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**Galvanizing Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education to Promote  
Student Attendance**

A Dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Education

in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education

The University of Mississippi

Marquita Robertson

May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

This applied research study aimed to increase parental involvement to improve kindergarten attendance. The need to increase parental participation arose from low academic achievement ratings and high chronic absenteeism rates among young students. This applied research study used three elements to increase kindergarten attendance. The researcher used surveys, interviews, and kindergarten attendance data to complete the study. Using the abovementioned instruments and the school leadership team's collaborative involvement, findings support that improving parental involvement can lead to improved kindergarten attendance and shared organizational learning.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my supportive family. To my husband, Frank, and my children, J' Mya, Frank IV, and Malachi, thank you for your endless sacrifices during this journey. When I felt like giving up, you reminded me of my inner strengths, passion for educating children, and love for learning. Without your sacrifices, this accomplishment would not be possible.

To my parents, Gloria and Donnie, I did it. I become a first-generational doctorate graduate setting the standard for success for future generations. I also thank you for affirming that I could achieve anything I desire with hard work and dedication. Your love and discipline molded me into the person I am today.

To my siblings, thank you for being a shoulder to lean on and an encouraging text away. Always ready to assist, willing to support, and a listening ear when I encouraged challenges during this process.

To the loved ones I have lost throughout this journey, my grandmother, Mrs. Essie Roebuck, and my bonus dad, Michael Lacy, your transition left me with an unexplainable void in my heart that can never be replaced. I know you would be proud of my tenacity to push through adversity.

To my friends and well-wishers who supported me throughout this process. Thank you for challenging me to stay the course and to keep pushing to change the trajectory of our community and holding me to high expectations at all times. This helped me to realize the importance of productive struggle and being a role model for our community.

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To my cohort, thank you for being supportive throughout the journey. We entered this program as strangers and have developed long-lasting bonds that will outlast this program. We are leaving with a memorable educational experience that will equip us as change agents and to affect change throughout our communities and state.

To Dr. Dennis Bunch, Dr. Mark Deschaine, Dr. Angus Mungal, and Dr. Jill Cabrera, I have learned so much from you throughout this process. Each of you has played an essential role in my growth as a doctoral student and a school practitioner. I am eternally grateful for everything I have learned during this program. Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Chronic absenteeism has been an ongoing plague to student achievement and has a daunting impact on students within communities with high-poverty rates. Gottfried (2014) and Jordan & Miller (2017) defined chronic absenteeism as missing anywhere between 2 and 3 weeks or 10% of the school year. Chronic absenteeism means missing more than 18 days of school (e.g., Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Chronic absenteeism between first and sixth grade is around 5% and is estimated to be as high as 10%-15% in kindergarten as (Bauer et al., 2018). Corriea-Zanini et. al. (1970) stated “The impact of school attendance of students is hardly overestimated.” This gap in examining school absences as outcomes is critical to address: The short-and-long term negative consequences associated with excessive school absences cannot be overstated, including lower achievement, increased behavioral issues, lower social development, greater chances of grade retention, higher odds of schools dropout, increased risk of the use of drugs, and alcohol in young adulthood and adulthood, and lower employment prospects (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey 1997; Broadhurst, Patron, & May-Chahal, 2005; Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Finn, 1993; Gottfried, 2009, 2010, 2014; Hallfords et al, 2002; Kane, 2006; Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014; Newman, 1981). In Sampson County, student achievement remains

an area of priority. Currently 65.9% of citizens have a high school diploma, with only 6.5 % of citizens having a bachelor's degree or higher. Jordan and Miller (2017) estimated one-fourth of our nation's kindergartners are missing so much school that it puts them into or in the proximity of categories of absenteeism that policymakers would red flag. While Power Elementary School met the kindergarten readiness target 3 out of 5 years between 2014 and 2018, lack of regular attendance has impacted student achievement data and could continue to the ongoing cycle of low academic performance. In addition, the accountability for the district has dwindled within the past years ranging from a "C" to an "F", which constituted a state takeover.

Children who frequently miss or are late to school fail to benefit from teacher instruction and modeling, peer interactions, and other activities designed to scaffold learning (Morrison et. al., 2014). When students who are absent from school, they miss instructional opportunities and develop academic gaps. Chang et al. (2018) stated chronic absenteeism rates in elementary school tend to be highest in kindergarten (16%) and first grade (14%) before becoming stable in second through fifth grade (12%) (p.17). Students with high absenteeism in elementary school are at greater risk of later school absenteeism, lower academic achievement (Caldas, 1993; Roby, 2004), and grade retention (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). For young children in high poverty areas, the impact of excessive absences become more alarming.

### **Description of the Problem**

In my role as principal of Power Elementary School (PES), one of four schools within the Sampson County School District, I oversaw the school's instructional and operational aspects. I support teaching and learning by hiring qualified staff, allocating resources to support school initiatives, and using data to improve the school's academic outcomes. Data analysis

includes a review of common assessments, classroom observations, teacher retention, funding allocations, and student attendance. The central issue of concern for this applied research was improving student attendance, thereby increasing student achievement.

Power Elementary School served students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade. The student population is comprised of the majority of African American students (96.2%), 1.6% white students, 0.9% Asian students, 1.1% two or more races' students, and 0.2% Hispanic Latino students. The school serves 100% of economically disadvantaged students and receives free and/or reduced lunch. The school staff consisted of one principal, two instructional coaches, 23 certified teachers, and 30 classified staff members. 85% of SES staff members are from the Sampson County community and attended the school as children. The school served a total of 365 students, the lowest enrollment since 2009. SES had one self-contained class, one pre-kindergarten classroom (with a maximum of 20 students), seven kindergarten classrooms, and seven first-grade classrooms. The faculty teaching experiences range from novice to 35 years, each with a passion for helping students develop strong foundational literacy skills serving a student ratio of 25 to 2. Each classroom had a teacher assistant to assist with instruction.

Power Elementary School experienced significant administrative turnover and teacher attrition in the last decade. During this time, PES has had seven administrators. I am currently entering my fourth year as principal. Although 85% of the staff were from the community, less than 40% of the staff have been employed at the school over five years. Currently, 30% of teachers are teaching outside of their area of certification. Teacher attrition within the school district was also a common practice in previous years prior to my arrival. The former principal was promoted to an upper elementary school within a district taking seven strong instructional

teachers with her leaving seven vacancies at PES. The transition of teacher creating additional concerns as recruit of highly qualified teachers in a high poverty area had been a difficult task to complete.

The community highly values Sampson County School District and desired to restore it to its previous honor of being a high-achieving school district and restored to its previous operation as a local school board. Sampson County School District serves pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade students with over 3100 students enrolled in the four schools (pseudonym): Power Elementary School, Monroe Elementary School, Winchester Middle School, and Sampson County High School. In 2019, the Sampson County School District was absorbed by the Mississippi Department of Education, becoming the first of two school districts consumed by the achievement school district model in the state. This transition devastated the community by dismantling the local school board, prompting changes in school and district level administration, teacher attrition, causing low morale among staff, heighten distrust between school and community, and transient issues among students. Addressing attendant deficits in kindergarten can help restore the former glory of the district by increasing educational instructional opportunities and educational outcomes for students. Thereby, reducing academic deficits and issues with chronic absenteeism.

### **Justification of the Problem**

A principal's primary responsibility is to improve instructional outcomes for all students. In order to do so, leaders must be transparent about barriers to achieving school goals. While principals spend a significant amount of time building teacher capacity, staying abreast of best practices to enhance instruction, and addressing discipline issues, rarely is chronic absenteeism



addressed. Contrary to common beliefs about absenteeism, children in their earliest years of education are missing a substantial amount of school (Gottfried & Hurt (2019). In my experience, the first three years of formal schooling have the most significant impact on academic progress. While parents initially have some reservations about their new educational experience, their desire is for their child or children to experience the utmost success. Challenges arise when there is a difference in the steps needed to help students achieve this goal.

Kindergarteners are missing more school than children in any other elementary grade (Balfanz & Brynes, 2012). Absenteeism in the early grades is a grade predictor of a student's attendance as they progress through the upper grades (Robinson et al., 2018). Absenteeism among kindergarten students at PES was highly prevalent. Achievement data for PES and the Sampson County School District will continue to dwindle if not addressed.

Early childhood education is a critical component of a child's development and school readiness skills. It is the foundational skills developed at this level that contributes to the future success of students. "80 percent of success is showing up" (Woody Allen). By 6th grade, chronic absences become a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Research suggests students who attend school regularly are better prepared to academically successful and socially engaged (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; and London et al., 2016, McNeal, 2018).

Students who do not attend school regularly are at a greater risk of developing early literacy deficits due to inconsistent exposure to foundational concepts. It is clear that students who are more frequently absent from school are at greater risk for school difficulty (e.g., Ansari & Pianta, 2019; Gershenson, Jacknowitz, & Brannegan, 2017; Gottfried, 2011; Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014; Smerillo, Reynolds, Temple, & Ou, 2017). High absenteeism has

consistently presented barriers to student achievement at Power Elementary School. Students are not attending school for various reasons and are missing valuable foundational skills which are critical to their long-term academic success. Therefore, it is pertinent to provide interventions which could address attendance problems in kindergarten which could potentially provide short-term and long-term benefits to young children.

### **Significance of the Study Audience**

This research study highlights the barriers chronic absenteeism poses to student achievement at PES. Students with high absenteeism in elementary school are at greater risk of later school absenteeism, lower academic achievement (Caldas, 1993; Roby, 2004), and grade retention (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). This makes it extremely important for schools and the community to quickly identify truant students and provide proper support (Huskins, 2019). When students are chronically absent from school, students, parents, teachers, administration, academic achievement, and school funding are negatively impacted. Thereby, exacerbating issues in high poverty-stricken areas. The study will focus on ways to improve student attendance and to gain momentum toward sustainable improvements in short-term and long-term progress toward students' achievement at PES.

The participants in this applied research study are parents and teachers in the Sampson County School District. The result from the study will help to address attendance deficits at PES and add to existing literature on chronic absenteeism by highlighting challenges faced by schools and in Mississippi, more specifically low performing school districts. Additionally, it will help improve home-school relationships by increasing parental awareness around attendance mandates and the importance of early childhood education. The goal is chronic absenteeism rates

in kindergarten through parental support systems to improve student attendance will lead to greater increased proficiency ratings of students who exit primary grades with strong literacy skills.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this applied research study was to improve kindergarten attendance in the PES. The research process began with a description of the problem at each school in the district and a justification of the need to conduct the research. Through a collaborative process with the stakeholders in the district, including school leaders, teachers, parents, and district administration, the central phenomenon was examined through a review of research on chronic absenteeism combined with both qualitative and quantitative data to develop an action plan to address the issue. The goal of the action plan was to develop a set of quantitative and qualitative questions to support a formative evaluation of the action plan. Implementation of the action plan will take place from early steps taken in July 2020 to full implementation from August 2022 to April 2023. The results of the evaluation will support the improvement of chronic absenteeism through a cycle of continuous improvements. The central phenomenon of this applied research study was the need to improve school attendance in an early childhood education setting to improve school readiness skills. Several quantitative data including SAMS attendance data, parent call logs, school accountability ratings, benchmark data, and state testing results will be used to evaluate the results of the action plan. In addition, qualitative data, such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be used to gather feedback from participants to improve the process. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is to have a more comprehensive set of data that examines both participants' viewpoints, observable data, and

measured accountability results. In conclusion, the purpose of this applied research study is to improve my ability to make sound instructional decisions for the school and to continue the cycle of organizational learning in the Sampson County School District. The justification for using mixed methods is to deter chronic absenteeism in kindergarten by raising awareness around the importance of early foundational skills and attendance policies outlined by the school district and the state of Mississippi in the evaluation process and determine the success of the students with early literacy and numeracy skills.

### **Research Questions**

1. Did the implementation of the PASS parent involvement program reduce kindergarten student absenteeism at PES by 30%?
  - a. To what extent did the implementation of the PASS parent academy help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten?
  - b. To what extent did the implementation of the health care services help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten?
  - c. To what extent did the implementation of the parental engagement support help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten?
2. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to increase parental participation in PASS parent involvement program?

- a. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to improve PASS parent academy provided to students and families at PES?
  - b. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to improve parental engagement supports provided to students and families at PES?
  - c. Following the implementation period, what steps if any, are needed to improve health care support provided to students and families at PES?
3. What problems, if any, hindered the successful implementation of the PASS parental involvement program?
- a. What problems hindered the successful implementation of PASS parent academy at PES?
  - b. What problems hindered the successful implementation of health care supports at PES?
  - c. What problems hindered the successful implementation of family engagement supports at PES?

### **Overview of the Study**

It was important for Power Elementary School to increase parental involvement to improve kindergarten attendance for young scholars, reducing chronic absenteeism rates. In Chapter One, this study establishes the need for improving student attendance to increase student achievement. Chapter Two provided relevant research examining the characteristics of chronic absenteeism in early childhood. Chapter Three presented the collaborative development of an action plan, the implementation of the plan, and an evaluation of the program. Chapter Four

presented a review of the evaluation of the study's results. Lastly, Chapter Five presented the conclusions and future implications for further research and continual improvement.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Research**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Two examines a review of the literature to identify barriers to chronic absenteeism and strategies to improve parental involvement. The literature presented in this chapter is used to help understand the problem of practice, develop the action plan to address the problem in practice and will guide the program evaluation of the action plan. The first section of this chapter provides a summary of the literature on chronic absenteeism and its relevance regarding short and long-term effects. The second section of this chapter examine causes of chronic absenteeism and parents' perceptions of absenteeism. The final section of this chapter explores strategies previously implemented to address chronic absenteeism and parental involvement. The literature contained within this chapter will address parental involvement and its use to improve regular school attendance in kindergarten and provides the basis for the action plan employed throughout the study.

#### **Chronic Absenteeism**

Chronic absenteeism is defined as when students are excused for unexcused reasons and has been called a nationwide issue (Chang 2016, Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017). Balfanz and Brynes (2012) defined "chronic absenteeism" as an extreme form of

missing school, which often is defined as missing at least 18 days or more within a given academic year. In Mississippi, the Department of Education defined chronic absenteeism as a student who misses 10% or more of their schools, which can mean just two days a month, for any reason (MDE, 2020). According to Slavin (1999), absenteeism is a cumulative process, and students with large amounts of absenteeism early in their school careers lack the foundation for the rest of their schooling, limiting their potential for success. Therefore, schools must intervene during early grades to prevent ongoing cycles of adverse school experiences. Identifying patterns in student attendance can assist in selecting effective strategies to combat truancy (Cole, 2011).

Attendance in kindergarten and elementary school robustly predicts student outcomes (Robinson et. al, 2018). Kindergarten is an extremely critical period that sets the foundation for future success (Duncan et al, 2007, Olson, Sameroff, Kerr, Lopez, & Wellman, 2005; Posner & Rothbart, 2000). However, in elementary schools, chronic absenteeism is highest in kindergarten (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Romero & Lee, 2007). Absenteeism in the early grades is a predictor of a student's attendance as they progress through the upper grades (Robinson et al, 2018). Chronic absenteeism among kindergarten students is an ongoing issue at PES that must be addressed to circumvent continuous low academic achievement. These high rates of absenteeism are of great concern given that the earliest years of school are critical for preparing children for the future (Phillips et al, 2017). By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, chronic absences become a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school (Attendance Works, 2021).

The United States Department of Education has specifically identified chronic absenteeism in public K-12 schools as a “national crisis” (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic



Absenteeism in the National School, n.d; Swaak,2018; The Problem, n.d). School districts across the country consider chronic absenteeism to be a prevalent concern that they are working to reduce (Volkman & Bye, 2006), especially considering that research has shown a distinct correlation between attendance and academic achievement (Sheldon,2007). More than 8 million kindergarten students, high school seniors, and every grade in between are absent from school for 15 or more instructional days per academic year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak,2018).

Additionally, the ability of schools to develop effective strategies to address student absenteeism may be imperative in reducing the probability of student absenteeism and increasing the probability of higher academic achievement in the later grades (Elhrich et. al., 2016). Proactively addressing student attendance during a student's early years in school is imperative (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018).

Mississippi, like other states in the United States, has implemented a compulsory attendance law, to ensure students are enrolled in school and allowed to receive a free quality education. Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law requires parents and/or guardians to enroll any child who is between the ages of 6 and 17 in school or before September 1 of each year (MDE, 2020). The law also states that a compulsory-school-age child who is absent more than 37% of the instructional day must be considered absent the entire day (MDE, 2020). Although the Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law put measures in place for the majority of students, it does not focus on kindergarten students unless they have enrolled in the program. Kindergarten participation is not mandated in Mississippi. Therefore, the Mississippi

Compulsory School Attendance Law only addresses attendance issues for kindergarten students who have enrolled in a full-time school program and do not attend.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) recognized the impact of chronic absenteeism and launched a “Thrive to Five Initiative” to help increase student attendance in the state of Mississippi. During the 2018-2019 school year, MDE chronic absenteeism data indicated 63,226 students were chronically absent from schools across Mississippi, which was a decrease of 19,746 students from the 2017-2018 school year. This data revealed chronic absenteeism rates for Mississippi dropped from 16.86% in the 2017-2018 school year to 13.05% in the 2018-2019 school year. During this time frame, Sampson County School District ranked number 8 out of 10 school districts with the highest chronic absenteeism in 2018-2019 with a chronic absenteeism rate of 22.35%, (MDE,2022). A closer examination of trend data for the district indicates that chronic absenteeism is an ongoing problem at all four schools within the district. Since the pandemic, chronic absenteeism rates soared, while academic performance plummeted.

Chronic absenteeism presents ongoing barriers to the field of education. While much time and research have been devoted to understanding this phenomenon, the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism remain ambiguous. Students who are absent from school miss access to systematic instruction. Thereby, hindering their educational experiences, even when provided by highly qualified teachers. There is a growing emphasis on examining the long-and short-term effects of students in their early years of public education missing numerous days from school, this importance is equally shared among educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (Anarsi & Gottfried, 2018). The ability of schools to develop effective strategies to address student absenteeism may be imperative in reducing the probability of student absenteeism and

increasing the probability of higher academic achievement in the later grades (Ehrlich et. al., 2016). The goal of the action plan was to identify the root causes of chronic absenteeism in an early childhood program and to identify strategies to increase attendance ratings through increasing parent misconceptions and increasing collaboration with school officials. Improving parent involvement could reduce student absenteeism patterns for students in early grades level and provide students with consistent exposure to academic instruction. Consistent systematic instruction to students in kindergarten could produce positive long-term effects on student achievement.

Poor school attendance negatively affects student outcomes, including academic achievement, regardless affects outcomes, including academic achievement, regardless of income, ethnicity, and gender (Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2010). One in 10 students in the United States is considered chronically absent, which entails missing more than 10% of school days in a year for either excused or unexcused reasons (Chang & Romero, 2008; Romero & Lee, 2007; Therriault, Heppen, O' Cumming, Fryer, & Johnson, 2010). When students do not attend school regularly, they miss meaningful opportunities to engage and develop academically, thus negatively impacting their future outcomes and increasing their chances of dropping out (Havik et al, 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; London et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2015). The data are clear: students do better in school if they attend school, especially in high school as absenteeism is a strong predictor of academic outcomes in grades 9–12 (Gottfried, 2011).

Attendance is pivotal to student achievement. Students who attend school regularly have consistent access to quality education. Attendance in kindergarten and elementary school robustly predicts student outcomes (Robinson et. al, 2018). According to Attendance Works

(2020), “When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.” Students who attend school regularly have consistent access to quality education.

Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in first grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). Schools with high rates of chronic absent students tend to have greater achievement gaps (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Chronic absenteeism predicts high school dropout over and above test scores, suspensions, and grade retention (Byrnes & Reyna, 2012). This makes it extremely important for schools and the community to quickly identify truant students and provide proper support (Husklins, 2019).

Low-income students enter kindergarten academically behind their more advantaged peers (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 1997; Lee and Burkam 2002; Mayer 1997) and these initial cognitive differences increase as children progress through school (Downey, von Hippel, and Broh 2004; Phillips, Crouse, and Ralph 1998; Reason 2003). Compared to more affluent students, children living in poverty are 25% more likely to miss three or more days of school per month (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2006a). Disadvantaged students are more likely to change schools during the school year.

### **Causes for Chronic Absenteeism**

Identifying the exact cause of chronic absenteeism can be difficult, as there are a variety of reasons that contribute to students not attending school daily (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et.al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin, 2016). School absenteeism may be more prevalent in students than in the presence of most childhood mental

health disorders (Kearney, 2008b). It is estimated that at some point in any given school year, between 5-28% of school-age youth display some form of school absenteeism (Kearney, 2001). Anarasi, along with various colleagues, have conducted several studies pertaining to absences. Anarsi and Purtell (2018) examined the effects of 3- and 4-year-old absences from Head Start for their early academic learning. The researchers used representative data from the Family and Child Experiences Survey 2009 (n=2,842) preschool students. The results indicated that children who were chronically absent and missed school demonstrated fewer gains in literacy and math during preschool. The study contributed to my background knowledge of the importance of attendance in improving students' proficiency. Young scholars who attend school regularly enter school with school-readiness skills and perform at a higher rate than their peers.

Anarsi and Pianta (2019) conducted a study to determine the correlation between absenteeism in early school years and its correlations with absenteeism in later school years, the academic and social-emotional impact of chronic absenteeism on student achievement, the timing of absences by age 15, and lastly the indirect impact of absences by age 15 or later. Using a longitudinal sample from the National Institute of Child Health and Youth development, the researchers sampled 1326 American students to gather data for their study. The results from the study revealed that absenteeism impacts the academic and socioemotional outcomes of students. Students who were chronically absent during elementary continue to have poor attendance in later school years. Overall, the study revealed that school absenteeism was stable throughout children's educational careers. The study was insightful as it helped to outline the long-term impact of chronic absenteeism and the importance of school attendance in the early years of school.

Anansi and Gottfried (2020) conducted a study to determine whether early childhood educational experiences contribute positively or negatively to later preschool absences. Data for the study was collected from pre-K students (N=2,996) from the National Center for Early Development and Learning Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten and the State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEEP) Study. The results from the study indicated that children who were exposed to higher quality instructional environments and more academic activities were absent less frequently with small to moderate effect sizes.

Ehrlich et al (2013), stated chronic absenteeism is especially high in preschool programs which may mitigate the potential benefits of these early learning environments. Students who receive routine instruction in early childhood education are possessed more school readiness skills than their chronically absent peers or those who do not attend early childhood programs.

Fuhs et al. (2018) examined associations between children's attendance rates, classroom quality, neighborhood poverty, and children's fall-to-spring gains in a set of important school readiness skills in executive functioning. The researchers sampled 197 children from a Midwestern city to explore the problem in practice. The results indicated attendance rates, including chronic absenteeism, were significantly associated with children's gains in executive functioning skills, but only when children attended high-quality classrooms. The findings also suggested that efforts to increase attendance rates may benefit children's executive functioning skills among children living in higher poverty neighborhoods the most when communities also invest in increasing preschool classroom quality. This information is pertinent to my research because it helps to frame the context to which of the problem of practice. The article emphasizes the importance of attendance in improving students' proficiency in early childhood studies.

Stempel et. al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and student attendance. Using the ecological theory as the framework, the researchers conducted a national telephone survey and found that neighborhood violence and family substance abuse have greater effects on chronic absenteeism. The study also noted when children experience multiple ACEs simultaneously, they are more likely to be chronically absent from school.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2006), children living in poverty are 25 percent more like than to miss three or more days of school per month compared to more affluent students. Ready (2010) examined the correlation between children's social class, school absence, and academic progress during kindergarten and first grade. The researcher gathered data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K) and analyzed it using growth-curve analyses within a three-level hierarchical linear modeling framework. The findings from the study indicated that the effects of schooling on cognitive development are stronger for lower socioeconomic status (SES) children and that the findings associated with theories of summer learning loss apply to literacy development during early elementary school. Indeed, although they continue to achieve at lower absolute levels, socioeconomically disadvantaged children who have good attendance rates gain more literacy skills than their higher SES peers during kindergarten and first grade. Therefore, school must continue to work with families to emphasize the importance of regular school attendance.

### **Chronic Absenteeism Effects on Achievement**

The consequences of young children missing so much time from school is staggering and widespread (Anarsi & Gottfried, 2018). Gottfried (2009) found that increased absenteeism

predicted lower reading and math achievement among a sample of second- to- fourth grade ethnically diverse students. Chang & Romero (2008) noted that it may be more detrimental for children from low-income families miss school as such families may be less likely to have time or resources necessary to help children “catch up” with missed school material, compared with peers from more advantaged background. Absenteeism results in deleterious outcomes in large part because it costs children valuable individualized and instructional time (Anarsi & Purtell, 2017).

Simon et al. (2020), conducted a study to explore chronic absenteeism in elementary schools to predict their fifth and eighth-grade test scores and eighth-grade school engagement. The researchers conducted the study by using a latent class growth analysis (LCGA) to specify a categorical latent variable determining trajectory membership, using absenteeism count variables. The results of the study indicated that students fall into four classes of absenteeism, and these are highly predictive of later school outcomes. Individual students tend to stabilize in their absenteeism rates after third grade, and the only truly poor outcomes are for students who have consistently high absenteeism over time, suggesting that as long as overall chronic absenteeism is low, a single year of high chronic absenteeism is not related to highly negative outcomes. This study is pertinent to my dissertation in practice as it provides relevant information on the long-term impacts of chronic absenteeism. While chronic absenteeism tends to stabilize as students matriculate through school, the study revealed that achievement gaps seem to widen in math rather than reading.

Gottfried and Kirksey (2017) conducted a study to examine if fall versus spring absenteeism directly linked to student performance on spring examinations. The study was



conducted using analytical samples for third to fifth-grade students at an elementary school over two contiguous years. Gottfried and Kirksey found that spring absenteeism was the greatest predictor of students' performance on assessments. Students who missed instructional opportunities lacked the skill set needed to provide confidence on assessments. This study can aid me in helping stakeholders to understand how absenteeism impacts student performance on test scores. While the study revealed that spring absences seem to have a greater impact on student performance on spring assessments, it also reiterates the impact of attendance on student performance. Chronic absenteeism impacts young scholars at an alarming rate. When students miss foundational skills, they are prone to underperform on grade-level assessments.

Preschool attendance tends to have a positive effect on student readiness for school. Corrairie et al (2018) explored the relationships between duration of early childhood education attendance and developmental outcomes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Using the longitudinal data, the researchers found students who attended early childhood education program performed better academically. The study also noted that students who attended early childhood education program experience for two years experienced fewer stress symptoms than one student who attended one year. Therefore, early exposure to school environment helps students to better prepare for the academic, physical, and social demands of a regular school environment.

### **Parents Perception of School Attendance**

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) stated young children rarely skip school on their own accord. While it is true that almost all parents want their children to succeed academically (Henderson& Mapp, 2002), parents' belief about the value of schooling and attendance may influence their motivation to engage in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), Kohn

(1989) posited those parental beliefs-which from personal experience, implicit theories of childhood development and notions conveyed by proximal individuals and groups (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993) affecting parenting roles, and therefore, student outcomes (as cited in Robinson et al, 2018). Robinson et al (2018) study indicated that parents perceived excused and unexcused absences to be more acceptable, despite the fact school district do not consider an absence excused unless written record (doctor's note). Parents, like humans more generally, fall victim to the Lake Wobegon effect (Harrison & Shaffer, 1994; Maxwell & Lupus, 1994) believing their child's school attendance is better than that of their classmates. Specifically, parents tend to underestimate both their child's total abscess compared with their child's total absences. Robinson et al (2018) further concluded that even if parents value daily attendance in the early grades, they may not motivate to help their child attend school more if they do not perceive that their child's attendance is substandard.

### **Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism**

Schools are an essential social construct that plays an integral role in how students learn the skills to help them function in their communities (Pellegrini, 2007). Despite the difficulty, several factors can help predict chronic absenteeism, such as health conditions, poverty, homeliness, family responsibilities, and the need to work (Allison & Attisha, 2019; London et al., 2016; Sahin et al, 2016). Therefore, collaboration between the home and school is essential to improving outcomes for students. Schools must familiarize themselves with general causes of truancy and develop supportive strategies to encourage students to school daily (Baxter& Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al, 2016; Sahin et al.,2016). When schools are intentional about involving parents in the educational process, students are more likely to

have greater chances of success. Many schools have developed intervention programs such as School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs), Check & Connect, individual counseling, peer counseling, family therapy, behavioral management, case management services and tutoring services (John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, 2012; Tanner-Smith & Wilson, 2013) to address their chronic absenteeism. Finding ways to keep parents abreast of their child's attendance and providing strategies to support parents with external factors that negatively impact student attendance is vital (Brookins, 2017; Brooks et al., 2019; DeArmas, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018).

Shelton and Epstein (2004) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the effects of family and community involvement activities on rates of chronic absenteeism. The results of the study indicated schools that used more communication practices about attendance with families reported significantly lower levels of chronic absenteeism. During the study, the researchers identified three practices with stronger effects on the lowering rates of chronic absenteeism: orienting parents about school expectations and policies for attendance, sending home a list of students with excellent attendance in school newsletters, and connecting chronically absent students with a community mentor.

Childs and Groom (2018) conducted a study using qualitative interviews to explore the effect of community partnership on student attendance. The study, conducted in Central Texas, examine the difference the collaboration among schools and community organizations had on student attendance. The researchers implemented a mentoring program that targeted sixth and ninth-grade students throughout the study to improve student attendance. The results from the study identified three major strategies to implement their school attendance initiative: convening

local partners committed to improving school attendance, using data to highlight the importance of school attendance, and implementing a national mentoring model in targeting schools. The researchers also integrated a data-sharing system that allows the community partners to analyze attendance data and train teachers and fellow educators on the importance of school attendance. Participants in the study spoke about the benefits of the partnership and how the partnerships promoted student attendance.

Robinson et al (2018) conducted a study to determine whether the implementation of a parent-focused intervention targeting parent misconception about school attendance in K-5 would increase student attendance. The results from the study determine students of parents who received mailing correspondence about attendance were less likely to be absent than students who families were a part of the control group. The study emphasized the importance of communication to families on attendance mandates.

Moody et al (2020) conducted a novel approach study to examine whether a market target model, which is built on association rule mining and probability helps schools to improve attendance in the United Kingdom. The study determined that the model showed significant improvements in chronic absenteeism rate, attendance in target sessions, and overall attendance. The researchers also discussed the benefits of training other school leaders and teachers on how to analyze the data to ensure all students are accounted for and to stay abreast of changes in trends and attendance rates. Technology also is useful in providing parents with pertinent information about the importance of kindergarten. Walsh et al. (2018) investigated the use of "Ready, Set! Go!" movies to assist families in preparing for the transition to kindergarten. Four videos—two in English and two in Spanish—and resources were made available to parents by

the researchers that describe what to expect in kindergarten and how families may help with the transition. Prior to the start of the 2017–2018 school year, the movies were personally presented to parents between May and June of that year through participation in parent–teacher conferences, parent meetings, and video distribution. According to the findings of parent surveys, parents thought the tools were helpful since they included visual instructions and information on what parents needed to know to help students get ready for new learning. The study's findings confirm the need to increase parent understanding of the value of education and the short- and long-term benefits that regular school attendance has on young children's futures. Using information from the National Education Longitudinal Study, Bui and Rush (2016) conducted a study to ascertain the impact that parental participation has on predicting college attendance for eighth graders. According to the study's findings, first-generation students' college enrollment is predicted by their parents' educational expectations. According to Bui and Rush (2016), "Parental participation is a dynamic (process) variable that is adaptable to change," in contrast to family status factors like ethnicity and SES, which are either totally or largely immutable. As a result, empowering parents is a significant strategy for enhancing students' academic success.

## **Conclusion**

Absences from school during the elementary school years are important for later academic success (Gottfried, 2011; Steward, Steward, Blair, Jo, & Hill, 2008). While there is a large amount of research on the long-term impacts of chronic absenteeism, there is little information on parental intervention tactics that are used to inform parents about the effects of chronic absenteeism during the early school years. According to Cole (2011), in order to manage

truancy issues in lower grades, it is critical to pinpoint the underlying causes and choose the best course of action. For children, entering kindergarten marks a significant scholastic turning point. Proactively addressing student attendance during a student's early years in school is imperative (Gotfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et. al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential to offer parental interventions that could enhance the quality of education students get by highlighting the significance of consistent attendance at school. The goal of the applied research is to solve PES's ongoing absenteeism issue. The applied research is designed to address the chronic absenteeism problem at PES by improving parental involvement. Chapter Three outlines the action plan and elements that will be used to improve the problem in practice at the school of research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methods and Procedures**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Three presents the applied research design and methods used in this research to address the problem of chronic absenteeism and low parental involvement rates at PES. Applied research is designed to both address a problem in practice and to improve the organizational effectiveness by developing the capacity for organizational learning. The details of the applied research design guiding this research are presented and explained. This chapter is divided into three parts. First, an explanation is presented of the collaborative development of the action plan to address the problem of chronic absenteeism is provided. This section includes an overview of collaborating with stakeholders, a review and timeline of the process, existing research guiding the work, and internal data examined to create the action plan.

The second section presents the full action plan to address the problem in practice. The research questions presented in Chapter One begin the section. Each research question is designed to guide the evaluation of one element of the action plan. The different element of the action plan represents a specific collaborative effort to address the problem. Each element includes a measurable goal. This section provides the details of what will take place for each element: what systems will take place, what participants will be expected to do and accomplish, what timelines will be followed, what resources of time and material will be required, and who will be responsible each activity or effort required of participants.

The final section of Chapter Three presents the program evaluation program evaluation methods that will be used to evaluate the action plan following one year implementation. Formative and summative assessment will be used for each element of the action plan. Each element will be evaluated using multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data. The focus of the evaluation will be to determine the level of goal attainment and to improve instructional leadership. The research questions will be answered with data collected and analyzed through the program evaluation process.

### **Development of the Action Plan**

Power Elementary School was one of seven schools in the first district to participate in the Mississippi Achievement District in 2019. The shifted from local control to direct supervision from the Mississippi Department of Education was disheartening and created dissension among community members and educators of Sampson the County school district. To restore the trust of the community within the school district, a meeting was scheduled with local city officials, clergymen, businesses, and concerned citizens to discuss the concerns regarding persistent low performance based on accountability data and other factors that contributed to the current state of the district. Community members asked each principal to give a report on the state of the school, based on data from the previous three years. During the presentation, I explained to stakeholders the PES accountability rating and the accountability model to help them understand how prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade schools could receive an “F” rating based on the accountability model. The stakeholders shared that they were now aware of how accountability was calculated. I also shared PES attendance data and informed stakeholders that PES, along with the other three schools within Sampson County School District was among



the school district within Mississippi with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. Feedback from the meetings deemed it necessary to raise awareness regarding the importance of regular school attendance and the short and long-term effects of chronic absenteeism. Schools with high rates of chronically absent students tend to have greater achievement gaps (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

In the spring of 2020, the school leadership team (SLT) gathered to review accountability data for PES. The SLT consisted of the school principal, assistant principal, lead special education teacher, English Language Arts Instructional Coach, Math Instructional Coach, School Counselor, MSIS Clerk, School Secretary, Parent Liaison, and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) representative. During the data analysis, the SLT identified high chronic absenteeism as an ongoing area of concern that had not been addressed in previous years. An analysis of school-level and district level data indicated persistent unsatisfactory daily attendance rates among students with Sampson County School District (see Table 1). Although the school serves primary grades (prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade), low attendance rates could potentially be a contributing factor to the low academic performance rates of students exiting PES. Further data analysis on the accountability model, (Mississippi Department of Education, 2020) shows low proficiency ratings on third and fourth-grade state assessment data at Monroe Elementary (assessment data which is used to determine PES accountability rating).

Table 1

*Sampson County School District Chronic Absenteeism Trend Data*

Schools	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Power Elementary School	17.21%	17.7%	15.0%	N/A	30.0%	37.1%

Monroe Elementary School	13.32%	15.5%	15.3%	N/A	22.7%	19.9%
Winchester Middle School	25.15%	27.4%	18.3%	N/A	17.2%	27.8%
Sampson County High School	29.28%	34.6%	42.8%	N/A	8.1%	31.4%
Sampson County School District	18.25%	23.1%	22.4%	N/A	11.4%	27.5%

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*\*Data for the 2020-2021 school term was waived due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

The school leadership team met to identify the root causes of the school's failing accountability rating; suggestions were made to review the school's trend data. The principal reviewed the accountability calculations for K-2 schools with team members to ensure all members of the school leadership team understood how the school's accountability ratings were the result of the 3rd-grade proficiency rate and 4th-grade grade growth rate of students from Monroe Elementary School. Since PES is the feeder school to Monroe Elementary School, it was important to identify early warning signals which could impede upon the school's goal of achieving a successful accountability rating of a "C" or better.

During the data analysis training, the school leadership team identified chronic absenteeism as a persistent problem at PES. Low attendance rates stemmed back to the 2016-2017 school year. Based on data analysis, the SLT identified the need to increase student attendance. In addition to improving student attendance, the need to provide parental awareness regarding attendance was evident. The lack of attendance interventions was a major concern and became a priority in the development of the action plan. It was determined that with the implementation of a parent academy program, parents can receive pertinent information which could change their perception of school attendance; ultimately increasing student outcomes. The action plan began in the late spring of 2021 as efforts to implement a parent academy program which will consist of the lead researcher (school principal), school counselor, parent liaison, and

parents of kindergarten students. The group will begin meeting in the summer of 2022 and continue throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Throughout the collaborative process, the leadership team used relevant research presented in chapter two to develop the action plan. The research supported the need to address chronic absenteeism in early childhood education. It also emphasized the importance of the Sampson County School District developing an action plan to increase school attendance during early school years. Ehrlich et. al (2014) stated children of parents who believe attendance is important are more likely to have better attendance. A useful framework for understanding the role of perceived value in education is the expectancy-value model (e.g., Atkinson, 1957, Eccles et. al., 1983). The expectancy model theory posits that the utility value of a task, or whether the risk is perceived as instrumental toward a future goal influences a person's motivation to engage with task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Prior experimental research suggests simply providing information about the value of a topic can promote its perceived utility value. Robinson et. al (2018) noted targeting parental belief about the importance of regular K-5 attendance could provide cost-effective solution.

Following the data analysis review, the school leadership team outlined strategies for implementation of the PASS parent academy to reduce chronic absenteeism at PES. The goal of the action plan to increase parental involvement efforts at PES. The short-term goal of PASS program is to improve student attendance among kindergarten students at PES. The long-term goal of PASS is to become a successful, "C" rated school based the state's accountability rating which is determined by student's performance on the Mississippi Assessment Program (MAP). Balfanz & Brynes (2013) noted many of the factors that many of the factors that contribute to

poor student attendance remain largely outside of school. Therefore, providing parents with pertinent information the importance of early childhood education and regular school attendance could result in student proficiency in primary grades. Thereby, increasing the school's accountability rating and potential sustainable improvement at the school-level and district-level.

The action plan began with the need to assess parents' perception of the importance of regular school attendance in kindergarten. The school's leadership team studied the accountability results as well as student attendance trends and saw the need to increase student attendance in kindergarten. Additionally, the school leadership team determined student attendance as a major barrier and discussed previous strategies taken by the school to address the issue. Because of the lack of success with previous interventions, the decision was made to provide support to parents at PES through implementation of PASS program. The school wanted to ensure parents were provided an opportunity to voice their concerns and/or barriers to regular school attendance as well as gain knowledge which will enable parents to help their goal of academic success. The school leadership team understood improvement in home-school relationships flows more freely when there is a shared understanding of attendance mandates and school expectations.

### **Description of the Action Plan**

Table 2 provides the elements and details of the action plan.

Table 2

#### *Action Plan*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>
Parent Academy	To increase parental involvement, increase kindergarten	August 2022- Spring 2023	Parent participants Teacher School Counselor

	attendance and student achievement at PES.		Parent Liaison
Healthcare Services	To increase access to health care services, parental engagement and student attendance.	September 2022-Spring 2023	Parent participants Teacher School Counselor Parent Liaison
Family Engagement Supports	To increase access to student attendance and access to resources.	September 2022-Spring 2023	Parent participants Teacher School Counselor Parent Liaison

The overall goal of the action plan was to increase student attendance through the Partners Achieving Student Success (PASS) Program at Power Elementary School. The first element addressed implementation of a parent academy to increase parental involvement at PES. Parents of PES, with a specific focus on kindergarten parents, participate in monthly parent education trainings designed to build awareness around early literacy skills.

### **Program Elements**

The parent academy provides parental training to families with flexible timing on educational topics pertinent to early childhood education. The goal of the parent academy is to educate parents on the importance of early childhood education and student attendance. Thereby, strengthening home-school partnerships for young students could lead to sustainable partnerships for students as they matriculate throughout high school. The parent academy program began in August 2022 and will continue through the 2022-2023 school term with continued implementation at PES. Parents will meet monthly to participate in parent educational training and to provide feedback on the relevance of the topic covered during the training.

The purpose of the feedback is to help the lead researcher determine the need of parents and to structure the next meeting to ensure the topic is addressed to meet the needs of parents. The parent liaison and school counselor at PES will assist the lead researcher with the recruitment of participants, pre-assessment survey and post-assessment survey, end-of-meeting evaluations, and implementation of a flexible meeting schedule to accommodate parents' schedules. Data will be collected from August 2022 to Spring 2023 for this study.

Following the end of the data collection period, data will be analyzed to determine the difference the implementation of the parent academy program had on student attendance at PES. The second element of the action plan addresses the implementation of health care services at PES. Following the pandemic and the district's decision to return to face-to-face instruction, SCSD sought opportunities to increase student attendance specifically at the elementary level. Consequently, the SCSD partnered with the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) to provide telehealth services to students free of charge with parental consent. In addition to medical services, PES also partnered with Brown Health Services (pseudonym) to provide behavioral and social-emotional support for students.

The goal of this element is to provide health care supports to 60% of students missing more than 5 days per nine weeks. The identified goal could reduce absenteeism for young students by providing mental health and behavioral support due to sickness or lack of access to healthcare. The lead researcher will collect and analyze data provided by healthcare providers on service usage at PES. The school counselor and parent liaison will assist the lead researcher in this process through the advertisement of healthcare services available to parents, tracking of referrals, and lastly monitoring of attendance. The usage of services provided to students will be

monitored and data will be used to determine if access to healthcare services in the school setting will increase student attendance. Parents and teachers will also complete interviews and surveys to gauge the difference the healthcare component of the PASS program had in improving student attendance. The implementation of this element began in September 2022 and will continue throughout the 2022-2023 school term. However, data collection for the purpose of this study will conclude in Spring 2023.

The third element of the action plan is family engagement support. The goal of this element is to provide personal contact with 80% of students missing more than 6 days per nine weeks. The parent liaison conducts wellness checks via phone calls and/or text messages daily for students who are absent from school. The parent liaison records the reasons for absence from school and determines the levels of support families may need based on the barriers reported. The aim of this element is to help families eliminate barriers to student attendance by providing parents with resourceful information or referrals to improve the home environment and student attendance. Parents and teachers will complete interviews and surveys to gauge their perception of the family-engagement component of the PASS program. Survey data will be collected by the lead researcher and analyzed at the conclusion of the program.

The data collection implementation began in September 2022 and will continue throughout the 2022-2023 school term. For the purpose of this study, the data collection process for this element will end in Spring 2023. The data collected from this element will help the researcher to identify themes or trends that prevent students from attending school regularly. The data will also be analyzed to determine the difference personalized communication had in increasing student achievement. Table 3 lists the elements and details of the evaluation plan.

## **Evaluation of the Action Plan**

The logic model outlines the process used to evaluate the elements identified in the action plan. Each element describes a specific goal and provides details regarding how data will be collected, stakeholders' involvement in the process, timelines, participants' roles, and responsibilities as well as data collection tools used throughout the evaluation process. The information presented in the logic model will help the researcher to determine the difference the implementation of the PASS program had on parent involvement and student attendance at PES. The purpose of the program evaluation will be to evaluate the success, if any, of the action plan in improving parental involvement and to continue the cycle of organizational learning at Power Elementary School (PES). The action plan will utilize both qualitative and quantitative evaluative data to provide a thorough description of the PASS program implementation at PES. Each element in the action plan will be evaluated quantitatively and/or qualitatively. Feedback provided throughout the plan will be evaluated and used to adjust and monitor the plan to facilitate continuous cycles of improvement.

The evaluation of the plan seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Did the implementation of the PASS parent involvement program reduce kindergarten student absenteeism at PES by 30%?
  - a. To what extent did the implementation of the PASS parent academy help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten? To what extent did the implementation of the healthcare supports help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten?



- b. To what extent did the implementation of the parental engagement support help parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of school attendance in kindergarten?
2. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to increase parental participation in PASS parent involvement program?
  - a. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to improve the PASS parental academy provided to students and families at PES?
  - b. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to improve parental engagement supports provided to students and families at PES?
  - c. Following the implementation period, what steps are needed to improve health care support provided to students and families at PES?
3. What problems hindered the successful implementation of the PASS parental involvement program?
  - a. What problems hindered the successful implementation of the PASS parent academy at PES?
  - b. What problems hindered the successful implementation of family engagement supports at PES?
  - c. What problems hindered the successful implementation of health care supports at PES?

Table 3

*Logic Model/Evaluation Plan*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Evaluation Data</b>
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Parent Academy	<p>Short-term goal- Assess parent's perception of chronic absenteeism</p> <p>Long-term goal- Educate parents on attendance mandates and importance of early childhood education</p>	September 2022-Spring 2022	Parents, Parent Liaison, School Counselor, Teachers	<p>Sign-In Sheets</p> <p>Parent Survey (Appendix A)</p> <p>Parent Interview (Appendix C)</p> <p>Teacher Survey (Appendix F)</p> <p>Teacher Interview (Appendix D)</p> <p>SAMS Attendance Data</p> <p>STAR Early Literacy Data</p> <p>Meeting Survey (Appendix E)</p>
Healthcare Services	<p>Short-term goal- Provide health care services to students to reduce absenteeism.</p> <p>Long-term goal- Reduce attendance barriers for students by providing sustainable healthcare supports in the school setting.</p>	September 2022-Spring 2022	Parents, Parent Liaison, School Counselor, Teachers	<p>Sign-In Sheets</p> <p>Parent Survey (Appendix A)</p> <p>Parent Interview (Appendix B)</p> <p>Teacher Survey (Appendix F)</p> <p>Teacher Interview (Appendix D)</p> <p>Family Referrals</p> <p>Service Usage</p> <p>SAMS Attendance Data</p>
Family Engagement Supports	<p>Short-term goal- Provide check-ins/wellness calls to parents to reduce absenteeism.</p> <p>Long-term goal- improve home-school collaborations to aid in student success.</p>	September 2022-Spring 2022	Parents, Parent Liaison, School Counselor, Teachers	<p>Sign-In Sheets</p> <p>Parent Survey (Appendix A)</p> <p>Parent Interview (Appendix B)</p> <p>Teacher Survey (Appendix F)</p> <p>Teacher Interview (Appendix D)</p> <p>SAMS Attendance Data</p> <p>STAR Early Literacy Data</p>

The logic model lists the elements involved in the action plan, which were derived from the research. Short-term and long-term goals are provided for each element. The evaluation data

to be used to determine the success of the action plan is provided. The chart shows a concise summary of the elements involved in this action plan, the goals to be attained, and the means of evaluation, which will help answer the research questions.

### **Parent Academy**

The parent academy was the first element of the action plan that evaluated to assess short-term and long-term goals. The short goal was for parents to develop an awareness of the importance of regular school attendance in kindergarten. The long goal of this element was to increase parental involvement during early school years and for parents to develop a deeper understanding of regular school attendance in early grades. Prior to the initial parent academy meeting, parents were given an (Appendix A) closed-ended, preassessment survey to assess their level of understanding of attendance mandates and the importance of early childhood education.

Parents participating in the parent academy attended monthly meetings to learn about the benefits of attending school regularly, learned about ways to support literacy skills at home, and discussed barriers in both the home and school setting which prevents students from attending school. Meeting observations and notes were collected to capture parents' perceptions of chronic absenteeism and emerging themes that arose from the information presented during training. Parents also completed a survey after each meeting to determine the difference the training had on their perception of attendance and to provide feedback on the next meeting's topic.

At the conclusion of the parent academy in Spring 2022, the research provided parents with a post-survey and compile the data to use for formative assessment. Sign-in sheets were used to capture the number of parents attending the monthly parent academy meeting. The number of participants helped the researcher to determine the number of families potential who

could potentially benefit from the implementation element. This information was used for formative assessment.

Classroom observations were collected to determine if students are attending school and engaging in learning following information presented in the parent meeting. Lastly, STAR Early Literacy Data was analyzed to determine the relationship between parent participation in the parent academy on student achievement. The program evaluation helped to determine successes and/or limitations noted from the implementation of the parent academy.

### **Health Care Supports**

Health Care Supports was the second element of the action plan that will be evaluated to determine, the level of success, if any on the PASS program at PES. The short-term goal was to reduce absenteeism by providing healthcare services to students in the school setting. The long-term goal was to strengthen home-school relationships by providing resources that may be a barrier to families outside the school setting free of charge. Quantitative and qualitative data was evaluated to determine the level of success, if any, in the PASS program at PES. A survey was given to parents and teachers to capture their perceptions of the benefits of healthcare support in the school setting. Observations of the school-based medical and behavior service program also occurred to gauge the effectiveness of services provided to students in the school setting. Lastly, student usage, parent referrals, and MSIS attendance was also analyzed to determine whether the implementation of healthcare services made a difference in student attendance.

### **Family Engagement Supports**

Family engagement supports was the third element of the action plan that will be evaluated to determine the level of success, if any, in the PASS program at PES. The short-term

goal of this element was to increase student attendance to provide encouragement and share resources with families who may need medical, financial, or mental health support. The long-term goal was to strengthen home-school collaboration and eliminate school attendance issues at PES. The evaluation source for this element consisted of parent surveys, teacher surveys, and interviews to gauge perceptions of the family check-ins.

Call logs, service referrals, attendance data, parent interviews and surveys, teacher interviews and teacher surveys, and documented by the parent liaison and school counselor was also analyzed for emerging needs of the supports to determine the difference the family wellness check-ins had on student attendance. The short-term goal of this element was to increase student attendance to provide encouragement and share resources with families who may need medical, financial, or mental health support. The long-term goal was to strengthen home-school collaboration and eliminate school attendance issues at PES. At the conclusion of the action plan, the lead researcher analyzed data collected from the element to determine emerging themes regarding reasons for absence, barriers presented to families as well as the difference the family check-ins had on increasing parental involvement and student attendance.

## **Conclusion**

The action plan was developed and outlined to improve chronic absenteeism at PES. The goal of the action plan is to increase parental involvement at PES through the implementation of the PASS program. The aim was to increase organizational learning is to improve school attendance and student outcome. The evaluation plan was developed to outline the elements within the action plan and the data collection process to help measure the effectiveness of each program element. The benefits of implementing a parent involvement program at PES could

potentially reduce the ongoing chronic absenteeism problem at PES. Chapter I provided a description of the problem in practice and the purpose for conducting the study at PES. Chapter Two provided the theoretical framework for the applied research study. Lastly, Chapter Three outlined the action plan, elements, and program evaluation for the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Four presents the quantitative and qualitative results of this applied study. Data was presented to examine whether the PASS program achieved its desired goal and improved kindergarten attendance. Chapter Four will review the problem, purpose, and design of my study. I will connect my research of literature to my program and restate my research questions. Lastly, I will answer each research question by outlining the data collection process and analysis of results.

As described in Chapter Three, this applied research study sought to improve kindergarten student attendance at Power Elementary School through the implementation of the Partners Achieving Student Success (PASS) program. Chapter One began with a thorough investigation of the literature on the short- and long-term impact of chronic absenteeism in early childhood education, barriers to regular school attendance for young students, and parent engagement initiatives. Chapter Two provided an analysis of the literature that revealed parent engagement as a critical component of improving student attendance and the turnaround process the literature discussed in Chapter Two outlined the foundation for the collaborative development of the action plan presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three defined the study's method and included the action plan for addressing kindergarten attendance and a program evaluation to determine whether the program goals were

met, and how to improve the program. The action plan outlined the different elements of the PASS program, such as the parent academy, healthcare support, and parent engagement support.

Data collection tools used to evaluate the program included:

- parent interviews,
- teacher interviews,
- student attendance data (pre and post-program implementation),
- parent survey data,
- teacher survey data,
- observation data,
- meeting evaluations data, and
- STAR Early literacy data (pre and post-program implementation).

Chapter Four reviews the problem, purpose, and design of the study. I aimed to connect the research literature to the program used to address the problem in practice and presented the data collection process and results. Finally, each research question is answered with corresponding data. Through targeted parental involvement support, the researcher sought to lead improved kindergarten attendance at Power Elementary School through the implementation of the PASS program, which aimed to equip parents with the information and resources needed to eliminate barriers to regular attendance during primary grades and student achievement.

The data examined and presented in this study to develop the action plan was based on student attendance data and surveys from 27 parents and 12 teachers at Power Elementary School. In 2019, PES was listed among the top 10 school districts within the state for the highest chronic absenteeism rates. This data directly impacts students leaving elementary school



possessing the early literacy skills deemed necessary to help students perform at or above grade level. Students are not performing at or above grade level consequently resulting in persistently low academic performance on statewide assessments.

A program evaluation was used to answer the research questions. The evaluation was used to determine the effectiveness of the action plan and to recommend improvements in the program. Quantitative data included meeting participation data, average daily attendance (ADA), and Star Early Literacy Data. Qualitative data was collected through parent and teacher interviews, parent surveys, teacher surveys, observation, and communication logs from wellness check-ins. The qualitative data addressed the differences and problems identified from implementing the PASS program.

### **Research Question One Results**

Research question one sought to determine if the implementation of the PASS program reduced kindergarten absenteeism at PES by 30%. Kindergarten attendance data was collected and analyzed to answer this research question. Attendance data was retrieved from the SAMS attendance portal to determine the difference between the attendance data before the implementation of the PASS program and attendance after program implementation. The data indicated the implementation of the PASS program improved kindergarten attendance at PES by 52.8%. Prior to the implementation of the PASS program, the daily average daily attendance rate for kindergarten during the 2021-2022 school term was 88.7% indicating a daily average absentee rate of 11.3%. Following one semester of program implementation (January 2023-March 2023), the average daily kindergarten attendance rate increased to 93.5% indicating a daily absentee rate of 6.5%. The daily average absentee rate fell from 11.3% to 6.5%, a drop of

4.8%. Thus, during implementation, the average daily absentee rate fell by  $(4.8/11.3)$  42.4%.

Consequently, the attendance data determined implementation of the PASS program reduced kindergarten absenteeism by 42.4%, exceeding the intended goal by 12.3%.

Table 4

<b>Pre-PASS Program ADA</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>PASS Program ADA Goal</b>	<b>Post PASS ADA</b>	<b>Post PASS</b>
August 21- June 22		30% reduction in ADA $(11.3 \times .3 = 3.39)$ $(11.3 - 3.39) = 6.41$	January 23- March 23	Average Absentee Rate (% improvement)
88.7%	11.3%	$88.7\% + 6.41\% = 91.59$	93.5%	6.5% (42.4%)

### ***Sub-question 1A***

Sub-question 1A examined the extent the implementation of parent academy helped parents to dismantle misconceptions about the importance of regular school attendance in kindergarten. End-of-meeting evaluation surveys, parent survey data, parent interviews and teacher interviews were utilized to answer this question. The parent academy sessions began in September 2022 and concluded in March 2023. I met with parent participants once a month for 45 to 60-minute sessions to provide educational information to parents and to ask or answer questions posed by parents to correct misconceptions. Topics from the parent academy included: kindergarten initiatives, chronic absenteeism, benefits of attendance, short-term and long-term consequences of excessive absenteeism, and the importance of early literacy skills. An average of 36 parents participated in the parent academy. During the first meeting, parents were administered a presurvey to help me gauge their knowledge of kindergarten attendance.

Although preprogram survey data indicated parents were knowledgeable about the importance of kindergarten attendance and its impact on student outcome, end-of-meeting evaluation data and post program survey data showed the workshops helped to correct parent's misconceptions by allowing them to recognize the shifts in early childhood education and how regular school attendance improves students' probabilities of success. Preprogram survey data indicated 74% of parents believed that missing two or more days of kindergarten a month does not affect student learning. However, post program survey data indicated only 18% of parents believed that missing two or more days a month of kindergarten does not affect student learning. The data suggests the parent training met its intended goal of educating parents on the importance of school attendance and early childhood instruction.

Parent participation in the PASS parent academy showed positive gains in parents' perception of kindergarten student attendance. End-of-meeting evaluation data indicated parents believe the parent training and resources provided during the training. Seventeen parents stated that the parent training was beneficial and helped to enhance their understanding of school attendance and kindergarten initiatives. Twenty parents indicated they would recommend the training to new parents or parents of children in upper-grade levels.

End-of-meeting evaluation data indicated a decrease in absences reported among program participants. At the conclusion of each meeting, parents were asked to report the number of days their child missed since the last meeting. After each meeting session, I referenced the number of reported absences with the SAMS attendance data for those targeted students, and SAMS attendance data confirmed the decreased absences trends for students of parent academy participants. In September 2022, four parents reported their child missed three or more days

during the first month of school. However, in March 2023, none of the participants reported their children missed days one to two days from school during the previous month. The decrease in parent-reported absences supports the intended goal of the element which was to raise awareness regarding the impact of kindergarten absence on student outcomes during primary grades.

The October 2022 meeting had the largest impact on changing parent perception according to end-of-meeting survey data. During this meeting, I focused on chronic absenteeism, and how it is calculated, and had parents participate in activities to calculate the loss of instructional minutes. Parents worked in groups of four and were given scenarios where they had to identify the problem, calculate the loss of instructional minutes, and identify a plan to address the short and long-term impact instructional loss might have on student performance. After the presentation on chronic absenteeism, several parents shared that no one had ever taken the time to explain what “chronic absenteeism” meant and reflect on previous experiences they had encountered from school officials. Ms. Gary said:

All I have ever received were the absenteeism brochure or a letter from the truancy officer threatening to take me to court. I thought the school was being petty. If someone had explained this better, my response would have been different. I thought the school was trying to say I was not a good parent. Now, I understand their position and why they must contact their parents about attendance.

Similar reflections were reported by six other parents in the session. However, Ms. Clara's statement was the most impactful reflection from the session. Ms. Clara stated:

I never looked at it like that. I thought kindergarteners' attendance was important. In my mind, all kindergarten students did was sing songs, trace the alphabet, count to 20, and

play all day. So, I did not see anything wrong with keeping my child at home. However, looking at the calculation of minutes my child missed from school has made me realize that I was hurting my child's future instead of helping him. I work an hourly job and depend on my 40 hours a week to meet my needs. If my boss shortens my check, then I will have a gap in expenses. I do not want to create gaps in my child's future. I want him to take advantage of every opportunity that is provided to him.

This statement was thought-provoking and moving to me as the researcher and other parent in the session. It helped me to realize that the parent academy met its intended goal of dismantling misconceptions about school attendance.

Ms. Vera got emotional and said:

I thought I was helping my child. I did not realize that keeping him at home could hinder my grandbaby's progress. I want what is best for him. I want to give him a chance to be successful in this world.

This statement was eye-opening and thought-provoking. It helped me to realize that the parent academy met its intended goal of dismantling misconceptions about school attendance. Twenty-five parents stated that the information presented in that session was beneficial and that they would recommend this training to other parents.

End-of-meeting survey data was collected, and sorted into categories to identify strengths of the parent academy trainings and to determine the difference the parent academy trainings were making on parent misconceptions about school attendance. An analysis of end-of-meeting evaluation surveys indicated parents perceived the information to be helpful and that they would recommend future kindergarten parents attend the parent academy. Although the meeting

participation data indicated that the parent academy reached 30% of kindergarten parents, the increase in kindergarten attendance pre and post program implementation supports the conclusion the program element met its intended goal of educating parents on the importance of student attendance in kindergarten and the short- and long-term impact of chronic absenteeism on student outcomes.

### ***Sub-question 1B***

Sub-question 1B examined how the implementation of health care services helped parents dismantle misconceptions about the importance of regular school attendance in kindergarten. I reviewed interview data from 27 parents and 12 teachers to answer this question. The purpose of collecting the qualitative data from parents and teachers was to identify what commonalities or trends emerged following of implementing the health care services. Parent interview and end-of-meeting survey data was sorted into categories to identify themes, strengths and benefits of the health care services as perceived by parents. The first trend noted was the implementation of the healthcare services at school eased parents' worries about their children attending school without them by knowing their child had access to medical services in their absences.

The data provided by parents indicated parents' shift in perception of their ability to meet the needs of children at school. During the parent interviews, I asked parents how they felt about implementing healthcare services at school and if the services offered could improve student attendance. Nineteen parents believed that providing health care services at school benefited students. Fourteen parents stated that implementing the healthcare services helped them feel comfortable sending their children to school because they could ensure their children could see

the doctor without them having to miss work. Two parents stated that learning that their child can receive minor medical services at school could prevent their child from missing so much school since transportation is an issue for them. Ms. Rose said:

If my child's nose was running or he had a low-grade fever, I would tend to keep him at home sometimes instead of taking him to the doctor's office but now that I know the school can monitor my child. I do not have to worry so much.

Twenty parents interviewed stated that the school's weekly covid testing program helped them to feel comfortable sending their children to school. All 27 of the parents agreed that the school's efforts to address the medical needs of students provided an additional safety net for families. Ms. Frazier said:

Implementing the health care support at school made me more comfortable with my child attending school because I know his needs could be met if something happened to him.

Before I learned about these services, I was reluctant to send my child to school. I have lost one child, and my baby is all I have. If I lose him, I do not know what to do.

This statement resonated with me and helped me realize that some parents keep their children home because they are trying to keep them safe or protected. Ms. Frazier discussed how angry she had been since the loss of her child and how she wanted to homeschool her child but knew she was not equipped to meet his academic needs. Although the incident resulting from the death of her child did not occur at school, the parents feared for their safety due to the increase of fighting and violence among middle and high school students. This parent's statement during her interview lingered with me as it provided additional information that should be considered to ensure we could meet the needs of students and their families.

I also interviewed 12 teachers to gauge their perception of the difference the healthcare support implementation could have on dismantling parents' misconceptions about kindergarten school attendance. The purpose of the data was to identify commonalities among teachers and parents and to determine what themes would emerge. Teacher interview data indicated that teachers believed the PASS program could be beneficial for students and their families and could improve kindergarten attendance. Ten of the 12 teachers reported that they received fewer messages from parents indicating their child would be absent from school because they had to report to the doctor. In addition, four teachers reported that implementing the health services program helped parents because they were less frustrated about missing work or struggling to get appointments at their local doctor's office. Six teachers reported that once parents understood the dynamics of the school-based health program, they were more willing to send their children to school. Mrs. Jasmine, a fifteen-year educator, said:

Parents of students with food allergies, asthma, or other health conditions that require medicine administration throughout the school day were more willing to send their children to school knowing that the school could adequately address the needs of their children. In previous years, students with medical conditions missed more school than their peers even for minor illnesses because parents were afraid the school could not meet their needs. I was excited about this program because I can finally teach my students and get them the help they may need inside the school. I worry when my students miss a lot of schools because they get behind academically and it is difficult to ensure that they are okay without intruding on family's privacy. Mrs. Jasmine's statement provided insight into the benefits of healthcare and supports the challenges excessive absences as well pose to teachers mentally and physically.



The second theme that emerged from the data analysis of parent interviews was that most parents believed the implementation of behavior supports at school was beneficial. When explicitly asked about their perceptions of the behavior supports provided in the school setting, most parents replied behavior supports at school were advantageous. Ten parents reported that setting young children's appointments with behavior specialists is often challenging. Therefore, they were happy to see that the school was trying to address behavioral issues. Four parents stated they were aware of behavior issues with their child but did not know how to go about getting the necessary support. Those same parents also revealed their personal concerns about their child's poor social and behavioral skills as one of the contributing factors to their child's attendance issues. Ms. Kelly stated:

My child has anger issues. I know this is going to be a problem in the school setting because he does not like to be told “no.” Honestly, I want to keep him home an additional year to address the issue, but I did not want to get in trouble with the court system. Once I learned about behavior support, I was happy because I know that I need to get him additional help to correct this problem. I also know I will not have to worry as much about his behavior because the school can address it.

This statement was profound because it supported the intended goal of the program element which was to reduce absences by providing healthcare support in the school setting.

Lastly, I reviewed preprogram survey data and post program survey data to determine the difference the healthcare supports had on changing parents' perception of kindergarten school attendance. Preprogram implementation 80% of parents indicated their children missed school due to sickness or doctor's appointments. Post-program survey data indicated that only 28% of

parents indicated their children missed due to sickness or doctor's appointments. The survey data supported, in addition, to the parent interview data, and teacher interview data indicated the implementation of the healthcare supports helped to dismantle parents' misconceptions about kindergarten attendance.

### ***Sub-question 1C***

Sub-question 1C examined the extent the implementation of parental engagement support helped parents dismantle misconceptions about the importance of regular school attendance in kindergarten. This element aimed to provide personal contact with 80% of students missing more than six days per nine weeks. To answer the question, I reviewed wellness check-in logs, kindergarten chronic absenteeism reports, and parent interview data to determine the difference in personal contact in improving student attendance. Anecdotal notes from the contact logs showed that students of parents who attended the parent academy were less likely to miss two consecutive days from school. The family check-in data also yielded a decrease in the number of students who were chronically absent from school. Of twenty-nine students who were chronically absent during the first month of school, only five received six or more absences in one nine weeks, resulting in only 17.2% of students missing six or more days within nine weeks. Therefore, the goal of providing personal contact to 80% of parents was obtained and yielded improvements in school attendance.

After reviewing the family engagement data (parent call logs, anecdotal notes, and written responses from parents), I also reviewed interview data from parents and teachers to determine the difference in the parental engagement supports, consistent with parent check-ins from the parent liaison, school counselor, and school principal. Interview data indicated that

parents believed personalized communication was critical in improving school attendance. Ms. Pattie stated:

I experienced several traumatic events this school year that left me helpless. However, I knew I could call the school to speak with someone to ask a simple question and end the phone call feeling empowered. The staff were friendly and genuinely cared about my well-being. I was not interested in my child leaving home every day. I knew I had to send my child to school to avoid trouble with the courts (truancy). Some days, "I did not feel like getting out of bed. However, I knew I would receive a phone call asking why my child was absent and how I was doing. This made me feel good. I felt like the school valued me as a family member and truly cared about the well-being of my family.

The information reported by Ms. Pattie supports the notion that this program made a difference in student attendance and parent engagement by offering support to families. It also provided insight into the importance of family engagement support and additional opportunities the school district could employ to strengthen the parent engagement council.

Eight parents reported that parent engagement support changed their perception of the importance of school. Two parents reported unblocking the school's number because they realized the phone calls were to share important information about their child or school. Three other parents laughed and said the automated calls from the school seemed like spam calls. However, they preferred live correspondence regarding their child's attendance. Ms. Mary said, *"Now, I get to tell my side of the story instead of the school reminding me that I failed to meet their expectations."* This statement was impactful as it helped to identify a barrier between home and school communication.

Lastly, teacher interview data indicated that teachers believed implementing parental engagement support helped improve kindergarten student attendance. Four teachers replied that parents often think they (teachers) are unequipped to meet the needs of their children and choose to keep their small children at home. However, communication with parents has been easier and we have seen an increase in student attendance. Ms. Blue replied:

Establishing a relationship with kindergarten parents is often challenging because parents are less trusting of teachers with their babies unless they have already had children attend school. However, implementing wellness check-ins and counseling supports has helped bridge the gaps between home and school.

Ms. Blue's statement helped the researcher to understand that the program element met its intended goal of improving home-school communication.

Teachers' interview data also revealed that teachers agreed that implementing parent engagement support makes communication more accessible. Teachers reported communication improvements by saying parents are less likely to block the school number or hang up when we call to discuss concerns about students. Ms. Crimson stated:

I believe parents value my input and finally see me as a professional and thought partner rather than viewing me as an educated villain. The purpose of the program was to improve parental involvement and student attendance. However, I also learned a lot.

While my job is to ensure parents are fully informed of grade level expectations and their child's progress, I must also listen to what challenges parents or students may face, which can hinder their progress. As a teacher, I may not be able to fix the issue. However, I can be a listening ear or refer parents to resources that could help them. Communication is a

two-way process. The parent engagement component helped parents to become more vocal about the barriers they are encountering.

Teachers also reported higher levels of satisfaction due to increased attendance. Six teachers reported that increased student attendance helped them to focus on providing quality Tier I instruction and keeping up with the pacing guides outlined by the school district. Adhering to pacing is difficult when children struggle and become overwhelmed, and we are still trying to help them establish solid foundational skills.

An analysis of ADA data, parent interviews, and teacher interview data indicates that implementing the PASS program improved kindergarten student attendance.

### **Research Question Two Analysis**

The second research question sought to determine if following the implementation period, what steps are needed to increase parental participation in the PASS parent academy program. To answer this question, I analyzed parent interview data, teacher interview data, meeting attendance data, and post programming survey data from parents. Each tool was used throughout the study to identify individual and collective successes through the analysis. A review of SAMS attendance data pre implementation of the PASS program and post implementation indicated the program achieved its intended goal (see Table 4). Implementation of the PASS program has had improvement in kindergarten at PES, as evidenced by the 42.4% increase in kindergarten attendance since the implementation of the program. End-of-meeting evaluation data from parents indicated parents would recommend other parents to attend the parent academy. Therefore, supporting the rationale of the program made an improvement in kindergarten attendance at PES.

### ***Sub-question 2A***

Sub-question 2A sought to determine if, following the implementation period, what steps, if any, are needed to improve the parent academy for families at PES. To answer this question, I analyzed the interview data collected from parents and teachers to identify commonalities. One theme that emerged from implementing the PASS program from parents and teachers was the need to continue to offer flexible meeting times and locations to accommodate the various groups of parents and broaden the focus to other grade levels for systematic growth and progress. Sixteen parents noted that most parents are employed outside the community and often work shifts that do not align with the traditional school day. When asked about virtual meetings, 18 parents indicated Zoom meetings could improve parent engagement efforts. However, the face-to-face interactions were more meaningful and helped with relationship building. Ten teachers also believed face-to-face meetings were more effective. Still, they agreed virtual meetings could bridge the gap between home and school and provide families with additional opportunities to be involved in their child's education.

### ***Sub-question 2B***

Sub-question 2B sought to determine if, following the implementation period, what steps, if any, are needed to improve health care support provided to students and families at PES. This element aimed to provide health care support to 60% of students missing more than five days per nine weeks. Parent interview data indicated that parents perceived access to healthcare in the school to be an asset and a deterrent in student absences. However, 10 parents believe the school could provide flexible hours to accommodate working parents who desire to accompany their children while receiving medical treatments. One trend identified was that parents believe

medical services for younger schools would be more impactful if parents were present while students received care. Ms. Clara asserted:

I am glad the services are available. However, I would rather see whom I am talking to or provide information about my child. I need to know who is recording this information.

More importantly, there is information that the medical provider may need to know about my child that only I could answer. My child is five years old. I need to be there.

Ms. Clara's statement helped me to understand parents' reservations about using telehealth services. The statement was powerful in providing information regarding considerations that should be considered to maximize the usage of services.

Another trend data identified was that teachers believe the medical supports, specifically behavioral supports, should include modeling how to address atypical behaviors presented in classroom settings. Five teachers believe access to behavior support on the school campus could help them to respond appropriately to undesired behaviors and minimize off-task behaviors in the school setting. Ms. Pittman stated:

I think the behavioral supports are beneficial for students. However, it would be helpful to teachers if the behavior specialist can model the strategies in real-time to staff. This will help teachers become more comfortable with implementing new behavior strategies in the class setting.

This statement was informative as it helped me to realize the need for ongoing professional development on social-emotional learning for teachers. Teachers must be equipped to employ behavior strategies in the class setting to ensure consistency of routines for students in both small-group and large-group settings.

Clinic usage data also indicated that only 42% of students who missed five or more days per nine weeks accessed the healthcare support provided in the school. The data suggested a need to expand further collaborative efforts with families who may encounter traumatic experiences or medical issues which cannot be addressed in the school setting or possess a heightened distrust for the school setting.

### ***Sub-question 2C***

Sub-question 2C sought to determine if, following the implementation period, what steps, if any, are needed to improve parental engagement support provided to students and families at PES. Both parent and teacher survey data indicated parents believed the continued implementation of the families supports can help to foster a better relationship between families and schools. Preprogram survey data indicated that 45% of parents did not believe the school should contact them when students are absent. Post program survey indicated that 10% of parents did not believe the school should contact them when students are absent from school. Teacher survey data indicated that teachers believed that 40% of parents were receptive to school officials contacting them when their child is absent from school. However, post program survey data indicated that teachers believed 85% of parents were receptive to school officials contacting them regarding them when their child is absent from school.

One suggestion made by two parents was to call more to check in on the family. The parents fussed at the parent liaison and school counselor for failing to contact them once attendance improved. This feedback was astounding, given the level of engagement before implementing the PASS program. The data also supported the purpose of the program element in



identifying ongoing ways to improve student attendance and fostering positive relationships between home and school.

### **Research Question Three Analysis**

The third research question examined what problems hindered the successful implementation of the PASS parental involvement program. Several data tools were used to answer this question. This tool included a review of kindergarten attendance data pre and data program implementation, parent and teacher survey data, parent and teacher interview data, meeting attendance data, observation checklists, and usage of parent engagement supports. One negative outcome was identified in connection with the program implementation. One trend data determined from the parent interviews was that some parents believed the schools should become more lenient with attendance reporting. Despite implementing the PASS program, the end-of-meeting evaluation indicated four parents still believed mandating attendance reporting could continue to produce negative engagement with parents.

#### ***Sub-question 3A***

Sub-question 3A sought to determine if any problems hindered the successful implementation of the PASS program at Power Elementary School. Parent and teacher interview data indicated that meeting times were a barrier for some parents due to conflict with their nontraditional work schedules. The goal was to engage 40% of kindergarten parents in the study. Parent Academy participation data indicated an average parent participation rate of 28% of kindergarten parents. The meeting participation rates, and end-of-meeting survey data suggested a need for flexible meeting times (inclusive of weekends) and types to provide more opportunities for parents with nontraditional schedules or transportation. It also indicated the

need to consider providing tiered parental involvement support based on the types of supports families may need. Tiered parental support could increase participation and maximize academic opportunities for students and their families by focusing on topics or information pertinent to meeting the physical, mental, or educational needs of families.

### ***Sub-question 3B***

Sub-question 3B sought to determine if problems hindered the successful implementation of healthcare support at Power Elementary School. The data collection process included interview data from parents and teachers, program usage data, and survey data. Each tool was used throughout the study to identify individual and collective successes through the study. One problem identified was that parents believed medical services for younger schools would be more impactful if parents were present while students received care. Seven parents believed the behavior services were helpful but needed to be more informed about behavior support services for young children. Interestingly, five of the seven parents were first-time parents; this was their first child entering a formal school setting. Ms. James stated:

I am glad the services are available. However, I would rather see whom I am talking to or provide information about my child. I need to know who is recording this information.

More importantly, there is information that the medical provider may need to know about my child that only I could answer. My child is five years old. I need to be there.

This statement was influential as it provided insight into parents' reservations about using telehealth services for kindergarten students. This data also helped me to understand the importance of providing early transition parent training to help parents become comfortable with

the expectations of formal school and to help families understand our focus on educating the whole child by focusing on their academic, social-emotional, and medical needs.

In addition, two teachers shared concerns about implementing the health care services and how it could meet kindergarteners' needs without a caregiver familiar with them. Ms. Nickels stated, "I strongly oppose students receiving medical services without their parents. Parents need to participate face to face with doctor's visits." The statements provided by Ms. James and Ms. Nickel helped me to understand the rationale regarding the low usage of telehealth services among kindergarten parents.

Lastly, I analyzed the usage of telehealth services among kindergarten students to review the usage of the healthcare services program. While the interview data indicated parents thought the services were beneficial, telehealth services' usage remained relatively low compared to the use of behavior supports. The average usage of telehealth services ranged from 8 to 10 visits monthly. However, the usage of the services for weekly covid testing was high, averaging weekly testing rates of 100 to 125 weekly among kindergarten students. When I inquired about the low usage of telehealth services, the school counselor and nurse informed me that due to the age of the children, many parents preferred to accompany their children to their doctors' appointments. However, parents who worked nontraditional shifts were more willing to use telehealth services than parents who did not work. They were open to participation via telephone or virtual meetings. The data indicated the need to revisit methods of approach to telehealth services.

### ***Sub-question 3C***

Sub-question 3C sought to ascertain if problems hindered the successful implementation of family engagement support at Power Elementary School. Data collected to answer this question included parent and teacher interview data, parent and teacher survey data, parent engagement support and usage data, and attendance data. Neither teacher nor the parents reported any problems with the family engagement support. However, one problem the parent engagement support team identified was the frequency of the changes in parents' contact information. Parents who updated their personal contact information without notifying the school were more challenging to engage with. To address this issue, the parental engagement team sent out memos to all parents to contact the school to update contact information within 48 hours of change or phone numbers or addresses to ensure families continue to receive information from the school. Therefore, the data support the need to continue implementing that parent engagement support at the school level.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the applied research study have been presented. The data indicated success in all three aspects of parental involvement with the PASS program. The PASS parental involvement program met its goal of improving kindergarten student attendance at Power Elementary School. Parent interviews and teacher interviews revealed other strategies needed to improve parental engagement opportunities, which could lead to increased attendance and student achievement. Providing a parent academy, healthcare services, and parent engagement support helped to push best practices found through my research. Each element of the action plan also attained its goal. As a principal, the program evaluation model helped me to utilize the

results to implement best practices consistently. I observed parents become more confident in their roles as partners with educators, students become more confident in their ability to meet grade-level goals, and teachers become more comfortable in their ability to meet the needs of students. I witnessed the school leadership team, school counselor, parent liaison, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders become more knowledgeable about the importance of kindergarten attendance and improving home school attendance. Chapter Five will present the conclusion and implications for further research and continuous improvement.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this applied research study was to improve parental involvement at Power Elementary School. The need to increase parental involvement became evident due to persistent high chronic absenteeism rates and low performance on the state accountability level. The loss of local district control coupled with frustrated teachers and community members determined the need to address overlooked barriers to student success. As mentioned in Chapter Two, According to Slavin (1999), absenteeism is a cumulative process, and students with large amounts of absenteeism early in their school careers lack the foundation for the rest of their schooling, limiting their potential for success. Identifying patterns in student attendance can assist in selecting effective strategies to combat truancy (Cole, 2011). Based on this research, the school leadership team decided to implement the PASS program using three research strategies as elements in this study to improve kindergarten attendance at PES. These research strategies included the implementation of a parent academy, healthcare support, and parent-engagement support.

In addition to the research-based strategies utilized, three research questions were used to guide the program evaluation of the study. The first research question sought to determine if the implementation of the action plan led to a kindergarten attendance increase of 30% at Power

Elementary School. The second and third research questions sought to determine the successes and/or barriers to the implementation of the action plan as well as the extent to which the implementation dismantled misconceptions about the importance of kindergarten attendance and early importance.

### **Parent-Academy**

The short-term goal of the parent academy was to assess kindergarten parents' perception of chronic absenteeism. The long-term goal was to educate parents on attendance mandates and the importance of early childhood education. Both goals were achieved. While the school had implemented several strategies in past years to improve student performance, student attendance still needed to be addressed. Before implementing the PASS program, the school leadership team met to identify barriers to regular school attendance and sought to assess parents' perceptions of chronic absenteeism. Kindergarten parents were given a preprogram assessment survey to gauge their perception of the importance of kindergarten attendance during the open house event. The study's results helped determine the topics needed to address misconceptions about regular school attendance. Each meeting lasted 30 to 45 minutes, consisting of a presentation, a question-and-answer session, and an end-of-meeting evaluation.

In retrospect, the short-term goal should have been to educate parents on attendance mandates and the importance of early childhood education. The long-term goal should have been to foster positive, long-lasting relationships with families, which could aid in improving student outcomes. While the parent academy focused on kindergarten parents, the program's expansion could help increase parent involvement and decrease student attendance, which continues to be a challenge at upper-grade levels. The results from the parent academy also suggested that the

transition academy before enrollment could prepare families for the realistic expectations of kindergarten.

### **Healthcare Supports**

The short-term goal of the healthcare support element was to reduce kindergarten absenteeism by providing students access to healthcare in the school setting. The long-term goal was to reduce absenteeism by providing sustainable healthcare support to students in the school setting. While both goals were achieved, low usage of telehealth services could threaten the sustainability of telehealth services. Therefore, redefining the parameters of telehealth services for young children is imperative. While parents knew about the availability of telehealth services, many perceived that telehealth services meant they could not attend doctor's visits. My goal as principal is to correct this misconception for parents at the beginning of the school year so that families can maximize the use of the medical services provided to their children. My goal is to continue fostering positive relationships with families and service providers to offer more of a community school approach for students in our community who may otherwise not have access to these services due to low socioeconomic barriers.

As a result of the pandemic, school districts across the United States have shifted focus more toward the social-emotional support of students due to the disruption of routine educational practices and learning loss experienced by students. Results from the study indicated parents were more accepting of the behavioral supports offered in the school setting than the telehealth service. However, future consideration for behavior support services is to emphasize social-emotional support for families as outlined in the family engagement supports. Young children are direct beneficiaries of stressors and trauma presented in their families. Verbal and nonverbal



cues often pose unwarranted stressors to adults and young students. Therefore, I plan to implement transition training for parents before their students enter kindergarten to minimize stressors for parents and children regarding their students entering a new environment.

### **Parent Engagement Supports**

The short-term goal of the parent engagement support element was to provide check-ins and wellness calls to 80% of kindergarten parents to reduce absenteeism. The long-term goal was to improve home-school collaborations to aid in student success. Both goals were achieved. The parental engagement yielded positive outcomes and helped to bring to fruition the school's vision of fostering a positive relationship with parents and community members. Power Elementary made a concerted effort to close the communication gap between home and school environments. We understand that children are a product of their environments. Our goal was to provide continuity of care to students and their families as they could help lead to the sustainable growth for all students that we envision for our students, our school, and our school district. In my role as principal, I plan to continue to implement the parent engagement level and expand it to all grade levels for my school. The SLT also aimed to use this model to demonstrate to other schools within our district what meaningful parental involvement looks like.

### **Discussion**

As outlined in Chapters One and Two, attendance is a major barrier to student academic success, especially for students in poverty-stricken communities where resources are limited. Sampson County School District had persistent issues with student attendance and low academic performance that led to loss of local district control. Therefore, it was imperative for PES to revisit our approach to student success by identifying barriers that has contributed the

longstanding demise of the school district. The school leadership team sought to address these identified challenges by addressing parental involvement initiatives.

### **Implications of the Study**

This study was designed to identify ways to increase kindergarten attendance through increasing parent involvement initiatives. One implication of this study suggested that the focus on parental involvement and student attendance were priority focus points of improvements within the school and the school district. While every element yielded successful results, each element suggested the need for continued focus to sustain implementation improvement in parental involvement and student attendance in future years.

Each of the elements within the action plan was vital to the success of the PASS program. While the focus of the action plan was the Parent Academy, the healthcare and parental engagement support provided parents with additional support and optimism about the benefits of attending school daily. The organizational learning that emerged from the study was the positive relationship between home and school that developed as a result.

The findings suggested continued implementation of parental engagement supports to improve student attendance and achievement. While parents and educators share a common goal of desiring successful outcomes for all students, this goal can only be obtained with collaboration between the two entities. Therefore, parents and schools must work collaboratively to meet the needs of young children.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Throughout the implementation of the action plan, there were adjustments made to the original action plan which may have impacted the results of the study. The first change was a

change in district leadership during the development of the action plan. While the change did directly impact the direction of the action plan, it did impact the level of buy-in from the district leadership which made it difficult to rely on support from district officials throughout the process. However, the school leadership team stayed the course as the action plan was pertinent to helping us to meet school level and district goals.

Another deviation from the plan was professional development for the parent liaison and school counselor on instruments that would be used to collect data from program participants. Although the development of the action plan was a team effort, I wanted to make sure that all parties involved understood their role and how important the data collection process was to the study.

Another deviation from the plan the length of the program study, the original intent of the study was to collect data for one school term on all three elements. However, the telehealth services did not begin until September 2022 which impacted data collection process for this element. The newness of the healthcare services may have contributed to low participation usage noted in the study.

Lastly, the school leadership team original intent of the PASS program was to demonstrate a correlation between kindergarten student attendance and students' performance on STAR Early Literacy assessment. However, once I began to analyze the data, I realize that there were several other factors which could contribute to increased student achievement that were not included in the program elements to guide the study. However, a comparison of STAR Early Literacy scores from previous years and the most recent progress monitoring data indicated an increase of 32 points from previous years. The STAR Early Literacy progress monitoring data

projections indicated that students would exceed the kindergarten MKAS goal of 681. It was the belief of the school leadership and teachers that the intentional focus on parent involvement and kindergarten attendance made the difference in the STAR Early Literacy Data. However, the school leadership team implemented a new approach to small group instruction and data analysis to provided target instructional points to students which could contribute to the increase performance as well.

Several limitations emerged throughout the course of the study. One limitation identified was the number of participants for the study. The PASS program aimed to recruit 40% of kindergarten parents to participate in the study. However, only 26% of kindergarten parents participated throughout the course of the study. Three parents declined to participate because they believed the study was not beneficial to the needs of their families. Although the program met its intended goal of increasing parental involvement by 30%, there is still opportunities for improvement.

A second limitation was the length of program implementation. The original intent of the action plan was to implement the PASS program during the entire 2022-2023. However, the data collection process for this action plan was revised to capture data after one semester of implementation. In addition, district approval for the implementation of behavior and telehealth services was not granted until September 2022, which impacted the length of data collection for the study. While the reporting period yielded successful results, a longer implementation could have provided more data on the effectiveness of the program elements, more specifically the healthcare supports.

A third limitation was the evaluation tools used to evaluate the program's effectiveness. I collected and analyzed the data collected from parents, teachers, student attendance, and STAR Early Literacy Data to triangulate the data to show how improving student attendance could improve students' performance on STAR Early Literacy Assessment. However, there was no specific way to triangulate the STAR Early Literacy Data to student attendance taking into account the various factors such as teacher recruitment, professional learning, and teacher efficacy that could contribute to improvements in student performances.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of the data collected during the study, a clear change in attendance and parental involvement was linked by a reduction in student absenteeism, and increase in parental involvement, and the qualitative responses of the participants. To minimize the impact of absenteeism, schools must identify the root causes and develop appropriate interventions that specifically address each root cause (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016). Increases in attendance in attendance and parental involvement are linked to student success. Parents play a vital role in preventing chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Wallace, 2017). Therefore, my first recommendation would be for schools to accept parents as partners in the pursuit of providing students with a quality education experience. Improving parental involvement and making parents aware of the actual number of days their child was marked absent leads to improved attendance (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Wallace, 2017). Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that when parents have a positive attitude towards school and are not facing multiple hardships (health concerns, homelessness, financial concerns), they tend to ensure their children

attend school regularly. Students who attend school daily typically are more successful and better prepared for college and the workforce (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Romero & Lee, 2007). Many schools use multi-tiered systems, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), to find viable solutions to remedy the causes of chronic absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017). MTSS uses current data and a tiered approach to address the issues preventing students from attending school daily (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017).

With attendance and parent involvement, young children can overcome many barriers as they matriculate throughout their school careers (Gottfried, 2009). To ensure the future success and growth of the PASS parent involvement program, I suggest a continued implementation of the PASS program and to expand the program schoolwide instead of just for kindergarten students. Power Elementary School serves students from pre-kindergarten through first grade, chronically absent challenges are also presented in those grades level. The earlier the intervention with parents (Wallace, 2017), the greater the chances of addressing the attendance issues raised during early school years before they become long-standing habits.

The second recommendation is to encourage Mississippi policymakers to improve kindergarten attendance policy. Kindergarten attendance needs to be mandatory in the state of Mississippi. Although the state has made many advances in raising reading proficiency (National Center for Education, 2019), one cannot negate the importance of early literacy instruction in building proficient reading. The implementation of the Thrive at Five in Mississippi speaks to importance of regular school attendance for young children. Two days a month of loss instruction is too days to many for students, especially students marginalized students who may face greater obstacles in terms of obtaining a quality education. A mandatory kindergarten

enrollment could delay the percentages of students in low-socioeconomic areas requiring intensive reading instruction due to a lack of school readiness skills and poor reading skills. It could also reduce stressors presented to young children and their families due to poor performance on standardized assessments. More importantly, mandatory kindergarten attendance could aid the state its continued goal to improved reading proficiency for all students by third grade.

The third recommendation is establishing a parent engagement council at the school and district levels. Due to the refinement of the former P16 council, the parent engagement council has yet to be established at the school or district level. The results from the study and the vested interest of parents in the success of their children and the advancement of their community indicated the parent engagement council is an untapped resource that the school and district should readily help to establish to support the systemic growth of all students as families. Furthermore, according to the Mississippi Department of Education's Accreditation Standard 12, Parent Engagement Councils, formerly P16 councils, are mandated for failing school districts. Any school district with an accountability rating below "successful" must have a p16 council. Therefore, the formation of a P16 council should be prioritized as immediate action steps to rectify issues improve student achievement and regain local control.

## **Conclusion**

The study on empowering parents as partners in improving kindergarten attendance was a transformative experience for Power Elementary School. For the first time, PES made a concerted effort to directly support students and their families by implementing the PASS program. Relationships were formed, and misconceptions were dismantled, contributing to

sustainable improvements with consistent implementations. Organizational learning occurred as all participants worked together to improve kindergarten attendance.

While the objective of the program implementation was to increase kindergarten student attendance by involving parents and changing parent perceptions, the unintended result was that it changed my perception of parent engagement and barriers to kindergarten attendance. I entered the study believing I had a general idea of why kindergarten students are missing school at an alarming rate. However, implementing the program elements helped me realize that internal and external factors within the home and community impact student attendance. The SLT aimed to teach the parent about attendance mandates and early literacy initiatives. However, engagement with the parents helped us to recognize the importance of social and emotional support and how educators must attempt to address these needs to help students and parents feel safe about the learning environments within the school. The parents helped me realize the best way to help students is to get to know them and their specific barriers or challenges.

This process was a valuable learning experience for stakeholders. I believe this program will redefine the image of parental involvement within our school and district. Several successes were noted throughout the implementation period of the program. Therefore, I anticipate continuous improvement in student attendance and outcomes as the program expands to include other grade levels within the school.

Continuous learning cycles will be evident throughout the future implementation of the PASS program. Using the knowledge, relationships, challenges, and feedback parents and teachers provide, the PASS program will strive to create a healthy balance between school and home to meet student's academic, physical, medical, and socio-emotional needs. An evaluation



will take place after each semester to monitor the progress toward program elements. Finally, parents can serve as the core members of the parent engagement councils at the district level. The knowledge and experiences gained throughout the program will enable parents to become ambassadors for equity and student achievement by providing input and guidance on key initiatives within the school district from the parent's perspective. This strategy could contribute to the cycle of continuous improvement at PES.

Student attendance is a complicated issue that challenges student achievement, especially for students in high-poverty communities with limited resources. While there is no specific method to eliminate chronic absenteeism among young students, identifying strategies to involve parents and evolve their perceptions regarding the importance of school attendance proved to be an effective approach and an essential step toward rectifying this issue and improving students' probabilities of success.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A: PARENT SURVEY**

**Statement of Consent:**

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Marquita Robertson from the University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of increasing parental involvement in kindergarten. Any questions regarding the project and its finding can be emailed to:*

*mrobertson@masd.k12.ms.us*  
*mrobert3@goolemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or be phone at The University of Mississippi.*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu;(662)915-1459(office)*

*The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to parents and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you can find statements about your perception about kindergarten attendance. Please indicate your response by marking one choice to each question.*

Question	I disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Kindergarten plays an important role in preparing students for future success.				
Missing two (2) days of school a month in kindergarten does not affect student academically.				
Attendance in early grades affects student learning.				
Attendance is linked to literacy development.				
Excused absences do not impact student learning, only unexcused absences.				
The school should contact me when my child is absent from school.				
Regular attendance in kindergarten can prevent low performance in future grades.				
Kindergarten prepares my child to pass the 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade reading assessment.				
My child misses less school than his or her classmates.				
My child miss school due to him/her being sick.				

My child miss school due to transportation issues.				
I am knowledgeable about the school attendance mandates in Mississippi.				

## APPENDIX B: PARENTAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL

**General Research Topic:** Increasing kindergarten attendance through parental involvement.

**Specific Research Questions:** To what extent do participation in parent academy improve student attendance?

### **Statement of Consent:**

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*drdavis@olemiss.edu;(662)915-1459(office)*

*Thank you for taking the time of speak with me today about your experience as a parent. The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to parents and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly.*

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Power Elementary School articulate as preventing their child from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

## APPENDIX C: PARENTAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL

**General Research Topic:** Increasing kindergarten attendance through parental involvement.

**Specific Research Questions:** To what extent do participation in parent academy improve student attendance?

**Statement of Consent:**

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Marquita Robertson from the University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of increasing parental involvement in kindergarten. Any questions regarding the project and its finding can be emailed to:*

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*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or be phone at The University of Mississippi.*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu;(662)915-1459(office)*

*Thank you for taking the time of speak with me today about your experience as a parent. The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to parents and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly.*

1. Please tell me about yourself. What is the current grade of your child(ren)?
2. What is your philosophy on school attendance?
3. Do you believe student attendance is a concern at Power Elementary School? Why or why not?
4. Describe a typical morning as you prepare your child(ren) for school.
5. Is it difficult getting your child(ren) to attend school? Why or why not?
6. How was your attendance when you attended elementary school? Why?
7. What is your understanding of Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) attendance policy?
8. How would you describe your experiences and interactions at your child's school?
9. What resources and supports can the school offer to improve your child(ren) 's attendance?



10. What can Power Elementary do to effectively engage parents in a process to determine schoolwide and targeted attendance intervention?

## APPENDIX D: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**General Research Topic:** Increasing kindergarten attendance through parental involvement.

**Specific Research Questions:** To what extent do participation in parent academy improve student attendance?

### Statement of Consent:

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Marquita Robertson from the University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of increasing parental involvement in kindergarten. Any questions regarding the project and its finding can be emailed to:*

*mrobertson@masd.k12.ms.us*

*mrobert3@goolemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or be phone at The University of Mississippi.*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu;(662)915-1459(office)*

*Thank you for taking the time of speak with me today about your experience as a teacher. The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to parents and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly.*

### Interview Questions

1. What is your philosophy on school attendance?
2. Do you believe student attendance is a concern at Power Elementary School? Why or why not?
3. In your experience, what challenges have you encountered educating chronically absent students?
4. Is it difficult speaking with parents about school attendance? Why or why not?
5. Is there a specific time of year or month absentee rates increase?
6. What is your understanding of Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) attendance policy?
7. What is your understanding of the school district's policy regarding attendance?
8. What resources and supports can the school offer to improve your child(ren) 's attendance?

9. What can Power Elementary do to effectively engage parents in a process to determine schoolwide and targeted attendance intervention?
10. Do you believe the implementation of PASS program will improve student attendance? Why or why not?

## APPENDIX F: TEACHER SURVEY

**General Research Topic:** Increasing kindergarten attendance through parental involvement.

**Specific Research Questions:** To what extent do participation in parent academy improve student attendance?

**Statement of Consent:**

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Marquita Robertson from the University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of increasing parental involvement in kindergarten. Any questions regarding the project and its finding can be emailed to:*

[mrobertson@masd.k12.ms.us](mailto:mrobertson@masd.k12.ms.us)  
[mrobert3@goolemiss.edu](mailto:mrobert3@goolemiss.edu)

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or be phone at The University of Mississippi.*

*[drdavis@olemiss.edu](mailto:drdavis@olemiss.edu);(662)915-1459(office)*

*The researcher will observe the healthcare services provided to students. The researcher will participants and the events taking place by taking field notes. Upon completion of the observation, the researcher will use the observation checklist for data collection. Any identifiable information will be removed from data reported.*

<b>Look Fors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.Were students receiving telehealth services?			
2.Were students receiving behavioral supports in the school setting?			
3.Were collaboration between the parent's, school officials and health care providers evident?			
4.Do healthcare services adequate meet the needs of students?			
5.Are parents involved in the process and notified of treatments students receive in the school setting?			

## APPENDIX G: TEACHER SURVEY

### Statement of Consent:

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Marquita Robertson from the University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of increasing parental involvement in kindergarten. Any questions regarding the project and its finding can be emailed to:*

*mrobertson@masd.k12.ms.us*

*mrobert3@goolemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or be phone at The University of Mississippi.*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu;(662)915-1459(office)*

*The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to parents and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you can find statements about your perception about kindergarten attendance. Please indicate your response by marking one choice to each question.*

Question	I disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Parents understand the importance of kindergarten in preparing students for short-term and long-term successes.				
Parents believe that missing two (2) days of school a month in kindergarten does not affect student academically.				
Parents understand that attendance in early grades affects student learning.				
Parents understand that absences equate to loss of instructional learning.				

Parents understand the difference between excused absences and unexcused absences.				
Parents are receptive to school officials contacting them when their child is absent from school.				
Parents believe their children misses fewer days from school than his or her classmates.				
Kindergarten prepares my child to pass the 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade reading assessment.				
I am knowledgeable about the school attendance mandates in Mississippi.				
Low attendance contributes to low accountability ratings.				
Students who are chronically absent from school have experience more difficulties than their peers who attend school daily.				
Implementation of the PASS program could improvement student attendance.				

## VITA

# MARQUITA ROBERTSON

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marqrobertson03@gmail.com

289 Sycamore Street  
Tchula, MS 39169

## EDUCATION

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- |              |  |          |
|--------------|--|----------|
| <b>Ed. D</b> | University of Mississippi, Educational Leadership<br>Dissertation: "Galvanizing Parental Involvement in Early Childhood to Promote Student Attendance"<br>Committee: Dr. Douglas Davis, Dr. Mark Deschaine, Dr. Kenneth Pulley, and Dr. Sara Platt | May 2023 |
| <b>Ed. S</b> | University of Mississippi, Educational Leadership  | May 2016 |
| <b>MS</b>    | Mississippi Valley State University, Criminal Justice<br>Graduated Summa Cum Laude   | May 2009 |
| <b>BS</b>    | Mississippi Valley State University, Social Work<br>Graduated Magna Cum Laude  | May 2007 |
| <b>AA</b>    | Holmes Community College, Elementary Education<br>Graduated Summa Cum Laude  | May 2003 |

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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|--|---------------------|
| <b>Webster Elementary School, Yazoo City, MS</b><br><b>Principal</b> | May 2019 to Present |
|--|---------------------|
- Lead school effort to provide high-quality educational experiences for students.
  - Analyze student achievement data, surveys, teacher input, and parental feedback to make informed decision regarding student achievement.

- Develop school budgets in conjunction with stakeholders to allocate funding for school initiatives.
- Provide updates to stakeholders regarding school's performance and progress toward school goals.
- Collaborate with Federal Programs to ensure accuracy of budgets and expenditures.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop schoolwide goals and instructional programming.
- Attendance Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) and Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings to facilitate problem-solving strategies as related to students with disabilities.
- Collaborate on internal and external support to improve teaching practices and student outcomes.
- Conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to improve the quality of instruction.
- Recruit and develop staff to improve teaching practices and student outcomes.
- Dispense guidance and direction for teacher improvement.

**Humphreys County School District, Belzoni, MS**  
**Special Services Director**

May 2018 to June 2019

- Supervised and facilitated operation of Special Education programming.
- Oversaw delegation of Special Education funding
- Developed and/or revise Special Education Project Application to ensure adequate funding for program
- Collaborate with agencies throughout the district identify student with disabilities
- Participate in Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) and Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings to identify students for students.
- Assisted with Facilitation of MAAP-A Assessments
- Served as a Member of Humphreys County School District's Interview Committee
- Served as a Member of Humphreys County School District Disciplinary Committee
- Facilitated Professional Development Meeting for Special Education Teachers
- Oversaw efforts to rectify citations and/or formal state complaints from Mississippi Department of Education
- Conducted Professional Development Training for Special Education Teachers and other support staff.
- Analyzed data to identify strengths and opportunities with special education programming.
- Participated in community meetings to raise Special Education Awareness

**Holmes County School District, Lexington, MS**  
**Child Find Coordinator**

May 2016 to June 2018

- Conducted Child Find Campaigns to identify students with disabilities.



- Monitored Special Education records and timelines to ensure compliance with state/federal law.
- Assisted Director of Special Education with implementation of special education programs
- Facilitated efforts to rectify citations from Special Education audit.
- Collaborated with agencies throughout the district to locate students in need of special education support.
- Developed and attended Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.
- Analyzed data pertaining to students with disabilities.
- Conducted Special Education Trainings for Teachers

**Holmes County School District, Lexington, MS**

August 2016 to May 2017

**Administrative Intern**

- Facilitated Professional Learning Community (PLCs)
- Conducted Teacher observations and evaluations with actionable feedback.
- Participated in Data Analysis Team
- Supervised school dismissal process and school events
- Assisted in the development of 2016-2017 District Strategic Plan
- Shadowed Assistant Principal and Special Education Director to perform administrative duties.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Boys and Girls Club, Tchula, MS**

July 2014 to July 2017

**Instructor**

- Taught reading, math and social skills to students during afterschool and summer programs.
- Participated in staff development opportunities.
- Organized field trips for students.
- Provided remediation and accommodations for struggling learners.

**Delta Workforce Investment Area, Winona, MS**

July 2010 to May 2015

**Senior Select Instructor**

- Taught work readiness curriculum to high school seniors.
- Organize and conducted community services projects for youths.
- Completed monthly contacts on student progress with job assignments.

**Holmes County School District, Lexington, MS**

September 2008 to June 2016

**Special Education Teacher/Local Survey Chairperson**

- Co-taught in inclusive classrooms.
- Provided remediation for students based on Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Facilitated the implementation of accommodations and modification within general education settings.
- Taught academic and functional skills to students with disabilities.

- Administered statewide assessment to student with disabilities.
- Trained staff on Special Education policies and mandates
- Collaborated with local agencies to organize job-shadowing opportunities for student with disabilities.
- Supervised building level special education department
- Develop and facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP)

**Region VI Mental Health Services, Lexington, MS**

April 2007 to September 2008

**Children Case manager**

- Develop service plans for children and their families.
- Conducted home visits and school visits to monitor student's progress towards services.
- Recorded progress notes to document progress made toward goals.
- Referred families to external agencies for assistance with medical, financial, and housing needs.
- Participated in departmental meetings and in-service opportunities.

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#### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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- Principals Advisory Committee, 2022-present
- Webster Elementary School Leadership Team, 2019-present
- MASD Recruitment Committee. 2019-present
- Humphreys County School District Recruitment committee, 2018-2019
- Holmes County Special Education Advisory Committee, 2008-2018