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Students on Truancy

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Students on Truancy: King City High School District

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Abstract

Truancy is an issue that is affecting the overall success of school districts, and in particular the King City High School District. A study was conducted to provide the school evidence on the leading factor of truancy. A survey was distributed to about thirty students who are currently truant to discover the leading cause of truancy, which was lack of motivation. Additionally, a workshop was developed for truant students who lack motivation. A guest speaker was invited to the school to give a motivational speech to promote future success. Several factors have led students to become truant such as lack of motivation, physical health, mental health, and homelessness among others. Unfortunately, truancy is steadily increasing. Truancy is negatively associated with negative outcomes in terms of not completing their education and becoming unemployed or homeless. Students whose families are from low socio-economic status, parents who do not monitor assignments, negative attitudes towards instructors, are all associated with the elevated levels of truancy.

Key Words: King City High School, Truancy, Students, Education, Low Graduation Rate

Agency, Mission, and Purpose

King City High School's vision is to prepare all students with the necessary tools to engage in rigorous thinking and the decision making for an active life in college, career, and community. As for their mission, is to inspire and empower all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their full potential as responsible productive citizens.

Population Served

King City High School provides all students with a standards-based curriculum, educational programs, resources and opportunities which empower all students to achieve academic success and reach their fullest potential. The King City High School District serves approximately 2,200 students. The district operates three schools, King City High School, Greenfield High School, and Portola Butler High School. Some of the programs that offer student services are the Migrant Program, Educational Talent Search, and the California State University of Monterey Gear Up Program. The services for students offer the opportunity to explore career paths, tutoring, and correction of absences or tardiness to prevent truancy.

Problem Description

The Number of Students on Truancy in King City High School Has Reached its Highest. According to the Kid's Data Organization (2015), Monterey County has one of the highest truancy rate standing at a rate of 27.8 compared to the state rate 31.4 per 100 students as shown below.
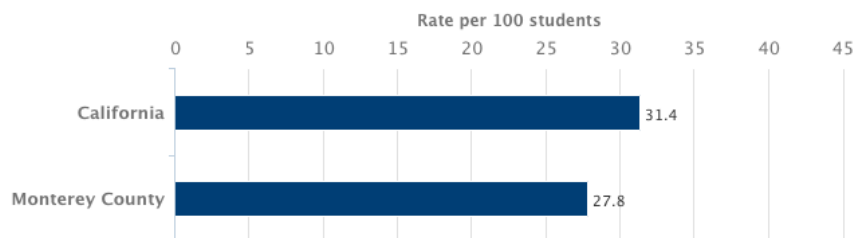
(Kids Data Organization, 2015)

The problem is that the number of truancies are not improving and are demonstrating the lack of parental involvement and motivation. According to Hing (2011), "As of the new year, California parents face prosecution, fines up to $2,000, and even jail time if they don't make sure their kids attend school regularly." It is expensive to become truant and the consequences are not pleasant. The school policies were made to encourage students to attend school.   The Department of Education (2017) states, "The intent of these laws is to provide intensive guidance to meet the special needs of students with school attendance problems or school behavior problems; interventions are designed to divert students with serious attendance and behavioral problems from the juvenile justice system and to reduce the number of students who drop out of school." The leading cause of drop out is truancy. The line graph below shows the dropout rates in the U.S.

Status High School Dropout* Rates Among Youth Ages 16 to 24, by Race and Hispanic Origin:** Selected Years, 1967–2016
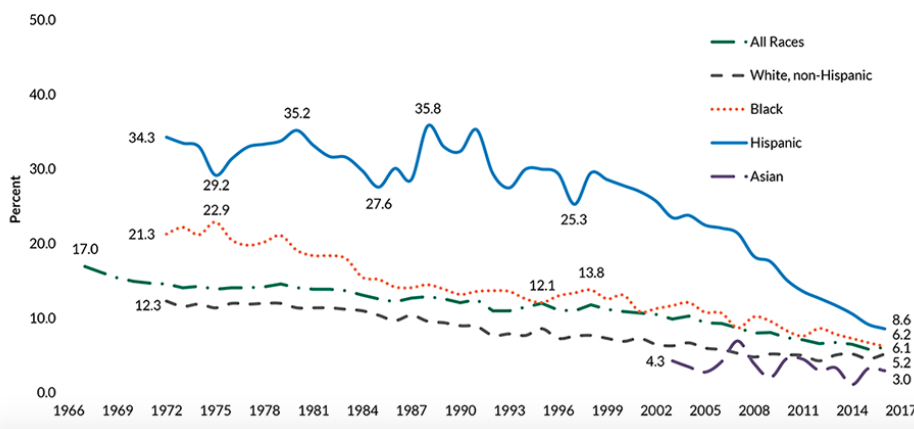
(Child Trend Databank, 2018)

Regardless of the cost or consequences, the number of truant students has increased significantly. When students are absent from school there are a few short-term educational consequences. First and foremost, students miss out on school assignments and lectures. The lack of parent involvement creates a significant impact on a student's academic performance and
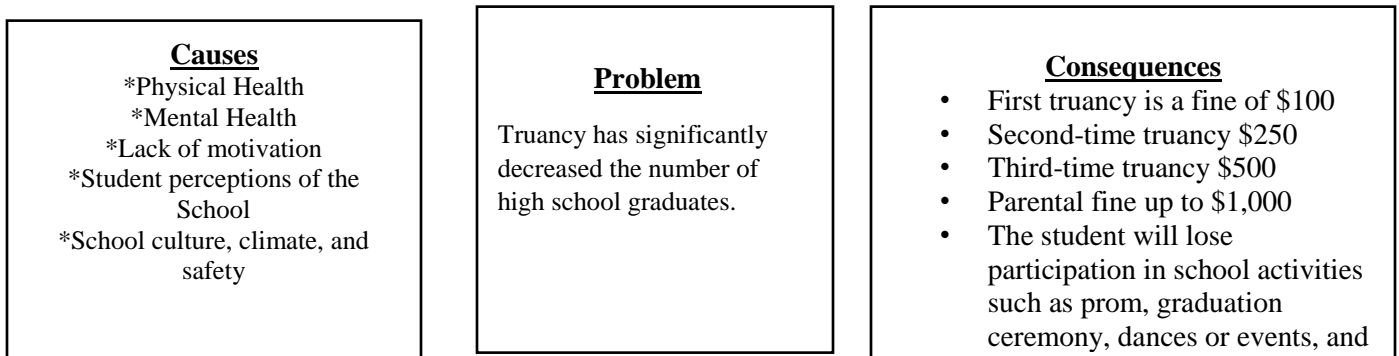
behavior. Many student parents don't attend truancy conferences when asked to do so. Okuna

(2008) argued, "However, students with poor academic skills can who also suffer from a lack of

parental involvement or support have virtually no chance of graduating high school." It is

possible for students to succeed without parental involvement and support, but very challenging.

Parents help students become successful. Therefore, the lack of parental involvement creates no

interest for the student to improve his or her attendance. Table 1 below demonstrates that 40.3%

of student's graduate high school and the students on truancy are included. By reducing the

number of students on truancy a significant improvement will be demonstrated in a future

census. If truancy was effectively being addressed the graduation percentage would have a

significant rise. King City High School has a low graduation percentage which can be addressed

by solving truancy issues in the school.

Table 1: Percentage of School Graduations (U.S Census, 2011-2015)

	King City	Monterey County	California
High School Graduate or Higher	40.3%	70.7%	81.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	4.8%	23.1%	31.4%

Aside from student consequences, there are parental consequences as well. Parents can get fined

for up to $1,000 for not attending school meetings with the district attorney and for not

demanding their student to attend school.

Problem Model

Causes	Problem	Consequences
*Physical Health *Mental Health *Lack of motivation *Student perceptions of the School *School culture, climate, and safety	Truancy has significantly decreased the number of high school graduates.	• First truancy is a fine of $100 • Second-time truancy $250 • Third-time truancy $500 • Parental fine up to $1,000 • The student will lose participation in school activities such as prom, graduation ceremony, dances or events, and

Project Description and Justification

Identifying Reasons to Truancy and Improving the Truancy Procedure can be challenging. The project that has been implemented at the agency which is King City High School District was a research project along with a suggested procedure for truancy. The study involved students participating in a survey that had been created to determine the reasons why students have become truant. After gathering the survey results a workshop was planned with a guest speaker to motivate students to attend school and be on time. However, the procedure that the King City High School District currently follows is not enforced and effective as it should be. The California Department of Education (CDE) states, "*EC* Section 48260 (a) A pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuing education who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than a 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, shall be classified as a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or to the superintendent of the school district." (Truancy, n.d.).

It is mandatory that all students who are enrolled in full-time education attend school and should not have more than three unexcused absences in one school year. Therefore, creating an effective truancy procedure will be very useful. The Strategies for Youth Organization (SYO) stated, "There are numerous factors that have caused youth to become truant; learning disabilities, victimization by school bullies, fear of attending school, family issues, mental health issues, and lack of communication with parents informing them about the student's absence" (How to Understand Truancy, n.d.). Youth need support to overcome the challenging situations or circumstance that prevents students from attending school regularly. The goal of the project was to discover the reason for truancy, provide a motivational speech to encourage students to be

successful and include suggestions on how to effectively carry on truancy policies as well as to compare other district policies and see which are more effective.

Project Implementation Plan

In order to address the truancy problem at the agency the project consisted of; statistic research, printed surveys, a workshop for students, a raffle, and suggested methods to carry on effective truancy policies for the agency. The statistic research will be obtained from the school attendance specialist and the staff members who focus on truancy as well as the U.S census and the California Department of Education. The data that will be used for the research will be from the 2017-2018 school year at King City High School.

To begin with, the surveys have been created for truant students and have been conducted in the English language and will provide a Spanish version if necessary. The survey consists of twelve questions and was personally delivered to about 30 students. Grades 9th and 10th were the main participants. Therefore, Aeries which has student data was used to call students and ask whether he/she wishes to participate in the research project. The purpose of the survey was to gather information directly from the truant students at the King City High School. The importance of receiving accurate information was dependent on whether the project results were successful. A document which had the name of numerous students was given to me to gather the information necessary to conduct the survey and target the students who have been recognized as truant.

Furthermore, based on the results that were gathered from the survey with 34 participants a workshop was created in which 30 students participated. The workshop involved a guest speaker who discussed the consequences for truancy and the importance of continuing one's education. After the workshop was over a post-survey was distributed to see whether having a workshop was useful, motivational and if students learned anything from the presentation. A

raffle took place a few days after the workshop for those who have attended and have participated in the survey. The items that were raffled were three $5 Starbucks cards.

Additionally, the school truancy policies in Monterey County High School Districts have been researched and analyzed in order to discover which school has the most effective method of decreasing the number of truancies. The next step was to compare other district policies to the King City High School policy and modify it or make suggestions depending on how different the policies were in each school in Monterey County. After researching other district policies, suggestions will be made towards suggesting other methods to decrease truancy at the KCHS.

Evidence-Based

While conducting research I came across a successful project that has solved the issue of truancy. In Georgia, the Truancy Project Organization has created a few programs which help students participate, attend school, and creates effective communication with parents to support their student in educational goals. The programs include Early Intervention. Truancy, and Outreach Activities. According to the Truancy organization Project, "The Truancy Intervention Project or "TIP" strives to decrease chronic absenteeism by pairing trained volunteers with children and their families to provide them with the advocacy, resources, and services necessary to ensure good attendance and success in school." The Truancy Intervention Project has many volunteers who help with the prevention of school failure. Volunteers are generously participating in making a difference in the lives of children in urgent need. Volunteers work one on one with children, as advocates both inside and outside the courtroom and with those who are at risk for failure. The Georgia project is an alternative project if the number of truant students continues to increase after the implementation of the new modified truancy policies.

Participants

My role and responsibilities at the KCHS agency are to counsel students who are struggling academically and refer them to some of the programs the school provides. A significant role during the project was to gather information on why attendance was and is a problem and what the cause is. The main responsibility for the project was to have 30-60 surveys distributed to truant students, motivate students to participate in the workshop, create flyers, have a raffle and present the results to the agency as well as modify the school truancy policy. The staff who have participated in the project were the high school students, vice principal, the librarian, and one of the high school program coordinator. The students who participated in the survey were informed that the information would be kept confidential, it was mentioned that the data was going to be used for the truancy project and that the student was able to stop the survey at any time.

Resources Needed

The resources needed to implement the project were funding, KCHS staff, raffle materials, and student data. Funding was obtained by donation. The school staff needed to request for the purchase order (p.o) for student lunches for the workshop date. The staff also contributed by providing confidential information regarding the truant student. Also, KCHS staff gave me access to a classroom, computer, and priority where the workshop eventually took place.

Scope of Work

| Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines
Gather data on Truant Students	Website/Research And Personal Communication/ School Staff	03/2/18
Create Truancy Survey	Research options/ Customize Questions	03/5/18
Access School System Aeries to call out students to participate in survey	Request field mentor for permission to access student info	03/7/18
Students begin taking the survey	Ask for participation	03/14/18
Finish truancy surveys with participants	Gather data	03/28/18
Plan a motivational workshop and request a P.O for food purchase from the district	Request a classroom from an instructor for the workshop	04/16/18
Purchase raffle items	Raffle prizes after the POST survey is turned in from all students $10	04/23/18
Create Workshop POST survey	Conduct survey after the workshop	05/2/18
Create Workshop flyers	Distribute flyers to instructors	08/22/18
Create tickets for Raffle	Motivate Students to turn in POST Surveys	08/27/18
Create the PowerPoint for the workshop	Get the district attorneys information regarding truancy	08/29/18
Contact presenters for the workshop	Get final workshop date	08/31/18
Truancy Workshop	Motivate students to attend school	09/17/18
Collect POST Surveys	Get data and personal responses	09/26/18
Raffle gift cards for survey participants	Choose winners during lunch	09/28/18
Research other Monterey county truancy policies that are effective	Create a modified truancy policy	10/3/18
Contact South Monterey High School Districts regarding their truancy policies	Obtain effective policy suggestions	10/15/18
Complete Reporting Requirements	Final agency capstone reports	10/15/18

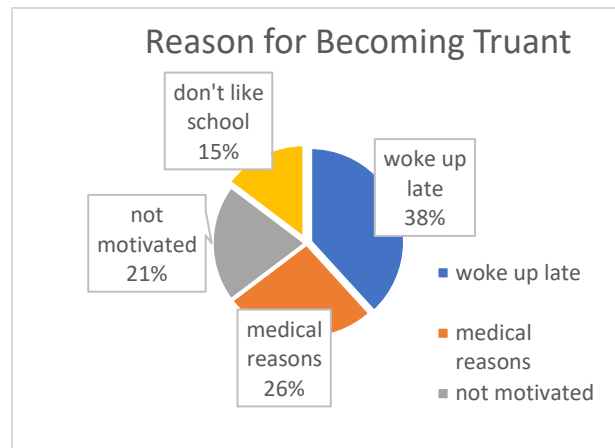| Created and Finalized a Portfolio for the Agency with Capstone Research and Results	Help staff understand the issue of Truancy	10/24/18
Capstone Festival Preparation	Prepare project presentation	11/16/18

Expected Outcome and Assessment Plan

As an intern at the King City High School, the expected outcome from conducting

surveys and research is that the KCHS will now have evidence to why students have become

truant. The way I will know if the project was successful is by considering the student

attendance data from the 30-60 students who attended the workshop until the beginning of

November. I have created a portfolio for the agency which describes every policy that the high

schools in Monterey County has as well as data, research, suggestions, copies of surveys and

other important documents. By my mentor accepting the portfolio and all the research and data

included will indicate a successful project because of numerous research was done to address the

truancy issue at the agency.

Project Results

After gathering data from the truancy survey, the results demonstrated that females are

more likely to participate and be participants of
activities. The pie chart to the right shows the
percentage of female participants compared to male
participants. Overall there were 34 participants.
The truancy survey was given to students before the
truancy workshop which would eventually motivate
students to attend school on time and on a regular
basis.

Participants who took the Survey

Confidential 3%
Male 35%
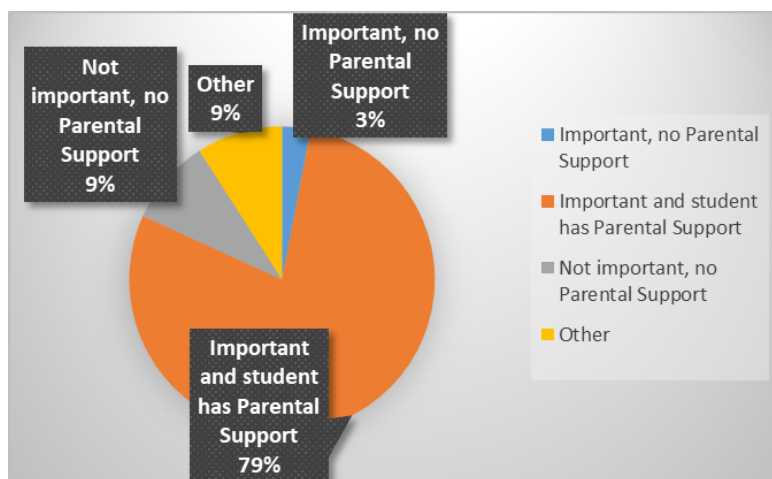Female 62%

Female
Male
Confidential
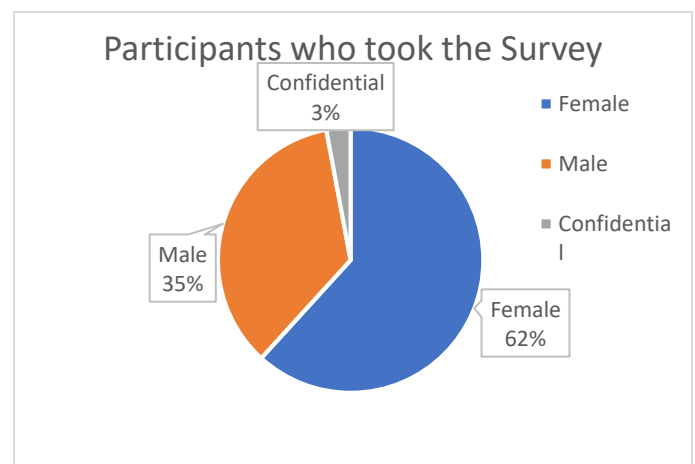
There are distinct reasons to why high school students become truant. After conducting

the survey out of 34 students, 38% answered

that he/she became truant due to waking up

late, 26% had medical reasons, 21% not

motivated, and 15% do not like school. The

results were very shocking. Waking up late for

school is evidence for lack of motivation which

overall is the result for truancy at the King City High School.

Reason for Becoming Truant

don't like school 15%

woke up late 38%

not motivated 21%

medical reasons 26%

- woke up late
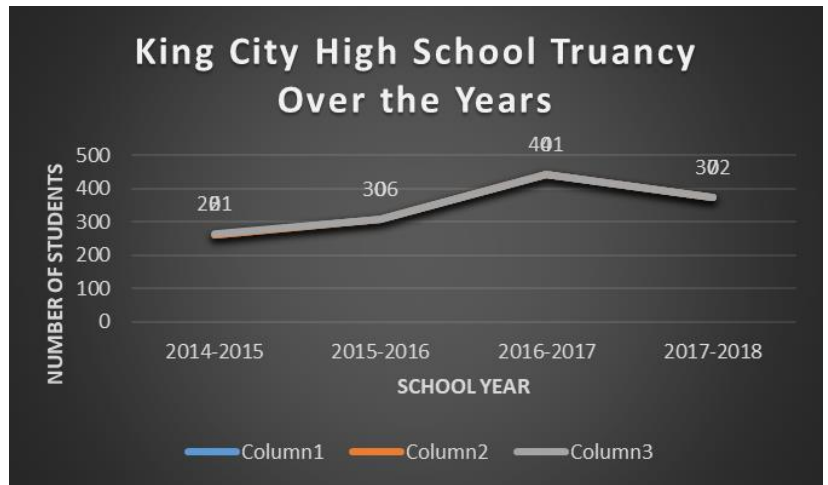- medical reasons
- not motivated

Based on the Pie chart below, most students have parental support and believe school is

important. Therefore, it is seen that students lack motivation as seen on the previous chart, but

parents seem to not be the problem. Students need educational support from staff such as

counselors, teachers, tutors and others who are school staff to become motivated and reach their

goals.

How important is the school for students?

Not important, no Parental Support 9%

Other 9%

Important, no Parental Support 3%

Important and student has Parental Support 79%

- Important, no Parental Support
- Important and student has Parental Support
- Not important, no Parental Support
- Other

The line graph shows how truancy at the King City High School has been increasing,

except for the year of 2017-2018. (R. Martinez, personal communication, April 16, 2018). The

agency was able to reduce the number of

truancies due to enforcing truancy

meetings with the district attorney. After

the truancy workshop, I was able to

encourage students to be on time as it will

prepare them for the professional world.

Students were very interested in knowing

how being late was very unprofessional.

King City High School Truancy Over the Years

School Year	Number of Students
2014-2015	201
2015-2016	306
2016-2017	401
2017-2018	302

Column1 Column2 Column3

After researching several district policies, I came across with the result that the Salinas

High School in Monterey County is in first place with a very high truancy rate compared to the

King City High School. The King City High School is in second place with the truancy issue.

The rates below demonstrate which schools have the worst truancy problems and which has the

most effective methods by having a low truancy rate.

Locations ▼	Rate per 100 students ▼
California	31.4
Monterey County	27.8
Alisal Union (School District)	14.7
Carmel Unified (School District)	22.1
Gonzales Unified (School District)	30.7
North Monterey County Unified (School District)	38.7
Salinas Union High (School District)	50.6
South Monterey County Joint Union High (School District)	41.1

(Kids Organization, 2015)

Strengths/ Successes

The strengths and successes of my projects outcome were all possible because of the great support at King City High School. My mentor Joseph Martin supported me throughout my project. As a high school counselor, Mr. Martin provided feedback and suggestions while working on my project. Mr. Martin was aware of the truancy issue at the school and helped me communicate with other staff to gather data and do research. Effective communication made my project a success.

Limitations/Challenges

Potential challenges varied from students not attending the workshop or not willing to participate in the survey to complete my project. What can be challenging as well is that students do not provide honest and accurate information on the survey. Additionally, a challenge could also have been requesting a class for the workshop and the instructor not willing to lend me the classroom. I would have to reschedule the workshop and look into using the KCHS library, but food is not allowed. Therefore, students would not like to attend a workshop during lunch at a place where food is prohibited. Challenges and obstacles were successfully addressed by speaking with my mentor and taking his advice of submitting a technical request for a workshop area which was the school library where I could take lunches for students and had access to a spare school computer to present.

Conclusion

Recommendation

From conducting numerous research and contacting other high schools in Monterey County, Soledad Unified School District has one of the lowest truancy rates standing at 3.3 per 100 students.   The district has similar procedures as the King City High School, the problem is

that some parents are not as concerned about their student's absences. Therefore, it is difficult to address the issue. A recommendation to the agency would be to develop a program that involves employees whose focus would only be truancy. In order to create the program a grant proposal must be created and submitted to get funds to hire employees who can address and solemnly focus on the issue of truancy.   The King City High School needs to demonstrate more interest in student attendance and be stricter on truancies. Soledad High School has employees who only focus on truancies and officer visits.

Soledad Truancy Letters	Truancy Numbers (2017-2018)
First Truancy Letter	244
Second Truancy Letter	125
Third Truancy Letter	47

(L. Uribe, personal communication, September 17, 2018)

Compared to Soledad High School, King City High School had 302 Truancies for the school year of 2017-2018. As seen the way truancy is addressed at the King City High School is not effective. If the policies were enforced as much as they need to be and there was a support program to encourage students to attend school, truancy rates can drop. The policies don't need a change, but strict enforcement and attention.

Personal Reflection

As for my personal reflection, I have grown to become more professional and work in diverse situations. The process of the research project was challenging. Being able to follow the scope of work and work under a timeline was very stressful and difficult, but I managed to be successful. I have learned to manage my time. Managing time will come in use in the professional world when working under deadlines. I really learned a lot from the project I did to what has led students to become truant, what their needs are, and how they can be helped. The truancy issue is a concern to the community as it will affect everyone from high unemployment

rates to financial insecurities. The capstone project that was done for the agency where I

interned will benefit many by finding or recruiting other services for truancy.

Advice for Future Capstone Students

The advice I have for future capstone students are to: build relationships with students,

encourage student education, visit classrooms, support teachers and lastly choose a project

wisely which will benefit not only the agency, but students as well. Interns are given the

opportunity to be able to understand what students need to be successful. Interns should be more

involved and ask questions even if it may seem to become annoying. It is important to be aware

and informed of what the agency needs to be more successful than what it might be.

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Appendix

King City High School Survey- 9th and 10th grade

Exploring the Reason for Truancy

King City High School Truancy Students

The purpose of the survey is to examine the problem leading students to become truant. This survey will remain confidential, if you decide to stop the survey your answers will not be a part of my study. Feel free to stop at any time. Thank you for your participation.

1. What is your grade level?

☐ Freshmen

☐ Sophomore

☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Prefer not to say

3. How is your parent notified of your unexcused absence or tardy?

☐ Phone

☐ Mail

☐ E-mail

☐ He/She doesn't find out about my unexcused absence or tardy

☐ The number of my parent/guardian on file has changed

☐ Other [_____]

4. I have become truant because...

☐ I have had three or more 30 minute unexcused tardies

☐ I have more than three unexcused absences

☐ I have frequent unexcused absences or tardies

☐ Other [_____]

5. I have _____ unexcused tardies.

☐ 3-5 times a month

☐ 6-10 times a month

☐ More than 11 times a month

☐ I lost count of the times I am late

6. I have _____ unexcused absences a month.

☐ 2 to 4

☐ 6 to 8

☐ 10 to 12

☐ More than 13

☐ Other

7. I have received_____.

☐ The first letter of truancy.

☐ The second letter of truancy.

☐ The third letter of truancy.

☐ I don't know

8. If you answered "I don't know" to number six check the box that applies to you.

☐ First time truant: A written warning given to the student

☐ Second time truant: Attend an after school or weekend program

☐ Third time truant: Required to attend a truancy mediation program offered by the school and held in KCHS office

☐ Fourth time truant: Student will appear in court

☐ Other

9. School is _____.

☐ Important to me and I have parental support

☐ Not important and I don't have parental support

☐ Important, but I don't have parental support

☐ Not important, but I have parental support

☐ Other

10. The reasons I attend school include... (Check all that apply)

☐ I am forced to attend

☐ I am interested in my education

☐ I can hang out with my friends

☐ I like to participate in after school activities

☐ I like my instructors

11. I am often late or absent because... (Check all that apply)

☐ I woke up late

☐ I don't like school

☐ I have drug or alcohol problems

☐ Medical reasons

☐ Family issues

☐ I was homeless

☐ Hang out with friends

☐ Conflicts with staff or teachers

☐ Don't like school

☐ Felt unsafe

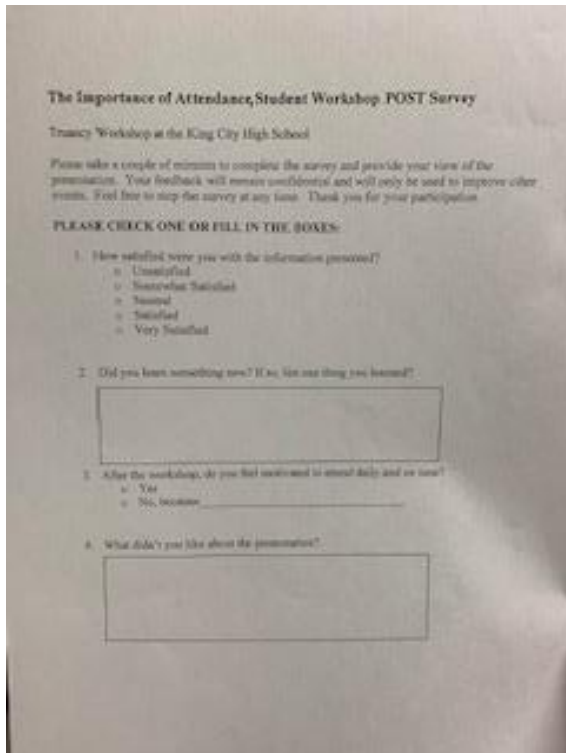☐ I am not motivated enough to attend

☐ Other [   ]

12. What do you need in order to come to school on time and be present often during the

school year?

☐ Parental support

☐ Counseling (KCHS) support

☐ Motivation

☐ Other fun and interesting electives

☐ Instructor's motivation and support

☐ Schedule change

☐ Friendship motivation

☐ Other [   ]

TRUANCY WORKSHOP FLYER
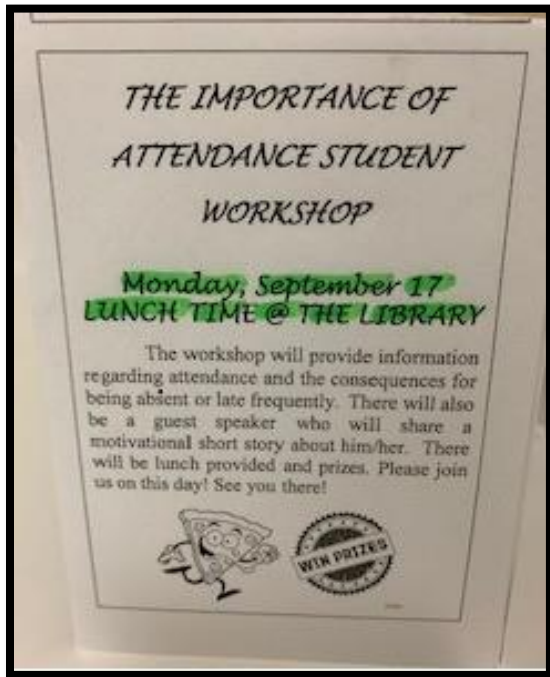
WORKSHOP POST SURVEY

Capstone Portfolio with Project Results and Research