your opinion, WITH WHOM do students most skip or intentionally miss classes?
(Select one answer that fits best)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) Not in School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) Not in School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Same School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Same School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Other School(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Other School(s) |

The third question that was asked to students was to give their opinion regarding whom whom students skip or intentionally miss classes with. This question was also asked to the faculty participants but was numbered as question two on their survey. The students and faculty had eight answers to select from. The results indicate 80% of the faculty believes students skip class with friends from the same school. Also, 48.4% of students believe students skip class with friends from the same school. The results are reported in Appendix B.

4. In your opinion, DO YOUR PARENTS / GUARDIANS care if you skip or intentionally miss classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

Question four asked the students their opinion regarding if their parents/guardians cared if they skipped or intentionally missed class. This question was also asked on the faculty survey as question four. However, the question was worded slightly different on the faculty survey in that it asked how much do parents/guardians care if their child skips or intentionally misses classes. The results indicate a significant difference between student and faculty perceptions at the .001 level, ($p= 107.494$, $df= 3$). It was interesting to note that the majority of the students (78.1%) believed that their parents cared very much of they skipped class. In addition, 4 (4.0%) of the staff participants wrote an answer that declared it would depend on the parents if they cared. The results are reported in Appendix C.

5. In your opinion, do your TEACHERS / OTHER SCHOOL STAFF care if you skip or intentionally miss classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

Question five asked the students their opinion regarding if their teachers/other school staff cared if they skipped or intentionally missed classes. This question was almost the same on the faculty survey but asked how much do teachers/other school staff care if students skip or

intentionally miss classes. The results indicate a significant difference between students and faculty at the .01 level, ($p= 11.551$, $df= 3$). The results are reported in Appendix D.

6. Are you aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's HABITUAL TRUANCY POLICY?

- Yes No

The sixth question on both the student and staff surveys asked if they were aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's Habitual Truancy Policy. The results indicate that 91.1% of the faculty and 61.7% of the students are aware of the district's habitual truancy policy. It was interesting to note that 227 (34.3%) of the students were not aware of the district's habitual truancy policy. In addition, 5(.8%) of the students wrote in the answer "somewhat". The results are reported in Appendix E.

7. How would you rate this POLICY'S EFFECTIVENESS in preventing or reducing truancy?

- Very Much Not at All
 Somewhat I'm not sure
 A Little

The seventh question on the staff survey (see above), asks staff to rate the habitual truancy policy's effectiveness in preventing or reducing truancy. It is noteworthy that 62 (61.4%) of the staff believe that the district's truancy policy is only somewhat effective. In addition, 4% answered either not at all or I'm not sure. The results are reported in Appendix F.

7. Do you consider yourself to be HABITUALLY TRUANT?

- Yes No I'm not sure

The seventh question on the student survey asked the students if they considered themselves to be habitually truant. Of the 661 students who participated in the survey, 59 (8.9%) answered yes, 481 (72.8%) answered no, 98 (14.8%) answered I'm not sure, and 23 (3.5%) did not answer the question. It was interesting to note that 98 (14.8%) of the students who participated in the study were not sure if they were habitually truant.

8. In your opinion, what works to PREVENT TRUANCY?

(Select all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Local Hangouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Notification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students Academic Failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Truancy Citation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School-Based Detention | <input type="checkbox"/> Truancy Court |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Probation / Supervision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing |
| _____ | |

The last question on both surveys was a checklist question and asked for student/faculty opinion regarding what worked to prevent truancy. There were eight answers to choose from and an option to write in an answer. The results indicate a significant difference with 5 of the answers including: parent notification, truancy citation, truancy court, juvenile probation/supervision, and doing nothing. The results are reported in Appendix G.

In addition to the nine listed choices that the respondents had to choose from for question eight, they also had the opportunity to write in their opinion in regards to what they believed would work to prevent truancy. The following answers are those listed by the ninth grade student population, they include:

- “Talk to the student and make sure you get the point across”.
- “Finding why they skipped and seeing if you can help”.
- “Community service”
- “Kids becoming fully aware of what it is”.
- “They will figure it out themselves”.
- “Supervision by an adult for a repeat offender”.
- “Docking the grade by 10 % every time a student is truant”.
- “Helping kids with why they are skipping school or they will just keep doing it no matter what”.
- “Prearrange a meeting to discuss about the conflicts and problems”.
- “Make classes and school better and stop with the dumb dress code”.
- “Make class fun”.
- “I don’t believe the fifty dollar fine is affective”.
- “Move the school day to start later”.
- “Last period study hall”.

The following answers are those listed by the tenth grade student population for question eight, they include:

- “Find some way for truant students to better connect with school”.
- “Extracurricular limitations”.
- “Just let them skip until they fail school”

The following answers are those listed by the eleventh grade student population for question eight, they include:

- “Teachers not discriminating against regular truant students”.

- “Creating better values earlier in life”.
- “Those that choose to waste their education should not be allowed to participate with other students who actually want to be in school. Suspension or expulsion is necessary. Truancy court should also be more prevalent”.
- “Inspiring programs that encourage students; teachers that actually care”.
- “Not allowing students to make up work assigned when they were skipping”.

The following answers are those listed by the twelfth grade student population for question eight, they include:

- “Jail time”
- “Starting school later (8:30), kids would still be able to sleep in”.

The following answers are listed by those who participated with the staff survey for question eight, they include:

- “Administrator involvement”
- “Teacher concern, make class interesting; give students reasons to be here”.
- “Talk directly with student about reasons why, and how I can help you”.
- “Getting students connected; staff expressing concern when students miss”.
- “Improved classroom atmosphere and instructor”.
- “Valued purpose-that the kids feel like they belong here”.
- “Getting students involved in school”.
- “I can tell you one thing-kids that are court ordered to attend are not suddenly cured. That is a waste; those kids need counseling/help”.
- “Lower the age to 16”.
- “Increase activities to connect students to school”.

- “Parent citation”
- “Home room”
- “Provide students with a connection to school”.
- “Take drivers license”
- “Joining school clubs”.

Research Objectives

Research Objective #1- To determine the possible causes and factors related to truancy, as perceived by students and faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Item 3 on the faculty survey and item 2 on the student survey addressed this question. The results indicated a large percentage of both students (44.9%) and faculty (53.5%) believing that students skip class to use alcohol, 53.6% of students and 59.4% of faculty believe students skip class to use marijuana, and 50.8% of students and 42.6% of faculty perceiving students skip class to use other drugs. In addition, a large percentage of students (56%) and faculty (54.5%) believe that students skip classes because parents do not care. Conversely, the results also indicated a significant difference at the .05 ($p=5.503$, $df= 1$) level between student and faculty perceptions regarding why students skip or intentionally miss classes because of problems with other students. 29% of the student population reported that they believe students skip class because of problems with other students. In addition, 40% of the faculty population believed that students skip class because of problems with other students. The results were reported in Appendix A.

The results also indicated a significant difference at the .001($p= 12.101$, $df= 1$) level regarding students skipping classes because of bullies in school. 17% of the students reported they believe students skip class because of bullies in school. Furthermore, 31.7% of the faculty

population reported they believe students skip class because of bullies in school. The results were reported in Appendix A.

The results indicated a significant difference at the $.001(p= 46.951, df= 1)$ level regarding students skipping classes because of a lack of connection to school. 35.4% of the students reported they believed students skip class because of a lack of connection to school. Furthermore, 71.3% of the faculty population perceived students skipping class because of a lack of connection to school. The results are reported in Appendix A.

The results indicated a significant difference at the $.001(p= 34.522, df= 1)$ level regarding students skipping classes because of a lack of family involvement. 28.1% of the students reported they believed students skip class because of a lack of family involvement. In addition, 57.4% of the faculty population reported they believe students skip class because of a lack of family involvement. The results are reported in Appendix A.

The results also indicated a significant difference at the $.01(p= 8.760, df= 1)$ level between student and faculty perceptions regarding why students skip classes related to committing delinquent acts. 14.9% of the faculty population believes students skip class to commit delinquent acts. However, 28.9% of the student population reported believing that students skip class to commit delinquent acts. The results were reported in Appendix A.

In addition, the results indicated a significant difference at the $.001(p= 11.595, df= 1)$ level between student and faculty perceptions regarding why students skip classes associated with babysitting siblings. 8.8% of the student population believes students skip class to baby-sit siblings. Conversely, 19.8% of the faculty population reported believing that students skip class to baby-sit siblings. The results were reported in Appendix A.

Furthermore, the results indicated a significant difference at the .05 ($p= 4.513$, $df= 1$) level regarding students skipping classes because of other family problems. 34.6% of the student population believes students skip class because of other family problems. In contrast, 45.5% of the faculty population believes students skip class because of other family problems. The results were reported in Appendix A.

In addition to determining why students may skip class, objective 1 attempted to identify who students most skip or intentionally miss classes with. The results indicated that 48.4% of the students and 80.0% of the faculty believe students skip class with friends from the same school. The results were reported in Appendix B.

Research Objective #2- To identify the degree of school/parental concern regarding truancy, as perceived by students and faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Items 4 and 5 on the faculty survey and items 4 and 5 on the student survey addressed this question. The results indicated a significant difference at the .001 ($p= 107.494$, $df= 3$) level between students and faculty regarding their perceptions of parents who care if they skip or intentionally miss class. 78.1% of the students believed that parents care very much if they skip or intentionally miss classes. In contrast, 31.8% of the faculty perceived parents caring very much if students skip or intentionally miss classes. Furthermore, over 50% of the faculty population perceived parents caring somewhat if students skip class. However, 11.1% of students perceived parents caring somewhat if students skip class. The results were reported in Appendix C.

Furthermore, objective 2 also attempted to identify student and faculty perceptions regarding the degree of teacher concern of students skip or intentionally miss classes. The results indicated a significant difference at the .01 ($p= 11.551$, $df= 3$) level between student and faculty perceptions. Over 50% of the staff perceived teachers caring very much of students miss

class. In contrast, 42.2% of the students perceive teachers caring very much of students skip class. Conversely, 9.3% of students perceived teachers not caring at all and 0.0% of teachers reported teachers not caring at all. The results were reported in Appendix D.

Research Objective #3- To determine the perceived effectiveness and awareness of the current methods for reducing or preventing truancy, as perceived by students and faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Item one the faculty survey addressed this question. Items 6 and 7 on the faculty survey and items 6 and 7 on the student survey also addressed this question. The results indicated that the majority of faculty (53.5%) perceived truancy as being a little problem at their school. In addition, 39.6% of faculty perceived truancy as somewhat of a problem at their school. Interesting to note that 3% of the faculty perceived truancy as being a very serious problem at their school. The student population was not asked this question on their survey.

The results also indicated a large percentage of both the student (61.7%) and faculty (91.1%) populations were aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's habitual truancy policy. Furthermore, 61.4% of the faculty population perceived the habitual truancy policy as being somewhat effective. Moreover, 18.8% perceived the policy as very much effective with 11.9% of the faculty perceiving the policy as being a little effective. The results were reported in Appendix F. The student population was not asked this question. Instead, the student population was asked if they considered themselves to be habitually truant. 72.8% of the student population reported that they did not consider themselves to be habitually truant and 14.8% were not sure if they were habitually truant.

Research Objective #4- To identify new or unique preventative measures to reduce or prevent truancy as reported by students and faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School. Item 8 on both the faculty and student surveys addressed this question. The results indicated a majority

of the faculty population 73.3% believed that both truancy court and truancy citations were the best choice to prevent truancy. In addition, truancy court had the largest number of responses by the student population, with 46.2% of the student population perceiving truancy court as the best choice to prevent truancy. On the contrary, there was a significant difference between student and faculty perceptions regarding what methods work to prevent truancy. There was a significant difference at the .001 level between students and faculty with responses correlated to parent notification ($p=12.859$, $df=1$), truancy citation ($p=45.705$, $df=1$), truancy court ($p=25.589$, $df=1$), and doing nothing ($p=20.228$, $df=1$). In addition, there was a significant difference at the .01 ($p=10.051$, $df=1$) level between students and faculty in regards to imposing juvenile probation/supervision for truancy with 54.5% of the faculty supporting juvenile probation and 37.8% of the student population supporting juvenile probation. The results were reported in Appendix G.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The chapter contains a discussion of the present findings of the study as they relate to the literature. In addition, the chapter will conclude with a summary of this study and recommendations for future research in the areas of truancy and school absenteeism.

Discussion

Based on the study conducted by this researcher, the results show that over 50% of the student participants reported that students skip or miss class because of five main factors including: parents lack of care (56%), problems with teachers/staff (55.4%), to use marijuana (53.6%), behavior problems (51.9%), and to use other drugs (50.8%). In addition, over 50% of the faculty indicated that they believe students skip or miss class because of six critical issues including: to use marijuana (59.4%), lack of family involvement (57.4%), behavior problems (56.4%), parents do not care (54.5%), to use alcohol (53.5%), and because of problems with teachers/school staff (51.5%). These findings are consistent with Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001) and Reid (1999) as several of the major causes of truancy and school absenteeism. As stated previously, Gary (1996) argued that truancy is often the first step to a lifetime of problems for youth, and therefore it may be beneficial for the school involved in this study to review the causes of truancy as reported by students and faculty. However, since the sample population of faculty and students selected may not be representative of the total population of faculty and students in the school district in west central Wisconsin, the results should be used with caution when generalizing to the larger population.

Another statistical outcome of this study was that 78.1% of students responded that they believe that their parents care very much if they skip or miss class. This data is supportive of the data cited in the *Manual to Combat Truancy* (1996) which identified parents as the most influential individuals in getting their children to attend school. However, the faculty in this study did not report parents caring as much if children skip or miss class (31.8%). Furthermore, 51.1% of faculty reported they believe parents cared somewhat while 11.1% of students reported they believe parents cared somewhat. Therefore, from this data it appears that there is a difference between the perceptions of students and faculty regarding the degree of care parents have if students skip or miss class. The results were reported in Appendix C.

The results of the study also showed that 51.0% of faculty reported they believe teachers cared very much of students skip or miss class. However, 42.2% of students reported teachers caring very much if they miss or skip class. The results were reported in Appendix D. These findings are significantly different and consistent with what was reported in Chapter 2 of this study by Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent (2001) as the attitudes of teachers being a cause of truancy. From this data it appears that the faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School believes that the teachers care very much if students skip or miss class. However, the students do not have this same perception.

In regards to truancy, the majority of faculty (91.1%) reported that they were aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's Habitual Truancy Policy. In comparison to the faculty, 61.7% of the student sample reported being aware of the habitual truancy policy. The results were reported in Appendix E. In addition, 18.8% of the faculty reported they believed the policy to be very effective and 61.4% reported the policy being somewhat effective. The results were reported in Appendix F. These findings are important in preventing truancy in a school by

making a truancy policy public and well known to all faculty and students in a school. As reported in Chapter 2 of this study, oftentimes a school's lack of consistency and uniformity to attendance and attendance policy can directly impact the number of students skipping class on a daily basis (Colorado Foundation For Families and Children, n.d.).

There were also significant differences between the perceptions of faculty and student samples in regards to preventing truancy. Significant differences were reported between the faculty and students in five areas including: parent notification, truancy citation, truancy court, juvenile probation/supervision, and doing nothing. The results were reported in Appendix G. The results indicate that the faculty are more in favor of preventive/intervention measures directed towards punishment including: truancy court (73.3%), truancy citation (73.3%), parent notification (62.4%), and juvenile probation/supervision (54.5%). However, the student population also strongly endorsed these areas of prevention/intervention including: truancy court (46.2%), parent notification (43.3%), juvenile probation (37.8%), and truancy citation (37.5%).

However, the students also identified several other preventive/interventions by adding hand written comments at the end of the survey. Those comments included; "connecting students to school", "making school more fun", and "having teachers who care". These findings are consistent with the findings reported by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice Manual to Combat Truancy (1996) as potential preventive/interventions for truancy. Communities that have the most success in deterring truancy not only have focused on improving procedures, but also on implementing comprehensive strategies that focus on incentives and sanctions for truant students and their parents (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996).

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, there are significant differences between students and faculty at Eau Claire Memorial High School in regards to why students skip or miss class. In addition, the majority of both students (56.0%) and faculty (54.5%) believed students skip class because parents do not care. Also, the majority of students (53.6%) and faculty (59.4%) believe students skip class to use marijuana. Furthermore, there were significant differences between student and faculty perceptions in other areas of study including: the perception if parents care if students skip or miss class, if teachers care if students skip or miss class, and perceptions in regards to what works to prevent truancy. Also, both students and faculty members listed intervention and prevention strategies to help prevent and control truancy in their school.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study only considered high school student perceptions of truancy and related issues; a better understanding of middle school students and faculty perceptions of the causes and factors related to truancy is needed. Interventions that target younger students could very well eliminate much of the truancy problem if programs were implemented in middle school.

Research findings in diverse school districts, urban areas and other locations with specific truancy issues are needed. Further research could focus on surveying a range of schools throughout the country; a national survey incorporating rural, urban and suburban and diverse socioeconomic status areas would be ideal.

Final Recommendations

It is recommended that all these “key players” assemble to address why their students may be skipping class at their respective school. According to this study, there was a significant

difference between students and faculty in seven areas in regards to why students skip or miss class. Therefore, it appears that faculty may be unaware of why students may be skipping their class, thus making it hard for them to intervene or prevent truancy from occurring.

In addition, since there were significant differences between students and faculty regarding what works to prevent truancy, I would recommend identifying interventions that meet the needs of all individuals involved including students, parents, school faculty, and the community. Furthermore, clearly identifying the causes, interventions, and community agencies that help address truancy may assist parents in holding their child accountable and getting him/her to school. And lastly, like any behavior, truancy is a learned behavior that can be reinforced over time by parents, school, and the community. I would recommend educating all teachers and school personnel, parents, and the larger community regarding the causes, potential problems, and solutions to truancy as early as possible.

Finally, these results suggest that each school should identify the causes of truancy. Because truancy is often the product of four main issues related to family difficulty, school factors, community/home issues, and individual issues, it is imperative that each school identify the causes of truancy correlated to their student population. I would also recommend the school district to identify specific personnel responsible to track truancy on a daily basis. This may assist in building a rapport with students who are truant and connecting them back with their school. Also, this may allow the district to identify individuals who may be at-risk for becoming habitually truant and incorporate a plan to prevent the student from becoming habitually truant.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1

Student and Faculty Perceptions of Why Students Skip Class

	<i>Students</i>		<i>Staff</i>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Problems with faculty	366	55.4%	52	51.5%
Problems with other students	192	29%	41	40.6%
Bullies in school	113	17.1%	32	31.7%
Difficult coursework	260	39.3%	32	31.7%
Lack of school challenge	107	16.2%	23	22.8%
Behavior problems	343	51.9%	57	56.4%
Lack of connection to school	234	35.4%	72	71.3%
Lack of school consequence	95	14.4%	16	15.8%
Lack of family involvement	186	28.1%	58	57.4%
School phobia	153	23.1%	23	22.8%
Commit delinquent acts	191	28.9%	15	14.9%
Use alcohol	297	44.9%	54	53.5%
Use marijuana	354	53.6%	60	59.4%
Use other drugs	336	50.8%	43	42.6%
Baby-sit siblings	58	8.8%	20	19.8%
Work	72	10.9%	13	12.9%
Parents do not care	370	56.0%	55	54.5%
Other family problems	229	34.6%	46	45.5%

APPENDIX B

Table 2

Student and Faculty Perceptions Regarding Who Students Skip Class With

	Students		Staff	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Alone	55	8.5%	10	10.2%
Friend(s) not in school	33	5.1%	4	4.1%
Friend(s) same school	312	48.4%	80	80.0%
Friends(s) other schools	19	2.9%	0	0
Family member(s) not in school	3	0.5%	0	0
Family member(s) same school	2	0.3%	0	0
Family member(s) other school(s)	0	0	0	0
Other	18	2.8%	2	2.0%
Multiple responses	203	31.5%	2	2.0%

APPENDIX C

Table 3

Student and Faculty Perceptions Whether Parents Care When Students Miss Class

	Students		Staff	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	473	78.1%	28	31.8%
Somewhat	67	11.1%	45	51.1%
A Little	29	4.8%	11	12.5%
Not At All	37	6.1%	4	4.5%
Not Sure	33	5.0%	8	7.9%

APPENDIX D

Table 4

Student and Faculty Perceptions Whether Teachers Care If Students Miss Class

	Students		Staff	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	253	42.2%	50	51.0%
Somewhat	225	37.5%	40	40.8%
A Little	66	11.0%	8	8.2%
Not At All	56	9.3%	0	0
Not Sure	42	6.4%	2	2.0%

APPENDIX E

Table 5

Student and Faculty Awareness of School District's Truancy Policy

	Students		Staff	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	408	61.7%	92	91.1%
No	227	34.3%	6	5.9%
No Response	21	3.2%	3	3.0%

APPENDIX F

Table 6

Faculty Perceptions of Effectiveness of Truancy Policy

	<i>Staff</i>	
	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	19	18.8%
Somewhat	62	61.8%
A Little	12	11.9%
Not At All	4	4.0%
Not Sure	4	4.0%

APPENDIX G

Table 7

Student and Faculty Perceptions of Ways to Prevent / Reduce Truancy

	<i>Students</i>		<i>Staff</i>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Monitoring Local Hangouts	157	24.3%	28	27.7%
Academic Failure for Truant Students	163	25.3%	25	24.8%
School-Based Detention	170	26.4%	28	27.7%
Suspension	160	24.8%	17	16.8%
Parent Notification	279	43.3%	63	62.4%
Truancy Citation / Fine	242	37.5%	74	73.3%
Truancy Court	298	46.2%	74	73.3%
Juvenile Probation / Supervision	244	37.8%	55	54.5%
Other	111	17.2%	16	15.8%
Nothing	142	22.0%	3	3.0%

APPENDIX H

Student Survey

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

TRUANCY PERCEPTIONS SURVEY – STUDENT VERSION

You are being asked to participate in a research study on student and teacher perceptions of the causes and solutions to truancy. You are not required to complete the survey and may withdraw at anytime. If you do not wish to participate you may leave the survey blank and place it in the envelope when the class is instructed to do so. All information will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes in aggregate form for a research report. There are no risks to you as a result in participating in this study as information will be tabulated anonymously. The benefits for completing this survey will be a better understanding of why students skip class at Memorial High School, and how to effectively reduce this problem.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following questions are being collected for comparison purposes only.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female

<input type="checkbox"/> Male | Current Grade: <input type="checkbox"/> 9 th (Freshman)

<input type="checkbox"/> 10 th (Sophomore)

<input type="checkbox"/> 11 th (Junior)

<input type="checkbox"/> 12 th (Senior) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following questions pertain to truancy and your perceptions of truant behavior.

1. On an average, how many CLASSES PER WEEK do you skip or intentionally miss?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None

<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3

<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7-9

<input type="checkbox"/> 10 or more |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|

2. In your opinion, WHY do students skip or intentionally miss classes? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Teachers or School Staff

<input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Other Students | <input type="checkbox"/> School Phobia

<input type="checkbox"/> To Commit Delinquent Acts |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies in School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult Coursework | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Marijuana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Challenge in School Work | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Other Drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> To Baby-sit Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Connection to School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Does Not Consequence Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents Do Not Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Family Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Family Problems |

3. In your opinion, WITH WHOM do students most skip or intentionally miss classes? (Select one answer that fits best)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) Not in School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) Not in School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Same School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Same School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Other School(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Other School(s) |

4. In your opinion, DO YOUR PARENTS / GUARDIANS care if you skip or intentionally miss classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

5. In your opinion, do your TEACHERS / OTHER SCHOOL STAFF care if you skip or intentionally miss classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

6. Are you aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's HABITUAL TRUANCY POLICY?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

7. Do you consider yourself to be HABITUALLY TRUANT?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|

8. In your opinion, what works to PREVENT TRUANCY? (Select all that apply)

- Monitoring Local Hangouts
 - Students Academic Failure
 - School-Based Detention
 - Suspension
 - Other: _____

- Parent Notification
 - Truancy Citation
 - Truancy Court
 - Juvenile Probation / Supervision
 - Nothing

APPENDIX I

Staff Survey

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

TRUANCY PERCEPTIONS SURVEY – FACULTY VERSION

You are being asked to participate in a research study on student and faculty perceptions of the causes and solutions to truancy. You are not required to complete the survey and may withdraw at anytime. If you do not wish to participate you may leave the survey blank and place it in the envelope when the class is instructed to do so. All information will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes in aggregate form for a research report. There are no risks to you as a result in participating in this study as information will be tabulated anonymously. The benefits for completing this survey will be a better understanding of why students skip class at Memorial High School, and how to effectively reduce this problem.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following questions are being collected for comparison purposes only.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Gender: | <input type="checkbox"/> Female | Current Position: | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Male | | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor / Psychologist |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
|
Years of Experience: | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 or more years | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years | | |

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following questions pertain to truancy and your perceptions of truant behavior.

1. In your opinion, how much of a PROBLEM is TRUANCY at your school?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Serious | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

**2. In your opinion, WITH WHOM do students most skip or intentionally miss classes?
(Select one answer that fits best)**

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) Not in School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) Not in School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Same School | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Same School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s) from Other School(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member(s) from Other School(s) |

3. In your opinion, WHY do students skip or intentionally miss classes? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Teachers or School Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> School Phobia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with Other Students | <input type="checkbox"/> To Commit Delinquent Acts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies in School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult Coursework | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Marijuana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Challenge in School Work | <input type="checkbox"/> To Use Other Drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> To Baby-sit Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Connection to School | <input type="checkbox"/> To Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Does Not Consequence Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents Do Not Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Family Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Family Problems |

4. In your opinion, how much do PARENTS / GUARDIANS care if their child skips or intentionally misses classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

5. In your opinion, how much do TEACHERS / OTHER SCHOOL STAFF care if students skip or intentionally miss classes?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

6. Are you aware of the Eau Claire Area School District's HABITUAL TRUANCY POLICY?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

7. How would you rate this POLICY'S EFFECTIVENESS in preventing or reducing truancy?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very Much | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at All |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not sure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little | |

8. In your opinion, what works to PREVENT TRUANCY?

(Select all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Local Hangouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Notification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students Academic Failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Truancy Citation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School-Based Detention | <input type="checkbox"/> Truancy Court |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Probation / Supervision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing |
- _____

APPENDIX J

Consent Document

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY****TITLE OF STUDY:**

“Student and faculty perceptions of the causes and solutions to truancy”

INVESTIGATOR:

Ryan F. Fitzgerald, Master’s Program at UW-Stout, School Guidance and Counseling
Telephone: (715) 379-0691. Email: fitzgeraldr@uwstout.edu

PURPOSE:

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. This voluntary study is seeking students and faculty from Eau Claire Memorial High School to answer questions related to perceptions about the causes of truancy (unexcused absences), the effectiveness of current interventions to reduce or prevent truancy, and possible new methods to reduce or prevent truancy.

PARTICIPATION & CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study on student and faculty perceptions of the causes and solutions to truancy. Your child is not required to complete the survey and may withdraw at anytime. All information will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes in aggregate form for a research report. Individual surveys will not be available to any Eau Claire Memorial staff to view. Both consents and surveys will be kept in confidential envelopes.

RISKS:

The risks associated with this study are minimal, as all survey responses will be anonymous. Only group data (e.g., student, faculty) will be reported, and thus identification of individual responses will not occur.

BENEFITS:

As a student subject, your child will be allowed to clearly identify what they perceive to be the causes of truancy, the effectiveness of current measures, and new methods for reducing truancy. Memorial High School could benefit by not only addressing the similar and differing views of students and faculty, but also by application of this information into measures to effectively reduce or prevent truancy.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW:

Participation in this study is voluntary. By completing and returning this document, you are giving consent for your child to participate in the study.

QUESTIONS:

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions after you have completed and returned the document, you can contact Ryan Fitzgerald at (715) 379-0691 or fitzgeraldr@uwstout.edu. You may also contact Dr. Denise Zirkle Brouillard, thesis supervisor at (715) 232-2599 or brouillardd@uwstout.edu. Questions can also be answered by Sue Foxwell, Director-Research Services at (715) 232-2477 or foxwells@uwstout.edu.

Consent

By signing this document, you are giving parental consent for your child to participate in this study. Please have your child return this document and the survey to **Student Services** no later than **December 22, 2004**.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

(Student Signature)

(Date)