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## Teachers' perceptions of teacher incentives on district attendance incentive programs and their impact on improving overall teacher attendance

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Teachers' perceptions of teacher incentives on district attendance incentive programs and their  
impact on improving overall teacher attendance

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Pages in Study 46

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Teacher absenteeism is a problem that needs a solution. It is imperative that teachers come to work each day to prepare their students for academic achievement. If teachers are chronically absent from work, the students' academic achievement suffers. There needs to be a way to minimize teacher absences. School districts must track data that shows teacher absences in order to get a clear picture of when and where the absences are the greatest problem.

A review of the literature identified several studies conducted over the years that document the effects of teacher absenteeism. With this in mind, it is recommended that incentives be put in place to reduce the absences of the teachers. I furthered the research to include data from a school district by researching teacher perceptions of the use of teacher attendance incentives in the school district.

The purpose of this study was to determine which schools within the school district have Incentive programs in place to motivate teachers to come to work. Existing attendance data was obtained to analyze the attendance of the teachers at each building. The teachers were then surveyed to identify the incentives that are in place at each building and the teachers' perceptions of those incentives. The surveys conducted also assisted in determining if the attendance

incentives that are used as motivation are effective to motivate teachers to attend work. The results of the teachers' perceptions of the incentive program at each school will be compared with the teacher attendance data to determine which teacher attendance incentives are effective in motivating teachers to attend work as scheduled. The incentives that are the most effective will be shared with each principal in the district to utilize in maintaining better teacher attendance throughout the school district.

## DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my sons, Tanner Threadgill and Reeves Threadgill. They are my inspiration for everything I do in life. I went back to graduate school to complete this final degree, a doctorate degree, to show them that it is never too late to follow their dreams, and with hard work and perseverance they can obtain all of their goals in life. Hard work pays off every time. Never let anyone discourage you from obtaining the next degree, the next promotion, or the next job. You both are capable of doing anything you put your mind to doing.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of Study .....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
Introduction .....	4
Teacher Absenteeism and Student Achievement .....	4
Factors That Influence Teacher Attendance .....	8
Teacher Incentives: .....	13
III. METHODOLOGY .....	20
Research Design .....	20
Research Questions .....	21
The Researcher .....	21
Setting .....	22
Participants .....	23
Instrumentation .....	24
Trustworthiness .....	25
Data Collection Procedures .....	26
Data Analysis Procedures .....	26
Positionality Statement .....	27
IV. DISCUSSION .....	29
Interpretation of the Findings .....	29
Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research .....	34
V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	36



REFERENCES .....38

APPENDIX

A. TEACHER ATTENDANCE REWARD PROGRAM .....41

B. TEACHER ATTENDANCE INCENTIVES REWARD .....43

C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION .....45

C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION.....50

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Teacher Demographics .....24

Table 2 Teacher Responses on Whether Teacher Attendance Incentives Are Given.....30

Table 3 Teacher Responses on Whether Principals Emphasize Importance of  
Attendance .....31

Table 4 Teacher Responses of Number of Days Absent .....33

Table 5 Percentages of Teacher Absences by School Zone.....34

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of Study**

Teachers are the most crucial counterpart, in a school setting, toward achieving academic success. It is imperative that teachers come to work each day to prepare their students for academic achievement. The students' academic achievement suffers if teachers are chronically absent from work. There needs to be a way to minimize teacher absences. Teacher absenteeism is an area of concern in our school-district. Incentives are used to encourage and motivate teacher attendance, but the impact of teacher incentives has yet to be discovered. This study researched teacher perceptions of the teacher incentives being used and the impact of the incentives on teacher attendance. The data obtained will assist our school administrators in examining a teacher incentive program that will reduce chronic teacher absenteeism.

Teacher absenteeism is an ongoing problem in educational settings. A historical case study conducted by Norton in 1989 revealed that almost 75% of human resource personnel reported teacher absenteeism as a chronic issue in schools. Teacher absenteeism has a negative effect on student performance and school district performance. There has to be a way to minimize the use of days off that teachers take during school hours. Teacher absenteeism is a problem that needs a solution. “On average, 36 percent of teachers nationally were absent more than 10 days during the 2009-2010 school year based on the 56,837 schools analyzed in the dataset” (Miller,2012). American teachers have a higher absenteeism rate than people employed

in other occupations (Clotfelter et al., 2009). An astounding 16 percent of all teachers were classified as chronically absent because they missed 18 days or more in the school year, accounting for almost a third of all absences in a study conducted in 2014 by Waymack and Zielask. Students may be affected in many ways by having a chronically absent teacher. When teachers are not at work, the students are far less likely to get the education they need. The lack of instruction will likely impact the students, the schools, and the school district. Student achievement or lack of student achievement affects the scores on the statewide assessments. Low assessment scores will likely cause numerous issues for the schools and the school district (Miller, 2012). The assessment scores affect the reputation of the school district, the funding, and much more, causing a domino effect of problems in the communities throughout the school district. Chronic teacher absenteeism affects all stakeholders within the schools and the school district.

A review of the literature identified several studies that have been conducted throughout school-districts over the years. However, this study seeks to further the research to include data from our school district to hopefully bring awareness of this to the school district's stakeholders. According to a study by Waymack and Zielaski (2014), public-school teachers were in the classroom an average of 94 percent of the school year, missing nearly 11 days out of a 186-day school year (the average school year length). Teachers used slightly less than all of the short-term leave offered by the district, an average of 13 days. With that being stated, according to the data, American teachers reportedly have higher rates of absenteeism as compared to workers in other occupations in America (Clotfelter et al., 2009). However, Clotfelter et al. (2009) stated that teacher absences in the United States are a much smaller problem than in other countries. Even so, it is still a problem without a solution that needs awareness.

The purpose of this study was to determine which schools within a Mississippi school-district have incentive programs in place to motivate teachers to come to work. Teachers in the studied district were then surveyed to identify the incentives that are in place at each building and the teachers' perceptions of those incentives. Surveys were also conducted at each school in the district to determine if the attendance incentives used as motivation are effective in motivating teachers to attend work. The incentive program results at each school have been compared with the teacher attendance data to determine which incentive program is effective in motivating teachers to attend work as scheduled. The incentives that were the most effective will be shared with each school in the district to utilize in maintaining better teacher attendance throughout the district.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Research continues to point out that teacher absenteeism has a negative effect on school systems, including but not limited to lowered student achievement, increased administrative time spent obtaining substitutes, and a financial drain on the school district (Bipath et al., 2019).

Many factors can cause teacher absenteeism. Some can be avoided, and some cannot.

Regardless, teacher absences cost money that could be better used to educate the students. There has to be a way to minimize the frequency of teacher absenteeism and the subsequent loss of instructional time for students.

A review of the literature identified several reports from the World Bank that have been published throughout the years that document the effects of teacher absenteeism on student achievement. According to Hassan et al. (2018), the 2015 World Bank report stated that a teacher's chronic absence from school prevents students from learning how they should. Teacher absences reportedly affect student quality control, alienation, morale, stress, and liability (Hassan et al., 2018).

#### **Teacher Absenteeism and Student Achievement**

Common sense tells us that when a teacher is absent, the learning process for students is interrupted. When teacher absenteeism becomes a problem, academic achievement can be negatively impacted significantly. The more days a teacher is out of the classroom, the lower

their students tend to score on standardized tests (Miller, 2012). It is imperative that teachers show up each day to prepare their students academically. According to Miller (2012), teacher absenteeism is a leading indicator of student achievement. If teachers are not at school, academic instruction in their classes is not conducive to academic achievement. When the teacher is absent, the class is usually kept by a substitute teacher who is less effective and less qualified to teach the students than the teacher assigned to teach the class. Therefore, when teachers are not at school, academic instruction in their classroom is not conducive to academic achievement. If teachers are absent, the students' academic achievement could decline. With that being stated, according to the data, American teachers still reportedly have higher rates of absence compared with workers in other occupations in America (Clotfelter et al., 2009). Therefore, teacher absenteeism is an issue of concern regarding student achievement.

Teacher absenteeism poses a concern with regard to the loss of productivity in the workplace. Evidence is presented in an article about the effects of absenteeism on productivity using a detailed panel of data on the timing, duration, and reasons for absences among teachers and the gains in academic achievement made by their students (Herrmann, 2012). The data in the study came from New York City, which is the largest school district in the United States. Data for all teacher absences were retrieved from the school district for this study. The data suggests that all absences from work affect work productivity. However, the work schedule in the education setting lacks flexibility and cannot be rescheduled when missed or made up by working overtime hours (Herrmann, 2012). Therefore, it impacts the students academically and puts them behind in the study of their academic work.

“New research suggests that teacher absenteeism is becoming problematic in U.S. public schools, as about one in three teachers miss more than 10 days of school each year” (Toppo, 2013). Clotfelter et al. (2009) stated that teachers in the United States have a higher rate of absenteeism than employees in other professions. With this in mind, it is recommended that policies be put in place to reduce the absences of teachers in the United States; which would ‘include improved student discipline and achievement and reduced expenditures on substitute teachers’ (Clotfelter et al., 2009. p.116). “This article aims to address the questions of frequency, incidence, and effect as well as the potential impact of leave policy, using data on public schools in North Carolina’ (Clotfelter et al., 2009, p.117). The state agency, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and the North Carolina Education Research Data Center provided the data collected in this study. The ordinary least squares (OLS) model was used to determine the characteristics of teachers who tend to be absent most often. This method was also used to determine whether teachers from schools in low-income communities are absent more often than those from higher-income communities. In addition, the same method was used to determine whether teacher absences impact student achievement. The evidence revealed that chronic teacher absenteeism affects student achievement.

Roby (2013) discussed a study conducted to determine the impact of teacher attendance on student achievement. The data collected and used were from the Ohio Department of Education. A comparison of average attendance rates, means, standard deviations, and t-tests were analyzed. Adequate yearly progress data were compared using percentages. The school Report Cards were used to obtain the data needed for comparison. The schools used in the study were chosen based on teacher attendance. The results indicated that student achievement in



schools with higher teacher attendance was higher than in schools with lower teacher attendance (Roby, 2013). A substitute teacher is not the answer.

Is there really a substitute for a teacher? According to Kronholz (2013), her son worked as a substitute teacher immediately after college. A month after earning his bachelor's degree, with no teacher training, he taught history, Spanish, calculus, literature, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grades, tennis, and gym class to severely disabled students. It is not uncommon for people with no formal training to become a substitute teacher in schools in the United States. It is due to teacher absence. When teachers are absent, they reportedly leave behind work for the students to do, such as 'worksheets, quizzes, and videos' (Kronholz, 2013, p.1). Marguerite Roza, a professor at the University of Washington, called it a lost day for most kids. Reagen T. Miller, associate director of education and research at the Center for American Progress, said, "A lot of times, principals are just praying for basic safety" (Kronholz, 2013, p.1). "The education department reported after the 2003-04 school year that 5.3 percent of U.S. teachers are absent on any given day" (Kronholz, 2013, p.2). The effects of these teacher absences are shown through the achievement results of their students. "The Duke researchers found that being taught by a substitute teacher for 10 days a year has a larger effect on a child's math scores than if he had changed schools, and about half the size of the effect of poverty" (Kronholz, 2013, p.4). That is a profound impact on the students' academic achievement. Columbia researchers Mariesa Herrman and Jonah Rockoff concluded that the effects of using a substitute teacher on learning, for even a day, is more significant than replacing an average teacher with a terrible one (Kronholz, 2013, p.4). Substitute teachers do not know students or their skill levels well enough to provide the individualized instruction each student needs.

“According to the report of the World Bank 2010, teacher absenteeism rate is increasing in the rural area than the urban area of Pakistan” (Hassan et al., 2018). All of the studies addressed in the review have indicated that teacher absenteeism is increasing rapidly in more rural areas. The findings of the study conducted by Hassan et al. (2018) concluded that the teacher absenteeism rate has a more significant impact on student performance than student absenteeism. According to these findings, the public-school teachers in this study were absent 1-5 days per month compared to the private school absenteeism being less than that of the public-school teachers. However, the amount of monthly leave the private school teachers took was not given. In addition, the public-school teachers reported liking their jobs at a higher percentage than the teachers of the private schools. This may be attributed to the idea that the private school teachers reported were less satisfied and more insecure about their jobs, causing them to take less leave time (Hassan et al., 2018).

### **Factors That Influence Teacher Attendance**

A study conducted by Owen (2010) discussed how the practices of school officials affect teacher absenteeism. She stated that teacher absenteeism has a significant effect on student achievement, attendance, and behavior. Her research indicated that the more the teacher is absent, the lower the test scores are, the higher the student absences, and the higher the number of student discipline referrals. The study aimed to identify practices of school leaders that cause teacher absences with suggestions for replacement practices that will cause teachers to want to be at school. The research identified will assist school leaders by improving their practices, which will encourage the teachers and improve student achievement, attendance, and behavior. The study employed attitudinal surveys for the school leaders and teachers from two schools to obtain the data needed for the research. One of the schools had good teacher attendance, while the other

school had poor teacher attendance. The teachers agreed that their school leaders' practices did affect whether or not they were absent. Teachers also identified their leaders' lack of flexibility as a problem contributing to their absences. Sometimes there is personal business that has to be taken care of during the school day, and there is a requirement for taking the whole day off instead of leaving for a few minutes to take care of the business and immediately returning to work. Teachers in the study indicated that lack of concern and support as also being reasons for absences. If school leaders would be more approachable, teachers might not need a substitute teacher as often.

A study by Akseer and Játiva (2021) identified other factors that affect teacher attendance. The study conducted in Ghana asked the question: “What are the main factors associated with teacher attendance?”. The study verified the following results:

1. Factors that influence teacher attendance nationally include the timing of training programs that conflict with teaching times. This results in school and classroom absences and a lack of punctuality. Training teachers need is unavailable, especially in subject-knowledge, lesson planning, and classroom management. These combined factors limit classroom presence and time on task. Salary amounts also result in low punctuality and teacher absenteeism from work. Low salaries affect teacher motivation, their time on task, and their regular attendance at work teaching due to having second jobs.

2. Significant factors include limited monitoring by the school district education office and supervisors. This is mainly due to a need for more travel funds. The focus is often on measuring and sanctioning school absence instead of classroom absence or limited instructional time use. Engagement with teachers working in schools farther away from the school-district education

office is less often. This could lower teacher motivation at those schools. This also increases the occurrence of school and classroom absences and low punctuality.

3. Weather conditions can limit teachers' attendance and punctuality to school, especially among male teachers and those who rely on transportation systems to get to school. Public school teachers also experience higher instances of classroom absence and limited instructional time use due to inadequate school buildings and infrastructure, such as protection from rain while at school. Additionally, some teachers worry that parents need to provide students or teachers with sufficient support, which affects their time on task in the classroom.

4. Factors at the school level that affect teacher attendance include a lack of focus from the principals on classroom absence and instructional time use even though they track attendance. School absences and punctuality are typical when the principals do not emphasize the importance of attendance or regularly monitor absenteeism. Also, the lack of teaching materials limits teachers' time on task and their attendance to school. In addition, the heavy workloads of teachers reduce their attendance to school and their intended time on task.

5. Lastly, at the teacher level, health and personal responsibilities such as caring for family and social engagements are common reasons teachers may not be punctual or may be absent from school. Their level of commitment towards their work also affects their attendance, punctuality, and time on task.

According to a study by Waymack and Zielaski (2014), using school district data for 40 of the country's largest metropolitan areas for the 2012 – 2013 school year; districts with formal policies in place to discourage teacher absenteeism did not appear to have better attendance rates than those without such policies, suggesting that the most common policies are not particularly effective. Increased awareness on this topic must be communicated to the teachers since they are

responsible for the outcome. Waymack and Zielaski (2014) uncovered the following evidence about teacher attendance:

- On average, public school teachers were in the classroom 94 percent of the school year, missing nearly 11 days out of a 186-day school year (the average school year length). Teachers used slightly less than all of the short-term leave offered by the district, an average of 13 days in the 40 districts.
- 16 percent of all teachers were classified as chronically absent teachers because they missed 18 days or more in the school year, accounting for almost a third of all absences.
- Despite previous research to the contrary, this study did not find a relationship between teacher absence and the poverty levels of the children in the school building.
- Districts with formal policies to discourage teacher absenteeism did not appear to have better attendance rates than those without such policies, suggesting that the most common policies are not particularly effective.

Teacher absenteeism reportedly impacts the finances of the schools also. Chronic teacher absenteeism affects the school budget and the students because the payment of the substitute teachers must be budgeted each school year, and the loss of instruction affects student achievement (Owen, 2010). In a study in New Jersey's Camden City Public Schools, up to 40 percent of their teachers are absent daily. This is substantially higher than the 5.3 percent rate of teacher absenteeism in the United States overall. Due to the growing concern of teacher absenteeism, the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education began collecting data on teacher absenteeism through the Civil Rights Data Collection survey. These data have been collected on teacher absenteeism from the nation's schools since 2009. The report on the data collected was published at the beginning of 2012. The data raised concerns about the impact

of teacher absenteeism on student achievement. The report 'seeks to draw attention to the cost and effects of teacher absenteeism. The data showed that teacher absenteeism negatively affects finances and students (Clotfelter et al.,2009).

The impact of teacher absenteeism on student achievement is a topic that needs to be researched more in-depth. Stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, and lawmakers, have focused on the impact of student attendance over the years. However, very little research exists on how teacher absenteeism affects student achievement. The review of literature reveals that the effects of chronic teacher absenteeism are an issue that needs awareness. School district administrators need data on the effects that the absences of teachers have on their students' outcomes academically. The student academic results affect the schools and the district as a whole system; therefore, the data should be tracked. Data is needed to make decisions that affect the outcomes of students.

Improving teacher attendance needs to be a priority among school-districts. Offering incentives would be a way to cut down on teacher absences and improve teacher attendance. One way to improve teacher attendance would be to have formal district policies in place regarding teacher absences. Incentives such as teacher pay raises, more than the yearly increments on the teacher salary scale, could be enacted to improve the perception of the importance of the teaching position and entice the teachers to come to work daily. A stipend could also be offered to teachers with no absences other than documented illness by a physician. Other reward systems could be established and provided for teacher attendance. We reward students for goals met, so why not reward teachers for attendance? “One of the most frequently recurring themes among strategies implemented to combat teacher absenteeism is a focus on providing teachers with greater incentives to be in regular attendance” (Knoster, 2016).

### **Teacher Incentives:**

Teacher incentives are used to motivate teachers to obtain specific goals set forth by the school administration. School administrators reward the teachers by implementing a reward system for adults. Different types of rewards are used for teacher incentive systems. Some are monetary rewards; others are rewards of recognition or time off from work duties. A review of the literature yielded results for suggestions of teacher incentives used throughout educational settings to improve teacher attendance. However, the research on the teachers' perceptions of the teacher incentives used is limited. Researchers have suggested rewards and systems for teacher incentives in the education system.

Hildebrandt and Eom (2011) found five factors to be significant when considering teacher incentives to use; improved teaching, external validation, financial gain, collaboration, and internal validation. Financial gain incentivized teachers in their 30s more than those aged 40 and older (Hildebrandt and Eom, 2011). While all non-financial motivations are important, the evidence shows that teacher incentive structures also matter.

In a study conducted by Jacobson (1990), suggestions were made to help alleviate chronic teacher absenteeism:

1. Develop clear guidelines concerning 'excessive' absence. School districts should develop policy guidelines as to what constitutes an excessive absence. Based upon the usual 187- day school year, 7-11 days absent would be considered a reasonable amount of lost work time for a teacher.
2. Computerize teacher attendance data. Administrators should run attendance data regularly and give feedback to the teachers on their absences.

3. Regular reporting and feedback. A designated person at the district level should also keep up with cumulative absences and report them.

These suggestions could be beneficial to use as incentives to help with teacher absenteeism. If teachers are aware that the administration is looking at their absences each grading period, it could detour them from being absent unless absolutely necessary. In addition, the awareness of their cumulative absences could curb their desire to miss work. Teachers reportedly have little control over some variables in student academic success. However, it becomes necessary for them to focus on the one variable for which teachers are directly responsible: their own absenteeism (Dinham & Scott, 2000).

Vegas (2005) stated that many people think of teacher incentives as solely wages, salaries, and monetary benefits. Indeed, differences in pay can act as an incentive to attract and retain qualified teachers or discourage qualified applicants and talented practitioners already in the profession. However, Vegas (2005) discovered, in their study of teacher incentives in Latin America, that there are many different kinds of incentives that are not monetary. They identified and defined the types of incentives that affect teachers:

1. Intrinsic Motivation: The power within an individual to make a difference by teaching children. This can serve as a motivator and incentive for individuals to enter the teaching profession.
2. Recognition and Prestige: The idea that becoming a teacher is in some way prestigious can encourage people to become teachers.
3. Job Stability: The frequency of teacher union contracts protects teachers' jobs in some countries. This stability for teaching jobs may attract some people to the teaching profession.



4. Pensions and Benefits: Benefits such as health insurance and government retirement that provide a decent income after a teacher retires can attract people to become teachers and remain in the profession long-term.
5. Professional Growth. The opportunity for career advancement throughout a career can encourage a person to become a teacher. However, the opportunity for career advancement is only available in the teaching profession in some countries.
6. Adequate Infrastructure and Teaching Materials: Many times, the lack of basic physical and organizational structures makes teaching a less desirable and unattractive choice of profession to some who are qualified professionals.
7. Job Mastery: Individuals who think they are competent enough to become effective teachers will probably choose to become a teacher.
8. Responding to clients: Having to perform on the job to satisfy clients or customers and supervisors can be a strong incentive for performance on the job.
9. Salary Differentials: There are salary differences between teachers and non-teachers and between teachers in general. The salary differences between certified teachers and non-certified individuals could make the teaching profession more or less desirable to some individuals. The differences in teacher salaries may be based on seniority, degrees held, demographics of the school or students, performance, or other reasons. In most countries, teacher salary differences are usually based on the teachers' degrees and years of experience. The salary differences are not usually based on teacher performance.

According to Vegas (2005), these incentives can reportedly work together to entice, keep, and encourage individuals who would be effective teachers. All of these incentives may not

affect teacher attendance. However, it is beneficial to know the research based on the policies that can affect teachers.

Berry and Eckert (2012) stated that it is educationally and morally our job as educators to ensure that the students in America have the best teachers with expertise in their individual fields of study. Their solution is for the school districts to develop incentive policies that reward expertise in the teaching profession. The following suggestions were listed as ways to accomplish this goal.

1. Use the Teacher Incentive Fund to Spread Teaching Expertise for High-Needs Schools.
2. Expand Incentives in Creating Strategic Compensation.
3. Create the Working Conditions that Allow Teachers to Teach Effectively.
4. Elevate Best Practices and Policies that Spur School Excellence and Equity.

Berry and Eckert (2012) stated that in the development of these recommendations, “we follow the wisdom of Lee Shulman, who called for ‘exercising judgment under conditions of uncertainty’ while avoiding the ‘dangers of simplicity’ in improving our schools and the teaching profession.” They discussed how many years ago psychologists Herzberg and Vroom put forth their respective theories of work motivation and expectancy. “Herzberg found that professionals find satisfaction in the nature of the work performed—e.g., opportunities to achieve as well as reach personal goals—while dissatisfaction typically surfaces due to job-related factors such as policies that get in their way, inept supervision, salary, or working conditions” (Berry & Eckert, 2012). “Vroom's theory suggested that individuals behave in certain ways when they believe those behaviors advance an organization's goals as well as when they believe they will be rewarded” (Berry & Eckert, 2012). They stated that these theories are important to consider

when developing incentives for professionals. "Existing pay-for-performance programs for educators vary widely in their design and structure, but they rarely consider the sorts of non-monetary motivations described by Herzberg and Vroom" (Berry & Eckert, 2012).

Their research discusses and focuses on the following teacher incentives:

1. Rewarding performance
2. Attracting and retaining teachers for high-need schools
3. The working conditions that matter most

Berry and Eckert (2012) noted that in 2011 a study of New York City's \$56 million bonus pay system also yielded no positive effect on either student performance or teachers' attitudes toward their jobs. The NYC program primarily awarded the bonuses to the schools, with principals and teachers then determining how to divvy up rewards, which averaged approximately \$3,000 for each teacher. Even schools where individual teachers were rewarded did not demonstrate higher levels of student achievement. Survey results indicated that teachers were motivated less by a financial incentive and more by helping their students learn. At best, teachers reported that the bonus was "a reward for their usual efforts, not as an incentive for changing their behavior. Eighty-two percent of the teachers believed the rating system was unfair because of its overreliance on standardized test scores, which did not 'relate' to their work. The case study evidence suggested that many teachers did not understand how the payouts were determined. In addition, schools that participated in the program did not have marked differences in levels of teacher collaboration. The 'pay for performance' was not an incentive that motivated teachers to show up for work or to perform at a higher standard.

The study by Akseer and Játiva (2021) identifies four critical areas of action to assist in

reducing teacher absenteeism: the development of tailored training programs; the improvement of existing school infrastructure; the strengthening of teacher monitoring and school management; and teacher incentivization; attaching a reward to a teacher behavior.

The most relevant recommendations are:

1. Provide teachers with the pedagogical skills needed to achieve learning outcomes, as required by the new standards-based curriculum. Also, provide teacher training opportunities focusing on teachers' needs without interfering with their classroom time. Training should be provided in the areas of lesson planning; positive behavior supports and discipline, and classroom management.
2. Ensure that all schools and classrooms are conducive to teaching and learning in all schools. Also, ensure that all resources are provided to each teacher to ensure teaching and learning are possible.
3. Employ, train, and monitor teacher attendance management processes and programs so that attendance monitoring efforts also include classroom presence and time on task. Teacher engagement in non-teaching activities should be minimized so teachers can be in their classes and on task.
4. Support teachers through non-monetary incentives to motivate them to carry out their teaching responsibilities. The incentive package should be enhanced, providing tutoring opportunities for additional income to supplement their teacher salary.

In addition, the study suggested that the implementation of School Performance Appraisal Meetings needs to be strengthened to reward teachers for good attendance and employment throughout all schools (Akseer & Játiva, 2021). The meetings would be used to form a systematic approach to reward the teachers who are regularly in attendance and also achieve teaching goals set forth by school officials. School administrators would work diligently

to ensure that school performance appraisal meetings are conducted regularly and that teacher attendance is an integral part of the appraisal meetings. Another suggestion is for school officials to solicit rewards from stakeholders in the community to offer incentives and rewards for teachers who carry out their responsibilities effectively.

A review of the literature supports the idea that a teacher incentive system is needed to motivate teachers to increase their attendance. All of the studies documented in this literature review offer suggestions to assist school districts in improving teacher attendance by incentivizing through the development of policies. However, the research is based on identifying teacher incentives that will motivate and influence teachers to come to work by rewarding them for their attendance. The goal is to reward teachers for coming to work, hoping they will only miss when it is essential, thus improving chronic teacher absenteeism in our school district.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative-non-experimental method was used. The study is non-experimental research since it does not have control variables. This study did not manipulate the variables or test a hypothesis. This type of quantitative research was used for this study at each school in the specified school district to determine whether or not the schools within the school district have teacher attendance incentive programs in place that motivate teachers to come to work.

The research data involving the use of teacher incentives that were found about the research topic discusses developing policies and guidelines to encourage teachers to attend work. A review of the related research revealed policies that are put in place to increase teacher attendance. For example, a study conducted by Jacobson (1990) cited policy-based suggestions to help alleviate chronic teacher absenteeism. However, the research does not address teacher attendance incentive programs. This chapter consists of quantitative research based on teacher perceptions of existing attendance incentives. The chapter outlines the research design, research questions, the setting of the study, the participants in the study, the instruments utilized in the study, school district approval, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, data collection, and data analysis for the study.

#### **Research Design**

The research design being utilized in this study is a quantitative survey research design.

Quantitative methodology is being employed to collect the data in this study in an unbiased manner. A quantitative approach is being used to explore the answer to key questions on the research topic. According to Creswell (2012), the survey research design grants the participants in the study the opportunity to communicate their opinions on the topic. This research design is being utilized to research teacher perceptions of the teacher incentive programs for attendance that are used at the different schools in a specified school district. Using a quantitative research method, this study aimed to determine whether teacher incentives influenced teacher attendance.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were proposed in this study. The data were collected and analyzed to find the outcome:

1. Does your school have teacher attendance incentives in place?
2. Does your principal emphasize the importance of daily teacher attendance?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the teacher attendance incentives being utilized at their respective schools to promote teacher attendance?
4. Do the teacher attendance incentives being utilized influence teachers to increase their attendance?

### **The Researcher**

I, as the researcher, have worked in the field of education for twenty-six years and have a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education, a Master of Science degree in Special Education, and an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership. The participants involved in this study do not have a direct relationship with the researcher and have not been coerced or mandated to participate in this study.

I, being the researcher, have taken the courses required to conduct the research in this study and have obtained the skills needed to conduct the research in this study. My job requires

me to research topics pertinent to increasing educational outcomes and to disaggregate data in an ongoing effort to provide the best services possible to the students in the school district in which I work. I also have the full cooperation of the administration in the school district to conduct this research.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

Upon obtaining permission from the Superintendent of Education of the school district, Mr. Alan Lumpkin, to conduct research with teachers in the school-district, the researcher took the following steps: The researcher completed the online basic research course, Human Subjects Researchers, in order to gain compliance to apply for permission to conduct research through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mississippi State University. Then the researcher completed the online protocol to obtain approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research on the desired topic. Upon receiving permission to do research from the school district and the university, the researcher began to ask for volunteers to participate in this study by sending out invitations to ask teachers to participate in the study.

### **Setting**

This study was conducted in a rural school district in central Mississippi comprising eight schools within a sixty-mile radius. The school district employs 610 total employees, of which 349 are certified teachers. The school district served a cumulative enrollment of 4,214 students in the 2022-2023 school year. The school district consists of two elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and two attendance centers. The school district currently has a B rating on the Mississippi Accountability Model. In addition, the school district serves students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth grade. The demographics of the student population are somewhat diverse, with a significant Hispanic population throughout the school district. The



demographic makeup of students consists of those who are American Indian (0.52%), Asian (0.17%), African American (36%), Hispanic (17%), and Caucasian (46%).

### **Participants**

The sample selection in this study consisted of a convenience sample. The teachers in the sample selection that participated in the survey are from the school-district in which the researcher works. The sample selection used is from a group of teachers that teach in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth grades from the general and special education classes. The teachers were volunteers from the eight schools within the school-district who were employed with the school district during the 2022-2023 school year. Permission was obtained from the superintendent of the school-district to conduct the study in the school-district and permission was obtained by the principal at each school to conduct the research at the principals' respective schools. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all participant survey submissions were anonymous. The anonymity of the participants' survey results was ensured by using a secure link emailed to the participant through a secure email address. This study included the first 73 teachers that volunteered to participate in the survey for this study. The participants' demographics are represented in the following chart:

Table 1

*Teacher Demographics*

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Male	6	8.22
	Female	67	91.78
Age	21-30	14	19.18
	31-40	16	21.92
	41-50	28	38.36
	51-60	10	13.70
	61>	5	6.85
Ethnicity	White	67	91.78
	African Am.	5	6.85
	Am. Indian	0	0
	Asian	0	0
	Pacific Islander	0	0
	Other	1	1.37
Highest degree	Bachelor's	30	42.25
	Master's	31	43.66
	Specialist	8	11.27
	Doctorate	2	2.82
Yrs. Exp.	0-5	17	23.29
	6-10	14	19.18
	11-15	8	10.96
	16-20	14	19.18
	21-25	14	19.18
	25 >	6	8.22

**Instrumentation**

The researcher sent a recruitment email to the principal at each school in the school district in which the researcher is employed. The email sent to each principal requested that the principals forward the email to all of their certified teachers at their respective schools. The

recruitment email, which included the Informed Consent form, asked for participants in this study. The certified teachers who were willing to participate in this study completed the survey by clicking on the secure link from the email sent to them to answer the survey questions.

One survey was given during this study. The teachers were asked to complete the survey via a secure link that was emailed to them. The survey asked the teachers to identify the incentives utilized at their buildings. Once the incentives at each building were identified, the remaining survey questions required the teachers to share their perceptions of the incentives at their respective buildings. The surveys were administered to certified teachers at each school in the district to obtain their perceptions of the incentives given for daily attendance to school/work. The data from the surveys were used to determine if the attendance incentives used as motivation for teacher attendance are perceived by the teachers participating in this study as motivation to attend school/work.

In addition, the researcher obtained teacher absentee data from the principal at each school in the district to identify the number of cumulative absences of the certified teachers at each school. An additional email was sent to the principal at each school in the district to obtain information on the total number of absences of the certified teachers for the 2022-2023 school year at the principals' schools. Each principal provided information to the researcher about the cumulative number of absences for certified teachers from their schools.

### **Trustworthiness**

The survey was self-designed by the researcher. The survey was developed based on the questions pertinent to the researcher's research study. The survey was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mississippi State University for approval prior to the survey

being distributed to the participants. The same survey was used with each teacher participant in this study to ensure the reliability and validity of the results of this study.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

A recruitment email was sent to every teacher in the school district, inviting them to participate in this study via the researcher's secure Mississippi State University email. The email introduced the study to the teachers and informed them that participation in this study was voluntary and that participants' surveys completed would remain anonymous. The email also informed the teachers that the study would include one twelve-question survey that takes approximately five minutes or less to complete. The email included the Qualtrics link to the survey.

The number of participants in this study was determined by the number of study participants who voluntarily completed a survey for the data collection. All participants were surveyed for this study voluntarily, and their survey data were submitted as data in this study. Their data were tracked using the Qualtrics data analysis system through the secure Mississippi State University website.

Individual surveys were given in this study with each participant. Twelve questions were given on the research questions in this study. The surveys were conducted electronically by the participants who voluntarily completed the survey. The survey was given to obtain teacher perceptions of incentives given to them for attendance.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The findings were obtained by using a linear regression statistical analysis method. The data was coded using the numeric coding for patterns method of coding using the statistical

analysis system Qualtrics. The data from the survey results in Qualtrics automatically assigns a numeric code to each answer given on the survey utilized for this study. The statistical procedures of the survey included selecting answer choices to each question on the survey.

Findings from the teacher surveys conducted with the participants were compared to the results of the participants from the other schools in the district who completed the survey. The comparison was conducted to determine which incentive the participants preferred. The descriptive data from the survey results in Qualtrics was used to analyze the data by comparing participant responses on the surveys for similarities. The participants' responses were coded for patterns and analyzed to identify patterns in responses among the participants. Categories grouped the recorded responses according to similarities to determine a trend in patterns in the perceptions among the participants' responses. The patterns in data were analyzed and reported in the results of the research outcomes for the purpose of this study.

### **Positionality Statement**

As a veteran teacher of twenty-six years, I believe attending work is crucial to every aspect of education. I am intrinsically motivated to come to work, but I believe many teachers are extrinsically motivated. In addition, it is my position that teachers want incentives as rewards and will work for them. I am interested in obtaining teachers' perceptions of whether or not teacher incentives influence their decision to attend work.

The findings of this study discuss and illustrate those data related to teacher perceptions of whether the teacher incentives for attendance being used affect teacher attendance. The teachers' perceptions of the incentives they received are essential to the impact that the incentives have on teacher attendance. This is important information for the school administration to utilize in the overall planning for teacher incentive programs and teacher rewards. The results will also

assist the school district administration in developing attendance policies and decision-making about teacher absences and absence policies. Awareness of the results will be significant for the school district administration to understand the impact of teacher incentives on teacher attendance. This data will be used to develop a district-wide teacher incentive program to increase teacher attendance throughout the school district.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the teachers' perceptions of the teacher attendance incentives utilized in a specific school district. The study was conducted to research teacher perceptions of the teacher incentives being used and the impact of the incentives on teacher attendance. The study was intended to assist school administrators in creating a teacher incentive program to reduce chronic teacher absenteeism. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a brief summary.

#### **Interpretation of the Findings**

This chapter contains discussion to help answer the research questions and recommendations to formulate answers and possible solutions to the questions:

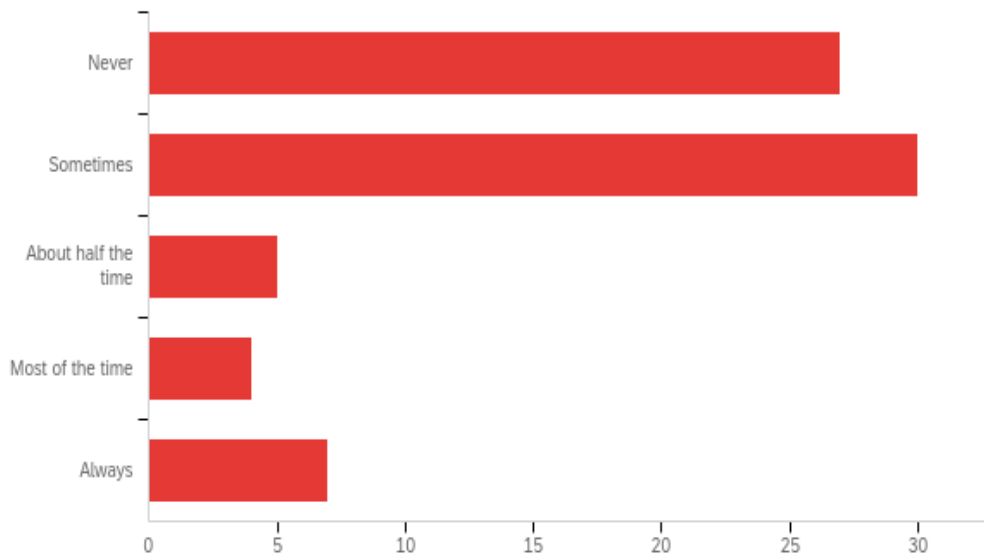
1. Does your school give teacher attendance incentives?

The answer to the question of whether the principals in the school district give teacher attendance incentives yielded the following results:

- 1) 36.99% of the participants indicated that the principal never gives teacher incentives
- 2) 41.10% indicated that the principal gives teacher incentives for attendance sometimes
- 3) 6.85% indicated that the principal gives teacher incentives for attendance about half the time
- 4) 5.48% indicated that the principal gives teacher incentives for attendance most of the time
- 5) 9.59% indicated that the principal always gives teacher incentives for attendance.

Table 2

*Teacher Responses on Whether Teacher Attendance Incentives Are Given*



Based on these data, many principals are not utilizing teacher incentives to reward teachers for attendance to school/work. Approximately 37% of the teachers surveyed indicated that their principal never gives incentives for attendance and another 41% of the teachers surveyed indicated that teacher incentives are given sometimes. The conclusion is that these data support the idea that teacher attendance incentives are broadly not utilized throughout the school district in the study.

2. Does your principal emphasize the importance of daily teacher attendance?

The participants in the study indicated the following results:

- 1) 91.67% indicated that their principal does emphasize the importance of daily teacher attendance
- 2) 8.33% indicated that the principal does not emphasize the importance of daily teacher attendance.

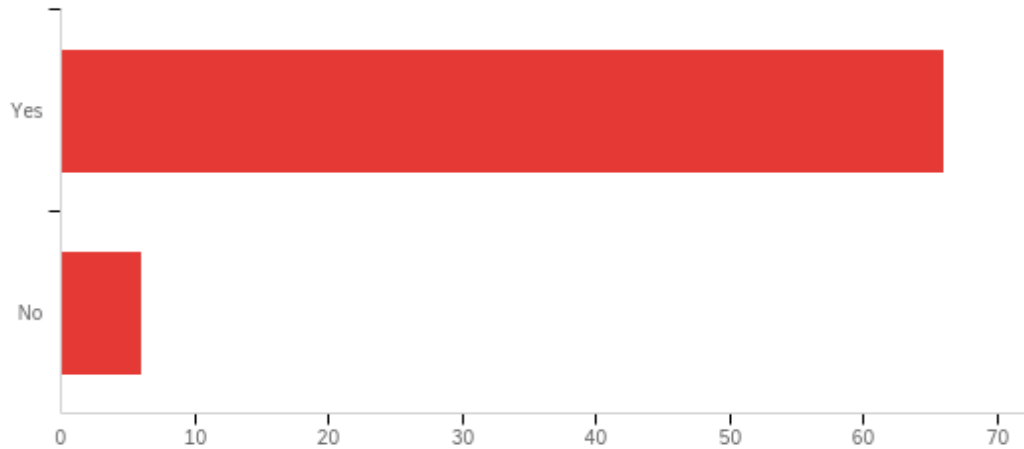
These data indicated that the principals throughout the school-district mainly emphasized the



importance of daily teacher attendance.

Table 3

*Teacher Responses on Whether Principals Emphasize Importance of Attendance*



3. What are teachers' perceptions of the teacher attendance incentives being utilized at their respective schools to promote teacher attendance?

The participants were asked to indicate what incentives are being utilized at their schools to promote teacher attendance. The following teacher incentives were selected as being those that are given by their principals: 1) GOOSE (get out of school early) pass 2) gift cards 3) monetary rewards 4) lunch without students 5) special recognition. 6) no incentive 7) another type of incentive not listed, and 8) attendance certificate. No other incentives were listed by the participants as being used. The participants indicated the following results when asked to indicate which incentive they preferred to receive for attendance:

- 1) 35.77% preferred to receive a GOOSE pass,
- 2) 25.55% preferred gift cards,
- 3) 21.90% preferred a monetary reward

- 4) 9.49% preferred lunch without students,
- 5) 2.19% preferred to receive special recognition,
- 6) 2.19% preferred no incentive, and
- 7) 2.19% preferred another type of incentive that they did not list.
- 8) 0.73% preferred to receive an attendance certificate,

These data largely supported that the teachers favor receiving the GOOSE (get out of school early) pass as a reward for attendance. The GOOSE pass received the highest percentage on the survey in this study as an overall preference for a reward for attendance. An additional 35.77% of the participants preferred the GOOSE pass. The following preferred reward by the participants was the reward of gift cards. 25.5% of the participants preferred to receive a gift card as a reward for attendance. Only 21.90% of the participants preferred to receive a monetary reward as reward. An additional 9.49% preferred to receive lunch without students as their reward. The rewards of special recognition, no incentive, and another type of incentive was each preferred by 2.19% of the participants as rewards. The lowest number of participants preferred to receive an attendance certificate. These data give us a good indication of what teachers prefer to receive as an incentive for teacher attendance.

4. Do the teacher attendance incentives being utilized influence teachers to increase their attendance?

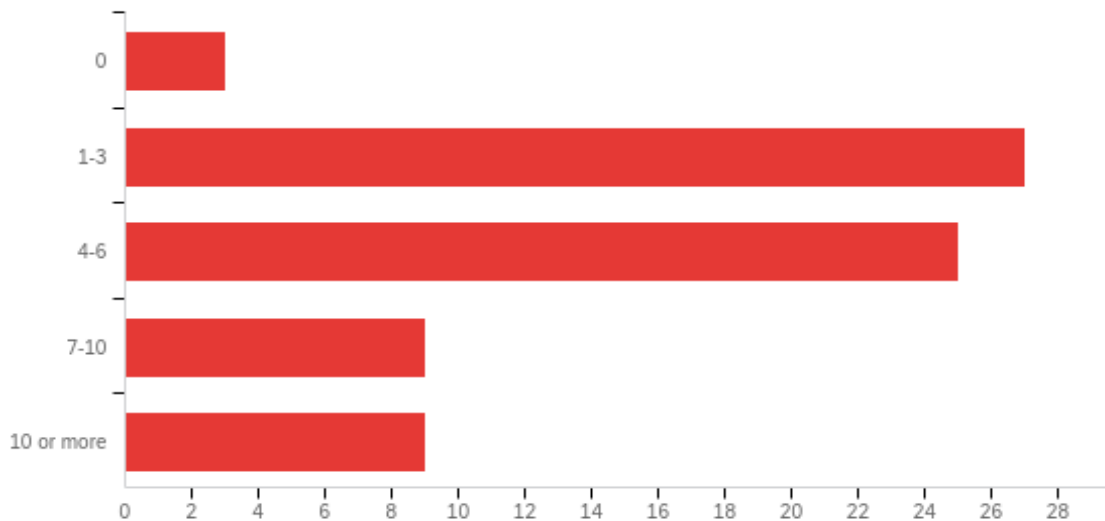
The results of the teacher absences from the survey indicated on the survey that there is a need for a consistent teacher attendance incentive program to influence the participants to increase their attendance, based on the following results from the participants:

- 1) Only 4.11% missed no days of school,
- 2) 36.99% missed between one and three days of school
- 3) 34.25% missed between four and six days of school

- 4) 12.33% missed between seven and ten days of school
- 5) 2.33% missed ten or more days of school

Table 4

*Teacher Responses of Number of Days Absent*



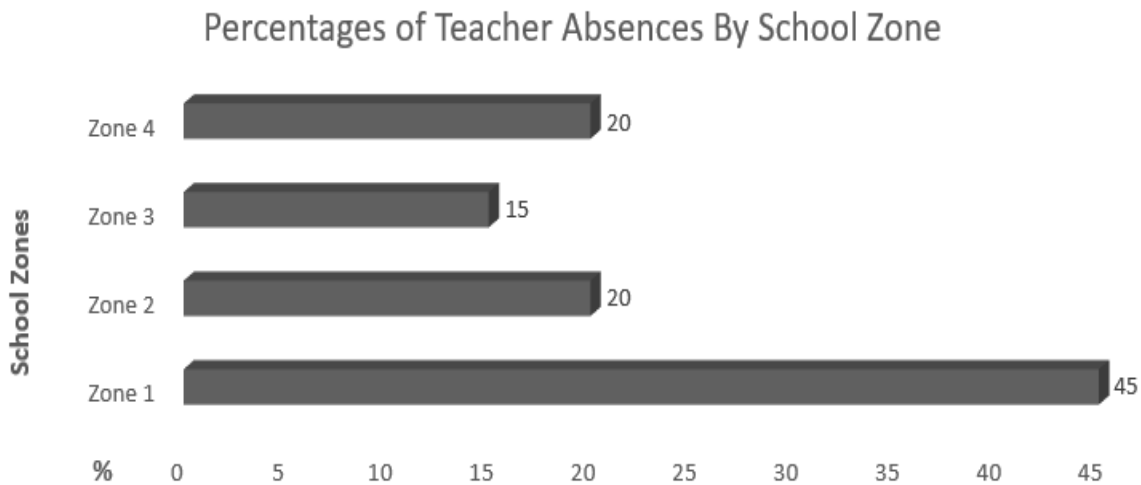
Approximately 71% of the teachers surveyed missed between one and six days of school/work. While an additional combined 25% of those surveyed missed seven or more days. Therefore, it is surmised that the attendance incentives being used are mostly not preferred by teachers for rewards for attendance to school/work overall; at least for these data from the participants in this study.

Additional data were obtained about school absences from the principal at each school district school. The researcher requested the cumulative number of absences of the certified teachers at each school from the principals. The results for the cumulative teacher absences in the school district was an astounding 3,569 absences by 349 certified teachers district-wide. These data were based on the 187 workday calendar for teachers. One of the

elementary schools had 513 teacher absences, the feeder middle school had 514 teacher absences, and the feeder high school had 236 teacher absences. This was a total of 1,263 teacher absences in that school zone. The other elementary school in our school district had a total of 460 absences, which included maternity leave from four teachers. The feeder middle school had a total of 98 certified teacher absences, and the feeder high school had a total of 346 certified teacher absences. There was a total of 904 teacher absences in that school zone. One of the attendance centers had a total of 822 certified teacher absences. The other attendance center had a total of 580 certified teacher absences. This data only includes the certified teachers, not the principals, secretaries, assistant teachers, bus drivers, food services staff, or central office staff.

Table 5

*Percentages of Teacher Absences by School Zone*



**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The review of related literature disclosed recommendations for implementing policies related to teacher attendance instead of ideas for teacher incentives. The lack of research made

the survey of scholarly sources on the topic challenging. The knowledge of teacher attendance incentives to utilize in the school setting was nonexistent. For this reason, the researcher acknowledges the importance of developing a teacher incentive program to attempt to decrease teacher attendance. The teacher perceptions are the opinions that matter in this study. Therefore, research on this topic is necessary for school districts with extensive teacher absences.

The researcher defends the validity of this quantitative study and its results. However, a qualitative element to the study, such as teacher interviews, could have been helpful in giving more insight into the concrete thoughts of the participants' perceptions of the incentives utilized for teacher attendance in the school-district. It also would have been insightful to know which school in the school-district the participants work; in order to prepare for the upcoming work of developing an incentive program in regards to knowing at what point in the process to begin the acquisition of skills. In addition, it would have been helpful to know if the incentives being utilized as attendance rewards motivated the teachers to come to school/work. It would have also been interesting to know if absenteeism from school/work is more prevalent among a specific group of teachers who teach at the same grade level. The more information available, the better the understanding would be in developing a solid teacher incentive program to utilize in the school-district.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends that the principal at each school in the district utilize a consistent teacher incentive program to motivate and reward teachers for good attendance throughout each school year. Recommendations include ideas such as rewarding teachers in short-term increments, such as weekly, with smaller rewards. Individual schools should also recognize employees who have good attendance each month by awarding the teachers a certificate of perfect attendance and a small reward for being at work all month. Larger rewards, such as getting off of work on the teacher workdays or the reward of monetary bonuses for having perfect attendance for the entire school year, could be given at the end of the school year, along with a certificate for perfect attendance. The researcher developed the following documents as a simple reward program and a simple chart to document the teacher rewards in Google Docs. The researcher will share them with the principals in the school district electronically. It is suggested that the principals duplicate the documents in Google Docs to create a document for each of their teachers to maintain weekly and monthly rewards. The individual teachers should be given view-only rights for the Google Doc under their name, including their reward program details, to track their attendance rewards. The Google Doc documents will give the principals a starting point on ideas to follow to reward teachers for attendance that will not cost them or the school district any money, and the documents can be revised easily to enter and track the teacher attendance program rewards. It is recommended that

the principals run a report of the teacher attendance from the online system utilized to show attendance at the end of each week and the end of each month to determine the teachers who will receive awards for their attendance. It is also recommended that the principals put a reminder in their planner to run the report and issue the rewards to maintain consistency in the rewarding process to ensure its effectiveness. The principals should then email the teachers eligible to receive a reward for attendance to determine which reward preference will be given and to arrange how the teacher will obtain the reward. The data should be put into the individual teachers' reward chart on Google Docs. Tracking the data is a recommendation to maintain organization and consistency while simplifying the process to make it seamless.

Another recommendation is for the principals to keep a record of the weekly absences in their school by teacher. The district contracts with an outside company that provides the substitute teachers for the schools in the school district. The teachers request their substitutes from the company through an online platform that the company provides. The principals should also ensure that there is a system in place at their schools that requires the teachers to make them aware of each time the teacher is absent from school/work. This recommendation will help ensure accountability for absences.

Lastly, it is recommended that each principal develop a committee, comprised of teachers, to develop strategies to decrease teacher absences. The teacher committee should consist of teachers who have been chronically absent in the past. The concept of utilizing these teachers is to provide a level of awareness to them, by providing them with the chronic absenteeism data. This committee will allow the principals to gather insight into the reasons for the teacher absences. In addition, the teachers can give their perceptions of the incentives used for teacher attendance and provide ideas for additional teacher attendance incentives.

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APPENDIX A  
TEACHER ATTENDANCE REWARD PROGRAM

## WEEKLY:

Run Attendance Report

Teacher Choice of 1 Reward for Perfect  
Attendance

**Reward:**

**(Choose ONLY One)**

No duty day

Lunch without students

Class covered for 1 period

Blue jean pass for 1 day

## MONTHLY:

Run Attendance Report

**Reward:** *GOOSE Pass for 1 day for Perfect Attendance*

\*Monthly Perfect Attendance Certificate given

## YEARLY:

Run Attendance Report

**Reward:** No Teacher Work Days in May

**(If all end of Year Duties Complete)**

\*Yearly Perfect Attendance Certificate given

APPENDIX B  
TEACHER ATTENDANCE INCENTIVES REWARD

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Month	Perfect Attendance	Reward
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		

# REWARDS



APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION

**From:** tss132@msstate.edu

**Date:** June 1, 2023 at 8:34:32 AM CDT

**To:** "Labat, Myron" <mlabat@colled.msstate.edu>, "Hickmon, Dr. Hickmon" <flh5@msstate.edu>, "Cockrell, Ginger" <ght5@msstate.edu>, "McMullan, Leigh Ann" <LMcMullan@colled.msstate.edu>, "Tharp, Paula" <ptharp@colled.msstate.edu>

**Subject: Protocol Inactivated: IRB-23-210, Teachers' perceptions of district attendance incentive programs and their impact on improving overall teacher attendance**

Protocol ID: IRB-23-210



Review Type: EXEMPT

Principal Investigator: Labat, Myron

You are receiving this inactivation notification for one of the two following reasons:

1) Exempt Determinations:

This protocol is has been granted an exemption determination. Based on this exemption, and in accordance with Federal Regulations which can also be found in the MSU HRPP Operations Manual, your research does not require futher oversight by the HRPP.

Therefore, this study has been inactivated in our system. This means that recruitment, enrollment, data collection, and/or data analysis can continue, yet personnel and procedural amendments to this study are no longer required. If at any point, however, the risk to participants increases, you must contact the HRPP immediately.

2) Non-Exempt Approvals (Expedited or Full Board):

A request to inactivate (with the submission of a final report) your non-Exempt protocol was submitted and approved. If this is the case, there should be no further data collection or data analysis conducted under this protocol.

For additional questions pertaining to this study, please contact the HRPP at [irb@research.msstate.edu](mailto:irb@research.msstate.edu).