

The Relationships Among Teacher Absenteeism and TVAAS Growth and Observation Scores,  
Student Achievement, and Student Absenteeism in a Rural School District in the First Region of

Tennessee

By

Alexa Lynn Renfro Transki

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Education Department

School of Sciences and Education

Milligan College, Tennessee

May 2020

Doctoral Committee:

Major Professor

Dr. Mark Dula

Dr. Patrick Kariuki

Dr. Tara Cosco

Copyright Page

@ 2020

Alexa Lynn Renfro Transki

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

Teacher chronic absenteeism is growing among school districts across the United States, and the impact thereof can negatively affect all stakeholders. The purpose of this quantitative archival study was to examine whether or not significant correlations existed between teacher absenteeism and 1) student achievement, 2) student absenteeism, 3) teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) teacher evaluation scores. The study sought to identify which variable, teacher absenteeism or student absenteeism, better predicted student achievement and teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, respectively. The study was conducted by obtaining archival data from the participating rural school district and running statistical correlational analyses to determine significant relationships. The results indicated that no significant correlations with teacher absenteeism existed for: student achievement in math ( $r=.369, p=.076$ ), student achievement in English/language arts ( $r=-.150, p=.484$ ), student absenteeism ( $r=-.017, p=.883$ ), TVAAS individual growth scores ( $r=-.068, p=.674$ ), or teacher evaluation scores ( $r=.000, p=.999$ ); however, significant correlations were present between both student absenteeism and student achievement ( $Beta=-.575, p=.001$ ) and student absenteeism and teacher TVAAS growth scores ( $Beta= -.318, p=.045$ ), demonstrating that student attendance has a more prominent effect on both student and teacher performance outcomes. Therefore, the key to student success is ensuring the consistent attendance of students. School districts must prioritize the establishment and implementation of formidable strategic plans that aim to combat student chronic absenteeism in order to see more positive results for student outcomes and school district accountability results.

*Key Words: Chronic Absenteeism, Public School System, Student Achievement, Teacher Evaluation, TEAM Growth Model, TVAAS, TVAAS Growth Score, TNReady.*

COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

Milligan College Dissertation Defense Approval Form

Candidate Name: Alexa Transki

Date of Defense: 4/30/20

Dissertation Title: The Relationships Among Teacher Absenteeism and TVAAS Growth and Observation Scores, Student Achievement, and Student Absenteeism in a Rural School District in the First Region of Tennessee.

Final Approval of Dissertation Defense

A signature below indicates committee members agree with the following:

- 1) Agreement the dissertation meets with the committee's approval.
- 2) Agreement the oral defense of the dissertation was successful.

<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>5/5/20</u>
Dissertation Chair Signature	Date
<u>Patrice N. Karunkich</u>	<u>4/30/20</u>
Dissertation Committee Member Signature	Date
<u>Dr. Cox</u>	<u>5/5/20</u>
Dissertation Committee Member Signature	Date

Other Required Signatures

<u>Patrice N. Karunkich</u>	<u>4/30/20</u>
Ed.D. Research Director Signature	Date
<u>Cynthia H. [Signature]</u>	<u>05/05/2020</u>
Area Chair of Education Signature	Date

## DEDICATION

*“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

*Isaiah 40:31*

To begin with, I would like to dedicate this work to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His unending mercy, love, and guidance, I would never have made it this far in my educational journey. To Him, I give all of the praise and glory for the blessings He has allowed in my life.

To my loving husband, Zach; thank you for your unrelenting support and encouragement throughout this process. Thank you for making me laugh and pushing me forward even when I felt discouraged. Thank you for being by my side and cheering me on throughout this endeavor.

To my parents and grandmother, thank you for your prayers, support, and love. Your words of encouragement and positivity have always helped push me to achieve my educational and career goals. Thank you for being an example of what hard work looks like and for being my biggest fans.

To Ashley, Josh, and Samuel, thank you for always supporting and encouraging me. I have felt your prayers and love all throughout this journey.

To my in-laws, your prayers and love have meant so much to me. Thank you for your support throughout this process, for your check-ins just to see how things were going, and for welcoming me so warmly into your family.

Lastly, I dedicate this work in memory of my baby nephew, Malachi Bernie Miller. You will always be my inspiration, and in the short five months and twenty days you were on this earth, you opened my eyes to more than most have in my life. Thank you for showing me the importance of being a fighter. I will always carry you in my heart.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to acknowledge for helping me as I traveled throughout this journey. First, I would like to thank God and all of my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Dula for his guidance and support throughout this process. Next, I would like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Patrick Kariuki and Dr. Tara Cosco. I could not have asked for a better chair and committee to advise and guide me through the completion of the Doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, I want to thank the entire Milligan Education Department for their support and intentionality in seeing to it that I was successful in my educational journey as a former Master's student and now as a Doctoral graduate. I am thankful for the relationships I made with each and every one of my professors; your guidance is something I do not take for granted. Subsequently, I also want to extend a special thank you to Dr. Corey Gardenhour for his support and advice. Dr. Gardenhour, you have been a wonderful leader and mentor, and I appreciate your willingness to listen and encourage me to find joy and purpose in my professional endeavors.

In addition, I want to extend my deepest appreciation to Mr. John English, Mrs. Sherry Ray, Mrs. Jenifer Lingerfelt, Mrs. Susan McInturff, Mr. Bruce Tolley, Mr. Jordan Simmons, Mr. Ben Evely, Mr. Michael Riddell, and Mrs. Debbie Hill. Thank you for your willingness to help me and the support you provided throughout this process. I could not have done it without each of you!

I would also like to thank my cohort members. I am sincerely appreciative of the support and encouragement that each of you extended to me. It has been a great blessing learning and working alongside of you. Each of you are outstanding educators, and your students are blessed to have you as their role models.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures.....	x
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
Introduction.....	1
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions and Null Hypotheses .....	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Limitations of the Study.....	11
Organization of the Study .....	11
CHAPTER 2 .....	12
Review of Literature .....	12
Historical Overview .....	12
Factors for Chronic Student Absenteeism .....	15
Educating Parents.....	17
Reducing Student Chronic Absenteeism through Parent Involvement.....	19
Chronic Absenteeism Among Special Student Populations .....	23

Case Study Examples.....	25
Chronic Absenteeism Among Teachers.....	28
Factors for Chronic Teacher Absenteeism.....	29
Effects of Chronic Teacher Absenteeism .....	31
Student Impacts.....	32
Financial Impacts .....	33
Combatting Chronic Teacher Absenteeism .....	34
Conclusion .....	37
CHAPTER 3 .....	38
Research Questions and Null Hypotheses .....	38
Population and Sample .....	40
Instrumentation .....	41
Data Collection .....	42
Data Analysis .....	43
Summary .....	44
CHAPTER 4 .....	45
Data Analysis and Findings .....	45
Demographic Data .....	45
Findings.....	46
Research Question 1 .....	46
Research Question 2 .....	47
Research Question 3 .....	48
Research Question 4 .....	49



Research Question 5 .....	50
Research Question 6 .....	51
Research Question 7 .....	52
Summary .....	53
CHAPTER 5 .....	54
Summary of Findings, Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	54
Summary of Findings.....	55
Discussion of Findings.....	56
Research Question 1 .....	57
Research Question 2 .....	58
Research Question 3 .....	58
Research Question 4 .....	59
Research Question 5 .....	60
Research Question 6 .....	60
Research Question 7 .....	61
Limitations of the Study.....	62
Conclusions.....	62
Recommendations.....	65
Recommendations for Practice .....	65
Recommendations for Further Study.....	66
References.....	68
APPENDICES .....	76
APPENDIX A.....	76

APPENDIX B .....	77
APPENDIX C .....	78

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student Math Achievement Scores.....	47
Table 2 Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student English/language arts Achievement Scores.....	48
Table 3 Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student Absences .....	49
Table 4 Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Teacher TVAAS Growth Scores.....	50
Table 5 Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Teacher Observation Scores.....	51
Table 6 Coefficients of Number of Each Predictor Variable on Student Achievement Scores ...	52
Table 7 Coefficients of Number of Each Predictor Variable on Teacher TVAAS Individual Growth Scores.....	53

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Attendance Incentive Policies .....	36
--	----

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism is a topic of crucial interest among public schools today. With the growing pressures of state mandated testing and the demand for high student achievement and growth scores, the need for both students and teachers to be present in school on a regular basis is growing imperative. More specifically, *chronic* absenteeism has gained momentum as a central focus for public education as particular students miss more days of school than others, and robust attendance initiatives are emerging from district to district. According to Gottfried (2019), chronic absenteeism is articulated as "...an extreme form of missing school which often is defined as missing at least 18 days or more of a given academic year" (p. 3). In many instances, as with the state of Tennessee, chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of a school year, no matter the reason for the absence (TDOE, 2019). According to some studies, the pattern of chronic absenteeism fluctuates, beginning high in kindergarten, decreasing around fourth and fifth grade, and then steadily increasing through middle school and high school, with the peak of chronic absenteeism being in twelfth grade (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Accordingly, "excessive absences from school represent lost instructional time for a student", and this includes the absence of teachers from the classroom as well (Jacob & Lovett, 2017, p. 1). As a result, the relationship between attendance rates (per student and teacher) and student academic achievement is left compromised if both students and teachers are not present for classroom instruction; if students miss school, they miss critical instruction from teachers, thereby hindering their academic performance (Rothman, 2001). If teachers miss school, they are not able to provide the necessary instruction for their students as deemed obligatory by their job duties. The Tennessee Department of Education (2019) corroborated, "Excessive absences from

school represent lost instructional time for a student” (para. 1). Gottfried (2019) noted that students with higher rates of absences had lower test scores in both reading and math, specifically. Other potential outcomes included increased grade retention and dropout rates, compromised social-emotional development, increased student infractions, and a higher risk for physical health issues in adulthood (Patnode et al., 2018).

Chronic absenteeism is often seen at its peak in larger cities, although rural areas also struggle with the issue; urban elementary schools have the highest percentages relating to chronic absenteeism, hence more research exists on the topic in urban settings (Gottfried, 2019). As a result, one must wonder why chronic absenteeism is emerging as a growing struggle in public education. Some studies highlighted that absence rates were most strongly affected by students’ cultural background and their socio-economic status (Patnode et al., 2018; Rothman, 2001; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Students of minority backgrounds and low socio-economic status often have higher rates of absenteeism than students who do not share these same characteristics. However, student background only explained up to 39% of the variance in Rothman’s study (2001). He discussed that this finding lends to the fact that there are other factors that play a more significant role in low attendance rates. However, regardless of the reasoning behind absences, there are several interventions that must be put in place so to combat chronic absenteeism among students in public schools, one of which is simply the engagement of parents and families and ensuring that they are more involved in their child’s education.

By the same token, chronic absenteeism among teachers is on the rise, and the effects of their nonattendance in the classroom can have tremendous implications in a variety of areas on both a local and global scale. Indeed, student achievement, student growth, student-teacher relationships, teacher job performance, and overall job morale, among others, are only a few of

the aspects that suffer. Lee et al. (2015) stated, “Teacher absenteeism can have negative effects on an entire school system, from lowering student achievement and attendance to damaging school reputations to broader economic losses” (p. 1). Hence, the effects of teacher absenteeism are not simply limited to the classroom but can impact the entire school, local community, and national spectrum, as a whole. According to Miller et al., (2008), on average, teachers are absent 5-6% of the school year. While this number may seem low, it is three times the rate of managerial employees, and, as a result, a high number of teacher absences plays a role in reducing student math achievement, among other academic areas. At the same time, Miller (2012) reported that 36% of teachers were absent more than 10 days during the 2009-2010 school year nationwide, an increase in rate since the study by Miller et al. in 2008. Moreover, Miller (2012) contended that African American and Latino students are exposed to teacher absence at a disproportionately higher level, and he stated that teacher absence is a leading factor of concern towards closing student achievement gaps. While the underlying factors of teacher absenteeism vary across districts, regions, states, and even countries, several explanations remain consistent as to why teachers are increasingly absent from their classrooms: pay structure, management, working conditions, community conditions, and social and cultural responsibilities (Lee et al., 2015). In addition, the United States estimated \$4 billion was used for compensating for teacher absenteeism (Miller, 2012). Similarly, other countries experienced the same financial effects, as Ecuador experienced a \$16 million loss and India incurred a \$2 billion loss due to teacher absenteeism (Lee et al., 2015). On a regular basis, 10-24% of “recurring primary education expenditures worldwide are lost to teacher absenteeism” (Lee et al., 2015, p. 1).

Since the outcome of teacher absenteeism then appears to be more impactful than that of student absenteeism, the question then lends itself to the focus of chronic absenteeism among

teachers. How can we combat the absenteeism of both critical stakeholders, students and teachers, in order to ensure the overall success of the education system and the pupils we seek to grow? What are the overall effects of the lack of teacher presence in the classroom? As Lee et al. (2015) contended, “The damaging effects of teacher absenteeism on students, schools, and, by extension, communities suggest a need to understand the causes of low teacher attendance and to identify systemic and policy-oriented solutions that mitigate absenteeism” (p. 1). Indeed, teachers are role models for their students and community in numerous ways as they are influential pillars in the professional world, and if they are not present in school, this sets a poor precedence for students and the expectations thereof. This is particularly the case in rural school districts which heavily rely upon the reputation of their teachers and the effects they have upon their students. As a result, the purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between teacher absenteeism and 1) student achievement (end of year assessment scores in both math and English/language arts), 2) student absenteeism, 3) teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) educator in-class evaluation scores in a rural school district in the First Region of Tennessee.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is grounded in the Theory of Performance (ToP), which is used to explain performance and ways to improve it. According to Elger (n.d.), “To perform is to produce valued results”, and when examining teacher absenteeism and its effects on teacher performance and, in turn, student performance, the end goal is to produce “valued results” (p. 11). If a teacher is not present often in the classroom, their ability to perform and create those valued results is lessened. This study also reflects other theories such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory of Motivation (1959), and Alderfer’s ERG Theory (1969). All three theories



seek to understand the employee and the reasoning behind their absenteeism on the job. Specifically, each of the three theories highlight the role of motivation and that, if lacking, employees may lose their desire for the job. In terms of Maslow's Theory, a "parallel to employee career development" is present, and employees may not reach the self-actualization level if their other needs are not met, such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, safety, and other social needs (UKEssays, 2018).

In addition, Steers and Rhodes' 1978 model of employee attendance serves as a theoretical framework for this study. According to Jacobs & Kritsonis (2007), the Steers and Rhodes model is "The most cited absenteeism model for a multitude of studies on teacher absenteeism" (p. 3). The Steers and Rhodes model highlighted a variety of psychological and personal qualities of educators. Psychological factors included job satisfaction, the ability to be present at work, and motivation to be absent. Personal components involved demographic variables and family-related dynamics, among others (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). According to the model, educator attendance is primarily influenced by organizational practices, school culture, and the attitudes, values, and goals held by employees; however, the leading determinant for teacher attendance was job satisfaction (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007).

The aforementioned theories serve as frameworks for understanding the motivation behind teacher absenteeism; they lay the foundation for conceptualizing the influence teacher absenteeism has on other elements in the world of education, including performance measures and outcomes, student achievement, and student attendance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teachers are recognized as influential leaders within their respective schools and, on a broader scale, in their communities. They are deemed to possess sound ethical and moral

compasses, thereby guiding their judgement and action steps. While teachers undergo numerous experiences, whether personal or professional, that require their absence from the classroom, it is their professional obligation to be in attendance to their job as often as possible. Their influence extends well beyond the academic area for many of the students they serve as they also minister as mentors, role models, and support systems for children who may lack such fulfillments in their personal lives. When teachers are not present in the classroom, their absence is felt on many different levels that affect not only students, but also their own performance (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2019; Miller et al., 2008; Rothman, 2001). The purpose of this correlational quantitative study was to determine whether or not there was a relationship between teacher absenteeism and other constructs in the classroom which directly impact teachers and students, and, if there is a relationship, the extent thereof. Specifically, the quantitative study sought to determine the relationship between teacher absenteeism and teacher and student performance measures in a rural school district in the First Region of Tennessee. This study sought to determine the nature of the relationship, negative or positive, and any potential systemic solutions to ameliorate poor teacher attendance habits.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Teachers have an influential role in their position as an educator. Their presence in the classroom shapes an array of educational outcomes, perhaps more than they realize. As a result, the purpose of this study was to identify if teachers' absence from the classroom has an impact upon other factors related to student and teacher performance. The function of this quantitative archival study was to identify the relationship among teacher absenteeism and 1) student achievement (TNReady math and English/language arts scores), 2) student absenteeism, 3)

teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) educator in-class evaluation scores in a rural school district in the First Region of Tennessee.

### **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

Seven research questions were used to guide this study.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores?

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores?

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent?

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores?

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores.

Research Question 6: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores?

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores.

Research Question 7: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score.

### **Significance of the Study**

School attendance is critical for teacher and student success. If students are chronically absent from school, their academic performance suffers (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2019; Miller et al., 2008; Rothman, 2001). If teachers are chronically absent from the workplace, negative impacts on student achievement, teacher-student relationships, student attendance, and teacher job performance occur (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Miller, 2012; Patnode et al., 2018). As chronic absenteeism among both teachers and students is increasing among public school districts, specific measures must be put in place in order to combat the ever-growing issue.

The significance of the study will offer insight into possible educator attendance trends within the participating rural school district. The study will have a strong potential benefit to increase awareness of teacher absenteeism and its effects upon student absenteeism and student achievement scores, as well as its impact on teacher TVAAS growth and observation scores.

With the awareness in mind, teachers in rural school districts may be reflective of their absences and how they impact their own performance and the academic performance and attendance of their students. Supervisors may also choose to be stricter in terms of when and how often teachers can take time off or attend professional development during school hours if there is evidence that high teacher absenteeism negatively impacts teacher scores and student attendance and achievement scores.

The findings of this research study will be shared with the participating school district, specifically with district supervisors and the Director of Schools. The findings will be used to bring about awareness of teacher absenteeism and how it impacts both teacher and student performance at school. The findings will help administrative supervisors determine if a change in teacher absence policy must occur. It will also help to isolate a possible factor in low performance and promote measures to reduce teacher absenteeism in order to improve teacher and student achievement.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terms specific to this study are defined in order to supplement understanding and conceptualization. All definitions not accompanied by a citation were established by the researcher.

Chronic Absenteeism – “Missing 10 percent or more of the days the student is enrolled-for any reason, including excused absences and out-of-school suspensions” (TDOE, 2019, para. 1).

Public School System – “Public school systems are schools supported by public funds. Public schools teach children essential skills and knowledge, turn out productive citizens, teach children to respect constitutional order, and instruct children in the framework of rights and obligations that secure our democracy and protect our liberty” (Renfro, 2019, p. 15).

Student Achievement – Student achievement is based on the score students receive on their end of year test.

Teacher Evaluation – “The formal process a school uses to review and rate teachers’ performance and effectiveness in the classroom. Ideally, the findings from these evaluations are used to provide feedback to teachers and guide their professional development” (Sawchuk, 2015, para. 1).

Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) Growth Model – “...a comprehensive, student outcomes-based, statewide educator evaluation system: the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM)” (TDOE, 2020a, para. 2).

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) – “A system that measures student growth year after year, regardless of whether the student is proficient on the state assessment” (TVAAS, 2019).

Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Growth Score – “The Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures the impact schools and teachers have on their students’ academic progress...TVAAS allows educators to consider students’ achievement (their score on the end of year assessment), as well as their growth (the progress students make year to year)” (TDOE, 2020c, para. 1).

TNReady – “TNReady is a part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) and is designed to assess true student understanding, not just basic memorization and test taking skills” (TDOE, 2020b, para. 1). TNReady is the end of year assessment for students in grades K-8 in the state of Tennessee.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited by the appropriate conceptual framework in determining the relationship among teacher absenteeism and the educational constructs impacted. Because this is an archival study, the research is limited to the fact that data were previously collected and may not represent a complete collection of data. The results of the study may not be generalizable to broader populations due to the small sample size of a single school district. In addition, the study may not be generalizable to urban populations as the study was based on outcomes according to teacher absenteeism in a rural setting.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 of the study imparts the introduction, conceptual framework, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. This chapter also provides the research questions, accompanied by null hypotheses, the significance of the study, definitions of terms, and the limitations of the study, and a general overview. Chapter 2 offers a review of the existing literature as it relates to the topic of chronic absenteeism among teachers and students. Chapter 3 details the methodology of the study, including the research methods used to conduct the archival study and the procedures used to conduct quantitative analyses. Chapter 4 presents the results and findings of the statistical outcomes. Chapter 5 offers a detailed review of the research findings, conclusions, and further recommendations for future practice and research on teacher chronic absenteeism and its implications.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The examination of literature provides an in-depth review of chronic teacher and student absenteeism through the lens of the historical origins and how it relates to contemporary educational issues today. The review of literature provides information regarding factors relating to chronic absenteeism and the array of effects experienced by all stakeholders. Chronic absenteeism impacts the overall school community on multiple levels, but perhaps the greatest impression of chronic absenteeism is left on the student. The effects of chronic absenteeism among teachers and students are felt far beyond the classroom. A review of literature offers insight into the impacts of chronic absenteeism and how school leaders can effectively combat the issue for teachers and students, simultaneously.

#### **Historical Overview**

The concept of chronic absenteeism is not new; it is an issue that American public schools have combatted for decades. Chronic absenteeism was an area of concern as early as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Horace Mann, an American education reformer known for his dedication to public education, was the first, among others, to introduce the concept of requiring parents, by law, to enroll their child in school (Goldstein, 2015). Tying education to law required that all school-aged children attend school on a regular basis. According to Goldstein (2015), the goal of such reform was to create “a more educated and moral electorate” (p. 4). As a result, Massachusetts was the first state to adopt compulsory education accordingly determined by the student’s age as formal legislation in 1852 (Goldstein, 2015). This was meant to remedy the “factory law”, passed in 1842, which sought to prevent students from leaving school to go to work in the factories (Jones, 1967). As such, other states moved towards implementing some



form of law legislating school attendance as a mandatory expectation, and by 1918, every state in the country had fulfilled this adoption (Goldstein, 2015). However, such laws did not always prove effective; for example, “a quarter of the juveniles jailed at the Chicago House of Correction in 1898 were for truancy” (Jacob & Lovett, 2017, p. 1). The history of compulsory attendance continued to evolve from this point, but it was not until the era after the Civil War that attendance debates took further shape and major educational decisions were achieved (Jones, 1967).

For the first time in history, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 mandated that all schools receiving federal funding report their data to the federal government. Data includes annual test scores (reading and math), attendance rates, and graduation rates. This increased the pressure felt by schools to perform according to federal standards, and while schools were not punished for their poor performance levels, a certain stigma was assigned to schools that performed less than expected compared to others. According to Goldstein (2015), the NCLB Act “created a social and political link between absence and negative outcomes for students. And with its explicit threat to declare low-performing schools as ‘failing,’ the law infected state-level lawmakers, prosecutors, and judges with a zeal to eradicate the perceived causes of low test scores—with truancy seen as among the worst” (p. 5). Accordingly, school districts redefined how they measured attendance and defined truancy and chronic absenteeism. Many states, including Georgia and Tennessee, consider students to be eligible for a truancy referral after five unexcused absences.

While several pieces of legislation emerged over the decades to ensure students are regularly present and accounted for at school, the compulsory attendance law reigns as the chief

enforcer of student attendance throughout the United States. According to FindLaw (2020a), compulsory attendance laws are defined as laws that:

“...require children to attend a public or state-accredited private school for a certain period of time. There are certain exceptions, most notably homeschooling, but virtually all states have mandates for when children must begin school and how old they must be before dropping out. Typically, children must start school by the age of six and remain enrolled until they are at least 16. These laws were put in place not only to improve literacy rates but also to discourage the widespread child labor practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries” (p. 1).

Indeed, while certain exemptions to the compulsory education laws are plausible, the overall consequences for violating such laws revolve around truancy referrals to the courts. School districts throughout the ages turned to the criminalization of truancy as a way to combat chronic absences in the classroom (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). In the past, students themselves were often incarcerated for their truant behavior, as seen with the aforementioned 1898 example of jailed juveniles in Chicago; however, over time, consequences for truant behavior evolved to target parents, holding them responsible for their underage children. In contemporary legislation, parents who do not comply with state compulsory education laws may potentially face fines, misdemeanor charges, and, for serious violations, sentences of up to 30 days in jail (FindLaw, 2020b). But what if parents are unable to control their child’s actions and attendance in school? Specifically, older students in high school, and often in middle school, who are not compliant with school officials or even their parents, serve time in juvenile detention centers, are placed on juvenile probation, or can even be removed from the home and placed in foster homes or group homes (Goldstein, 2015). While incarceration of students and parents is rare, most cases—

estimated at 150,000 per year— are dealt with in terms of fines, probation, and even removal of the child from the home (Goldstein, 2015). In the state of Tennessee, one law “curbed state welfare payments to parents if their children were truant, a policy that was also part of President Bill Clinton’s 1996 federal welfare reforms” (Goldstein, 2015, p. 6). Many school districts across the country, however, acknowledge that truancy court referrals do not always prove to be successful. Even after parents face the legal consequences of their child’s truancy, the child continues to be absent from school, thus resulting in increased consequences for the parents. Goldstein (2015) corroborated, “Such interventions have not been proven to increase school attendance or decrease long-term criminal behavior. In fact, the criminalization of truancy often pushes students further away from school, and their families deeper into poverty” (p. 4). Therefore, the long-term question of the effectiveness of court referrals and legal punishment as a result of truancy still remains.

It is universally acknowledged that absence from school is a critical problem, and it is exceedingly interconnected to low academic performance, excessive high school drop-out rates, and potential criminal behavior in adulthood (Goldstein, 2015). Hence, if handling truancy as a criminal offense is questionable in its ability to adequately address the underlying issues of student absences, then other measures must be pursued, and further studies must be conducted in order to better understand the reasons behind excessive student absences.

### **Factors for Chronic Student Absenteeism**

Rothman (2001) examined the factors behind student absenteeism, specifically student background and student experiences at school. A multilevel analysis was used to identify significant differences. According to the study, absence rates were most strongly affected by students’ cultural background and their socio-economic status. More specifically, other studies

suggested that students who identify as Native-American or Pacific Islander have the highest rates of school absences, and, in comparison to Caucasian students, African-American students are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism; Asian populations are among the least likely to be chronically absent from the classroom (Jacob & Lovett, 2017; OCR, 2020). In terms of socio-economic status, a national survey of kindergarten students revealed that 21% of poor students were chronically absent when compared to only 8% of peers associated with a higher socio-economic status (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Rothman (2001) discussed that this finding lends to the fact that other factors are more significant predictors of low attendance rates, but these factors were not addressed in his study. According to other research, factors for low attendance and truancy-related issues correspond to poor teacher classroom management, lack of teacher support, lack of parent support, and negative peer-relationships among students, including experiences of bullying (Gase et al., 2016; Havik & Ertesvåg, 2015). Through personal interviews with students at risk for truancy, Gase et al. (2016) discovered that school curriculum and instructional style played a substantial role in student attendance; students also acknowledged that relationships with teachers and counselors and the overall school climate were significant predictors of low attendance habits. In addition, the school's response to truancy influenced their decisions on whether or not they were more likely to skip school (Gase et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Durborow (2017) conducted a mixed methods study on student chronic absenteeism and the factors that contribute to it in rural schools. She described chronic student absenteeism and its effects on student achievement and success in school. The study sought to answer the following research questions: "(1) What explicit or implicit messages are parents and the school sending about school attendance? (2) What is the perceived effectiveness of the

current attendance policy? (3) What is the perceived value held by teachers, administrators, and parents of student attendance in school?” (p. 4). Durborow identified quantitative data concerning whether or not the participating school had an attendance problem. Next, qualitative methods were employed to answer the three aforementioned research questions. Through her study, she found that attendance issues were related to the messages sent and received by families and school staff, the nature of the attendance policy and the lack of enforcement thereof, and the attitudes and values of attendance held by parents, school staff, and students. Durborow found that if attendance policies are not consistently enforced and school staff holds a negative attitude about attendance, then the same attitude will reflect in both parents and students. Therefore, it is an arguable point that positive attitudes of the professional must be put in place before expecting parents and students to hold the same perspective (Durborow, 2017). However, once such attitudes are established, further steps towards involving and educating parents are considered by many researchers to be a positive reinforcer of consistent attendance habits at school, increased academic achievement, and overall student motivation (Boonk et al., 2018; Rogers & Feller, 2018; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

### **Educating Parents**

Wang & Sheikh-Khalil (2014) focused their study on the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement and mental health of students in high school. The authors discussed how the term parent involvement can hold different meanings for different people, but *they* defined parent involvement as a multi-dimensional concept consisting of three major constructs: school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and academic socialization. For each construct, they surveyed parents and students on a 5-point scale. They also identified

students' GPAs in all four core academic courses (math, English, social studies, and science). Overall, the findings of the study revealed that academic socialization was the only construct found to have both a positive impact on academic achievement and a negative relationship with depression. Home-based involvement only correlated to academic achievement, and school-based involvement only affected depression. According to the study, academic socialization was the construct that stood out among the other two; this construct also involved the success of student attendance. The authors discussed that academic socialization is a key strategy for parents in terms of promoting student success (academic achievement, attendance, and social-emotional welfare). The study was impactful because it highlighted that if schools are more intentional about educating parents on their child's education and plans concerning their future goals, students will have greater success in achievement, attendance, and social-emotional health.

Furthermore, Rogers & Feller (2018) studied the outcome of repeated personalized information treatments on parents of K-12 students throughout the academic year and how they affected student attendance rates. The personalized information treatments demonstrated an increase in student attendance and reduced chronic absenteeism by more than 10%. This was a direct result of correcting parents' misbeliefs about their child's total number of absences. Often, parents do not realize just how many days their child has missed, especially if they have sporadic absences throughout the school year. Reduction of absences was seen across all grade levels, and even reduced the number of absences of students in controlled households who cohabited with students in the treatment group. Hence, influence plays a significant role in how often students attend school. The study also highlighted the role of educational interventionists and how they can further the positive results yielded in the study by focusing more intensive interventions on

student absenteeism.

### **Reducing Student Chronic Absenteeism through Parent Involvement**

Allensworth & Evans (2016) addressed the chronic absenteeism issue in Chicago schools. According to the article, among all grade levels in Chicago urban school districts, 10-15% of all elementary and middle grade students are deemed chronically absent; in addition, almost half of high school students struggle with chronic absenteeism. Allensworth & Evans (2016) highlighted the connection between chronic absenteeism and student achievement levels. When students are chronically absent from school, their academic achievement declines. In regard to high school, chronic absenteeism decreases the likelihood of graduating from high school (Ross, 2016). According to Allensworth & Evans (2016), “Research revealed that each week of absence per semester in 9<sup>th</sup> grade is associated with a more than 20% decline in the probability of graduating from high school” (p. 17). The authors highlighted strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism, including the establishment of effective parent and community involvement programs as often students struggle with home issues that affect their school performance. The bottom line, as identified by Allensworth & Evans (2016), is that “Tackling absenteeism is intricately linked to a school’s family and community engagement strategy” (p. 20). If school districts recognize that the key to improving attendance rates is engaging in community resources as a way to promote student success and fostering strong parent/family relationships, then the problem of chronic absenteeism can be significantly improved (Allensworth & Evans, 2016).

Haines et al. (2015) furthered this concept as they highlighted the importance of school and community partnerships and the fact that they are often just as critical as school and family relationships. Building relationships with community agencies and businesses offers networking sources for students, especially older students who may seek employment after graduation, and

promotes positive attendance habits. According to Haines et al. (2015), community and school partnerships foster positive student outcomes. Trusting, communal relationships occur as schools collaborate with community members, organizations, businesses, and local industry to promote collective ideas and objectives, which yields community participation in school leadership and further access to community resources (Haines et al., 2015). According to the study, there are four factors that directly influence an impactful school-community partnership: strong school leadership, inviting school culture, teacher commitment to student success, and collaboration and communication among partners (Haines et al., 2015). The outcomes and benefits for establishing and maintaining relationships with community partners include: further school funding, donation of materials (i.e., books, technology support), access to special events, athletic and enrichment opportunities, teacher professional development, and an open door for future opportunities to engage in the greater community (Haines et al., 2015). In addition, increased attendance rates were a positive student outcome when community partnerships were established with schools. Student attendance can be improved by establishing school-community relationships and giving students opportunities to interact with the community, thereby increasing their motivation and desire to attend school (Haines et al., 2015).

With the subject of chronic absenteeism being a major emphasis for schools, it is increasingly important to engage parents in the matter and seek their support in reducing student absences. As strong relationships with families emerge, more convenient means of communication must be employed. Smythe-Leistico & Page (2018) highlighted the importance of increasing communication between home and school as a way to combat chronic absenteeism in the early grades. Their method encompassed leveraging the number of text messages sent to parents. They furthered their discussion by listing common reasons for absenteeism: child



illnesses, being raised in a single-parent household, public transportation dependency, and parental unemployment, among other low-income related factors. As a result, attendance interventions were highlighted as ways to address the aforementioned variables, including mentor relationships, letter correspondence, and technological means of communication (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). The authors focused their study on the form of text-messaging communication as a way to engage parents and heighten awareness of extreme absences. They identified their intervention plan as *Connect-Text* and partnered with Signal Vine and AmeriCorps to send outgoing messages to families which prompted them to respond back to the school. The two-way interaction between the schools and parents increased the level of engagement and communication, and, as a result, worked to decrease the number of student absences because it allowed for parents to receive supports offered by the school system and connect with other outreach programs. The outcome of the text-based initiative proved positive in reducing chronic absenteeism (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018).

Moreover, Chang & Romero (2008) posed many questions in regard to school-family relationships and the impact they have on student absenteeism. Without a solid school-home relationship present, students can, academically speaking, get lost in the cracks. Chang & Romero (2008) acknowledged that students at the elementary level must have intentional care and support when it comes to being present in school. The authors stated, "The discovery that thousands of our youngest students are academically at-risk because of extended absences when they first embark upon their school careers is as remarkable as it is consequential" (Chang & Romero, 2008, p. 3). As a result, the authors asked several different questions as to *why* students are chronically absent. They specifically wondered if chronic absence is a sign that schools do not effectively engage parents in their child's education. Through their study, they highlighted

that it is equally the responsibility of the school and parent to ensure that students are present and engaged in class every single day. Therefore, schools must do their very best to engage parents on a regular basis through means of frequent and clear communication, collaboration, and intentional cooperation. Specifically, one such strategy for improving school-parent relationships was to assist in the "learning at home" process. If schools provide information and ideas to parents on how to facilitate students' homework and other curriculum-related materials, parents will feel more confident in their own abilities and appreciative of the school's support (Chang & Romero, 2008). Another strategy listed in the article was to encourage families to be part of the decision-making process at school. By offering families from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to serve on a school leadership team, their investment in the school and their child's educational experience will tremendously increase (Chang & Romero, 2008). In addition, schools that are seeking to improve attendance can enlist parents to call homes of absent students to check-in and let them know that their child is missed (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Simultaneously, Musaddiq et al. (2019) highlighted the relationship between school attendance and parent outreach. Specifically, the authors focused on Georgia school districts with current messaging platforms in place, such as email and text messages, to inform parents of whether or not their child was absent from school. Messages were sent to over 8,900 parents of students who were on the path to being chronically absent. The authors found that some parents were harder to reach than others as students who had 15 or more absences had less accurate parental contact information in the system than students who had only five absences. The study sought to determine if text and email messages reached parents of chronically absent students and if there was an improvement in the attendance of such students after a more personalized means of messaging was employed to contact parents. The personalized messaging system was

based on the same system that distributes school closings, inclement weather, and information regarding standardized testing. While the messaging system was used to spread universal messages to all families, it could also be personalized as it synced to the student information system. According to the study, 8,924 students received the personalized messages and 18,544 students represented the control group which did not receive the messages. The results from the study revealed that 55% of K-8 students and 49% of 9-12 students had at least one working email address or phone number that received school messages about attendance; the authors also found that reaching out to parents about students' absences decreased the absenteeism rate in the school districts. At the end of the academic year, an 8% reduction in absences was seen among students whose families received personalized messages (Musaddiq et al., 2019). The authors contended that "Simple personalized outreach to parents can improve student attendance and reduce the incidence of chronic absenteeism" (Musaddiq et al., 2019, p. 5).

### **Chronic Absenteeism Among Special Student Populations**

According to researchers, students belonging to special populations have higher rates of chronic absenteeism (Branco, 2019; Jacob & Lovett, 2019; Nauer, 2016; OCR, 2020). Specifically, compared to their peers, students with disabilities (SWD) are nearly 1.5 times more susceptible to being chronically absent; on the other hand, students who are English language learners (ELL) are 1.2 *less* likely to be chronically absent (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). This is an interesting dichotomy as some ELL students are simultaneously diagnosed with learning disabilities. Branco (2019) focused his research on students in specific subgroups of students with disabilities. He sought to determine if employing additional communication with parents of students with disabilities (SWD) would decrease their absenteeism rate in high school. The study focused specifically on the mode of communication used and the tone of the message that was

conveyed to parents. The study concentrated on sophomores and juniors who were on-track to being chronically absent after the first 41 days of school during the 2018-2019 academic year. The results of the study demonstrated that attendance of students with disabilities of families who received additional communication improved, whereas the attendance of such students who did not receive further communication (control group) did not improve. Furthermore, the results showed that the tone of the message conveyed had no significant impact on student attendance. The bottom line is that more frequent contact with families of students with disabilities, regardless of tone, improved their attendance rates (Branco, 2019). The author acknowledged, however, that elementary school settings would probably have been more conducive to showing a significant impact regarding message tones.

To supplement the discussion on special populations, Denham's (2006) study addressed the role of social-emotional competence of children as they transition to kindergarten. While students with social-emotional issues are not an identified subgroup according to state reporting, they do encompass a special population of students that educators have to consider. So many students struggle with social-emotional issues at this point in our society. According to Denham (2006), teachers define school readiness as having "positive emotional expressiveness, enthusiasm, and ability to regulate emotions and behaviors" (p. 58). Such qualities allow students to be more "teachable" and, therefore, eases the transition process. Denham (2006) also stated that "Children who enter kindergarten with more positive profiles of social-emotional competence not only have more success in developing positive attitudes about school and successful early adjustment to school, but also have improved grades and achievement" (p. 59). Such outcomes are not only applicable to students' current status but also to their future performance, including their attendance habits. By the same token, students who have low

social-emotional competence have a more difficult time adjusting to and consistently attending school and interacting with peers. As a result, Denham's study proposed a strategy for assessing students' social-emotional competence levels prior to entering kindergarten. Denham (2006) contended that by measuring the aforementioned aspects of social-emotional competence, teachers and parents can determine "what combination can best be tailored for the needs of the children in their care and the programs they are implementing" (p. 82). This includes the promotion of student attendance in kindergarten. This article highlighted the importance of establishing positive and consistent attendance habits in kindergarten because such habits will follow students throughout their academic career; however, this article called attention to the need that in order to have successful attendance, other factors, such as social-emotional competence, must also be in place.

### **Case Study Examples**

Nauer (2016) furthered the strategy of involving families to reduce chronic absenteeism. The study focused on a new principal's initiative of decreasing the chronic absence rate in a small elementary school in Queens, New York. The population of students was largely minority, including black and Hispanic students from single-parent homes. At one point, the school had up to one-third of students absent at least one day out of ten school days during the academic year. The attendance rate was worse than many low-income schools in poor neighborhoods such as Central Brooklyn and the Bronx. Through her initiative, the principal reduced the chronic absenteeism rate from 26% to 17% in a single academic year. The school also moved from the 9<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile academically within two years. The principal accredited the success to family and community engagement strategies and student buy-in. One such strategy included assigning students to "success mentors", community members who worked with

students who had attendance problems and other issues such as homelessness. By engaging families in the battle for raising attendance rates, the school saw a major decline in absences. The goal was to demonstrate to families that the school cared for and was concerned about students' general welfare.

To supplement, Sheldon (2007) focused the research around strategies that improved attendance rates of students in Ohio elementary schools. The author sought to determine the outcomes resulting from families who received partnership intervention from schools and outcomes for families who did not. Attendance data were compared between schools with developed partnership programs and schools with no partnership programs. Such programs included partnerships with families and the surrounding community. The results yielded that schools with established partnerships had higher student attendance rates. In fact, attendance averages improved by .5% in participating schools with engagement programs; on the other hand, rates of student attendance declined in the schools without effective family and community involvement programs. The overall results demonstrated that parent involvement was the sole driving factor in increasing student attendance (Sheldon, 2007).

In a broader study, Sheldon & Epstein (2004) collected chronic absenteeism data from 39 schools and on specific family and community engagement programs aimed towards the reduction of absences. Their longitudinal study resulted in indications that positive family and community engagement significantly reduced chronic absenteeism. They addressed that frequent communication with families concerning attendance, holding attendance-focused events to raise awareness, rewarding and celebrating attendance, and pairing community mentors with chronically absent students all prove to reduce absenteeism rates. Sheldon & Epstein (2004) verified that the more families are involved in students' education, the more frequently students

will be present which, in turn, will improve their academic achievement.

Merod (2018) also offered examples of school districts that promoted parent involvement as a way to reduce chronic absenteeism. For example, Winchester Public Schools had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism compared to other local districts in 2017-2018. One way they combated the issue was to educate parents on the importance of school attendance and to be very transparent with them regarding the number of absences their child had the previous school year. Often parents do not realize just how much their child is absent from school (Rogers & Feller, 2018). Through data discussions on absenteeism and sharing the exact number of days missed, parents' eyes were significantly opened. Merod (2018) stated, Handley High School "Provides parents with a print-out that lists the number of class absences their child has had" (para. 6-7). The visual is surprising to parents because they often do not realize how many days their child has been absent (Merod, 2018). Merod went on to explain how various schools in Winchester, Frederick County, and Clarke County public schools emphasized the importance of relationships between teachers and students and teachers and parents. The key word here is *relationships*. If both students and parents feel that they can trust and be supported by schools, then their investment levels will increase, and their perceptions of education will grow more positive (Chang & Romero, 2008; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Such feelings only stem from frequent, positive interactions with educators, but it is up to the schools to reach out and engage parents. As a whole, parents will not make the first move. Overall, it is very clear that "Schools and communities have a choice: they can work together early on to ensure families get their children to class consistently or they can pay later for failing to intervene before problems are more difficult and costly to ameliorate" (Chang & Romero, 2008, p. 3). By making the effort to fully engage parents, the latter choice will no longer be an option.

The aforementioned strategies in the literature seek to resolve the obstacle of chronic student absenteeism, and it remains an issue in focus for most school districts across the country; however, the problem of chronic *teacher* absenteeism is currently growing emergent, and the question arises of what happens when teachers are not consistently present to establish and maintain the critical relationships with the community, families, and, most importantly, students.

### **Chronic Absenteeism Among Teachers**

While chronic absenteeism among students is a prevalent issue among American public schools today, what is more developing is the concern of chronic absenteeism among teachers. More than ever, teachers are absent from their classrooms, therefore hindering instruction and the educational possibilities for students (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2019; Miller, 2008; Miller et al., 2008; Miller, 2012; Rothman, 2001; Swaak, 2018). Many scholars question why chronic absenteeism among teachers is increasingly prevalent when specific breaks and holidays are already built into their professional calendar. For example, Buck (2019) acknowledged, “When teachers already have summer, winter, and spring breaks worked into their yearly calendar, it is concerning that such flagrant absenteeism on the public dollar is so common” (p. 2-3). He also contended that chronic absenteeism among teachers is not only a problem in the United States but is even more critical on a global scale, especially in developing countries (Buck, 2019).

Chronic absenteeism for students is deemed as missing 10% or more of a single academic school year; simultaneously, chronic teacher absenteeism falls under these same criteria as they, too, are marked as chronically absent if they are absent the same percentage of the school year (Buck, 2019; TDOE, 2019). As of 2017, 3.6 million full-time-equivalent (FTE) elementary and secondary teachers were employed in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2020). On average, teachers



are granted four paid personal days and 10-11 paid sick days (generally, one sick day per month) each school year (Moored, 2012). Typically, sick days carry over into subsequent school years, while personal days must be taken during the academic year or forfeited after the year is over. According to Swaak (2018), some districts allow teachers to “carry over paid sick leave days from year to year as well, up to 150 days” (p. 6). Teachers generally do not receive vacation days due to their unique work schedules (Moored, 2012). Many districts offer other types of paid leave as well, such as administrative and bereavement for immediate family members (Moored, 2012). If a teacher takes all personal and sick days allotted each school year, they will miss close to, but not at, 10% of the school year, keeping them under the chronic absenteeism mark; however, according to Buck (2019), “Roughly 28 percent of traditional public school teachers miss more than 10 days of school a year” (p. 3). Examined through another lens, an estimated 5.3 percent of teachers are not present in the classroom on any given school day (Buck, 2019; Miller, 2008). This is a dramatic increase since Miller et al.’s study (2008) which identified that teachers were absent, on average, 5-6 percent of the school year. Some states have seen an even more eye-opening increase in chronic teacher absenteeism in recent years. Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Nevada are among the states with the highest rate of chronic teacher absenteeism, with Nevada holding the highest percentage of 50 percent (Swaak, 2018). With numbers such as these growing more commonplace and rising across the country, one must consider why teachers are chronically absent from their schools.

### **Factors for Chronic Teacher Absenteeism**

Similar to students, teachers experience a plethora of factors that contribute to their absence from school. While Lee et al. (2015) acknowledged that factors for chronic teacher absenteeism vary across location and context, many of the motives behind low job attendance are

comparable. For example, most teachers who are chronically absent often report experiencing an unsupportive administration, burnout and stress due to the nature of the job, and chronic illness which prevents their consistent attendance at school (Swaak, 2018). Chronic absenteeism is also exacerbated by some districts' leave policies as they pay their teachers generously even when they are absent (Swaak, 2018). While such policies may be meant to assist in attracting employees to the job, it can also serve as a double-edged sword by allowing employees increased paid time off.

In addition, teachers deemed as chronically absent reportedly experienced a negative school climate and culture (Swaak, 2018). What amplifies these circumstances is that educators who previously demonstrated high attendance rates at one school showed a decline in their attendance upon moving to another school that exhibited a culture of absenteeism (Buck, 2019). To supplement, Lee et al. (2015) reported five main themes relating to chronic teacher absenteeism. They identified factors such as pay scale and structure, administration, working conditions (ex. school climate, classroom structure), community conditions (i.e., travel distance from home to job), and social and cultural responsibilities. Such responsibilities related mostly to personal obligations such as illness, care of family members, and attendance at funerals (Lee et al., 2015). Overall, job satisfaction, which encompasses the aforementioned themes, was the leading indicator of teacher attendance rates, hence if a teacher enjoys their job, then they will most likely be consistently present for it (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007).

Furthermore, there are some notable differences regarding gender and age and the impact thereof on chronic teacher absenteeism; however, gender and age are stronger predictors for teacher absenteeism in urban school districts rather than in rural settings. According to the research, the two constructs often play a significant role in predicting teachers who have a

stronger tendency to be absent from the classroom (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). Of the 3.6 million teachers employed in the United States in 2017, 77 percent were female (NCES, 2020). Female teachers tend to be absent more often than males by a ratio of 5.29 days to 3.39 days, respectively; as females age, their frequency in absenteeism also increases (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). Veteran teachers, especially those near retirement, were absent more frequently than novice teachers due to the nature of their career phase and fewer personal responsibilities; it is important to note, however, that teachers with two to four years of teaching experience and teachers with between twenty-three and twenty-five years of experience held the highest attendance rates (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). In addition, elementary teachers are absent more frequently than secondary teachers by a ratio of 6.63 days to 3.32 days (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). Regardless of the reason behind the absence, however, the effects of an absent teacher are widespread and deeply impactful.

### **Effects of Chronic Teacher Absenteeism**

The effects of a teacher's absence far surpass the simplicity of not being present at work on a given day. Teachers directly impact student learning and achievement (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2008; Miller, 2012). Teachers directly impact relationships with and among students (Boonk et al., 2018; Merod, 2018). Teachers directly impact students' behavior (Wang et al., 2013). For many students, if their teacher is absent, their entire school day experience is lacking. Moreover, if teachers are absent from the classroom, the effects are seen in their own performance, whether they be immediate or long-term (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). The financial burden felt by school districts is also exacerbated by teacher absences as substitutes are sought to fill the position (Bekingalar, 2015; Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Moored, 2012). The

following discussion highlights the most significant areas affected by chronic teacher absenteeism.

### **Student Impacts**

While the absence of teachers is experienced by students in various ways, perhaps the greatest impact of an absent teacher is on student academic achievement. According to Miller (2008), “Teacher absence... hampers student achievement; and it disproportionately affects low-income and minority students” (p. 15). More often than not, when substitutes fill the position, they are not adequately trained to teach the mandated curriculum to the depth that is expected (Bekingalar, 2015; Buck, 2019). Other challenges that substitutes encounter include “lack of or improper lesson plans, lack of evaluation, challenging work conditions, and lack of integration into the school system” (Bekingalar, 2015, p. 2). As a result, students are often assigned “busy work” to pass the time in order to avoid any behavioral infractions. In sum, when teachers are absent, students lose critical instruction (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Bekingalar, 2015; Gottfried, 2019; Miller, 2008; Miller et al., 2008; Miller, 2012; Swaak, 2018). According to Griffith (2017),

There are roughly 100,000 public schools in the United States, with over 3 million public school teachers and at least 50 million students. So every year, at least 800,000 teachers in the U.S. are chronically absent, meaning they miss about 9 million days of school between them, resulting in roughly 1 *billion* instances in which a kid comes to class to find that his or her time is, more often than not, being wasted (p. 2).

Griffith’s statement only reflects teachers who are chronically absent. To individualize the statistics, a single student is impacted instructionally when their teacher has a 10-day increase in absences, correlating with the loss of 6-10 days of English/language arts instruction or 15-25

days of lost math instruction over time (Swaak, 2018). Buck (2019) corroborated that a one-to-one ratio exists between teacher absenteeism and student learning, describing that 10 teacher absences directly correlates to 10 days of lost instruction and missed content. While this may seem obvious, the impact on student learning is much greater. If a teacher is absent for 10 days in a single academic year, their instructional impact is comparable to the effect of a first-year teacher versus a fourth-year teacher (Buck, 2019). This is not to say that first-year teachers are not effective, but the practice of a more seasoned teacher is more focused and intentional due to the nature of experience.

Perhaps most significant is the emotional impact a teacher's absence has on students and their willingness to learn. When a teacher is absent, students feel less connected to the classroom, and, as a result, they simultaneously lose their desire to learn (Bruno, 2002; Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). Student motivation declines when there is instructional inconsistency as delivered by various substitutes; therefore, their desire to stay committed and connected to learning weakens.

### **Financial Impacts**

One of the most notable effects of chronic teacher absenteeism is the impact it has upon the financial resources of a school district. When a teacher is absent, a substitute is required to fill the position. Under such circumstances, the school system will pay the teacher for their day of leave, regardless of type, as well as the day of work fulfilled by the substitute. While substitute pay is often considerably less than teacher pay, it still serves as an additional financial obligation for the system. When districts fill teacher positions with substitutes, it "creates large expenses for districts and states" (Miller, 2008, p. 15). When teachers are *chronically* absent, the financial burden is exacerbated as substitute pay increases by the number of substitutes required and the frequency thereof. Such instances can be cumbersome

to districts that already suffer from low student enrollment and limited funding. According to Swaak (2018), “The financial burden is... substantive: An estimated \$4 billion a year in taxpayer dollars funds substitutes and other costs related to teacher absences” (p. 3). Buck (2019) corroborated that with both the teacher and the substitute receiving pay for the same job, the number can be as high as \$1,800, annually, for each teacher that is employed.

Moreover, hidden costs for teacher leave are also present. In many school districts, “Teachers can cash-out on unused sick leave at retirement... teachers can also receive payment for unused personal leave, either because personal days are taken from sick leave or because personal leave converts to sick leave for accumulation” (Moored, 2012, p. 6). However, some school districts employ strategies for cutting such costs, such as offering bonuses to teachers with high attendance (Miller, 2008). Other districts pay fewer stipends to substitutes to save money (Miller, 2008). The need for consistent teacher presence in the classroom is increasingly recognized as the impact of teacher absenteeism is growing more injurious. Regardless of the method, it is necessary for school districts to be intentional about how they seek to minimize the number of teacher absences and promote more positive working conditions.

### **Combating Chronic Teacher Absenteeism**

School districts are implementing new policies and strategies to combat chronic teacher absenteeism because of the effects it has upon the school community overall. According to Miller (2008), “There are federal, state, and local roles to play in an overall effort to reign in teacher absences. Each level of government can work in concert to implement policies and allocate resources to better ensure that all students experience fewer teacher absences at no

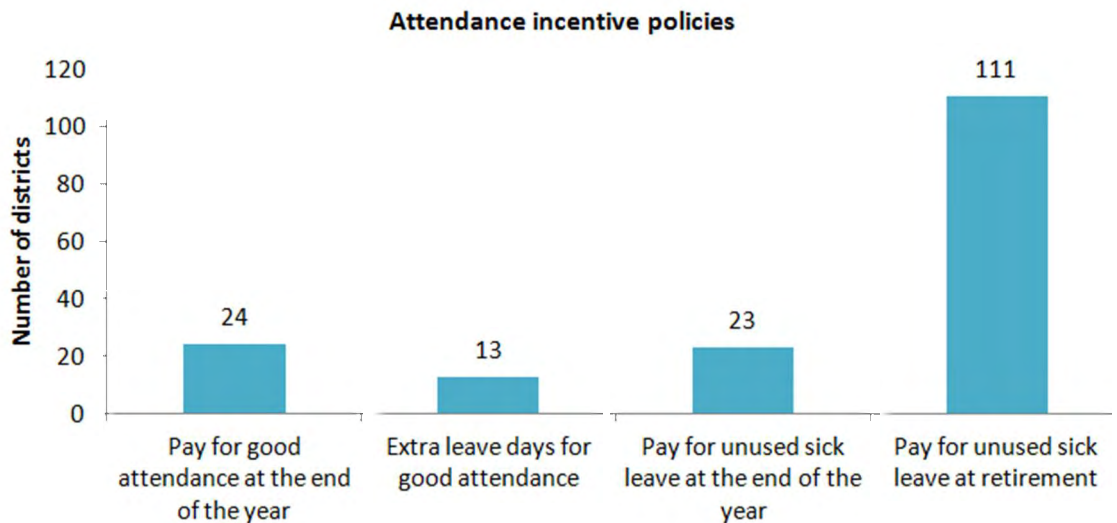
additional cost” (p. 15). Miller (2008) outlined policy recommendations for each level of government in terms of combatting chronic teacher absenteeism:

- “Federal policymakers should amend No Child Left Behind to require information on teacher absence on school report cards. School districts already collect data on teacher absences and share it publicly—already the practice in some states—which will give parents a more nuanced picture of school quality;
- State policymakers should re-examine and justify statutes governing teachers’ leave privileges. Not enough is known about the appropriate level of leave privileges. Those in some states may be excessively generous, elevating rates of absence and incurring the financial liability of accumulated, unused leave. This liability represents a source of leverage for reducing privileges, where needed;
- Local policymakers should encourage experimentation with and evaluation of incentive policies designed to reduce levels of teacher absence. Many examples of such policies exist, and teachers respond to them. However, little is known about the optimal characteristics of bonus schemes, buy-back provisions, or co-payment programs” (p. 2).

While each level of government indeed has a role to play in teacher absence reduction, the reality of the issue is that it is about the school districts and how they promote the work culture within their respective systems. Swaak (2018) corroborated that the system of accountability must be emphasized within school districts, and it must be highlighted that the issue is not about the individual teachers, but rather the system as a whole. Miller (2008) stated, “The data show that discretionary absences vary over time, between teachers, and between schools, which focuses policymakers on the need to enhance accountability around absences in ways that target teachers

and schools” (p. 17). In conjunction with the accountability process, it is encouraged that school districts implement employee attendance policies that include a progressive discipline clause; such a clause must underscore mounting levels of reprimands for repeated or increasingly severe violations of the attendance policy (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). The implementation of such employee discipline procedures will also help to cultivate a culture of accountability as the goal is to improve employees’ behavior and inform their understanding of expectations (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007).

In addition to promoting a culture of accountability, districts should increase incentives for teacher attendance. Figure 1 illustrates the number of districts in the United States that provide incentive policies for teacher attendance (Nittler & Alfuth, 2016).



*Figure 1.* Attendance incentive policies

Monetary incentives assist in resolving attendance issues in many school districts, specifically in larger districts (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). For example, certain independent school districts (ISD) such as Aldine ISD and Dallas ISD offered employer-matching contributions to 401(a) retirement accounts and awards for improved attendance in 2004; Dallas ISD, specifically,



partnered with community businesses to combat teacher absenteeism by offering prizes such as brand new cars for high attendance rates (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007). Most importantly, school districts must recognize the significance of fostering a positive and enjoyable working environment for employees. If employees are recognized for their efforts, it will motivate them to stay at work and continue to put forth their best performance (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

Chronic absenteeism is a major issue among public schools today. Students and teachers, alike, face ongoing issues that were not as prevalent even ten years ago. In recent years, the social and emotional struggles that students and teachers encounter on a regular basis hinder them from being present in school. As a result, it is a pressing need for school leaders to be proactive in action by identifying and implementing solutions for teachers and students; hence, school leaders must be strategic in their efforts to combat chronic absenteeism, especially in regard to family engagement strategies and employee-relations.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this quantitative archival study was to identify a correlational relationship among chronic teacher absenteeism and 1) student achievement (TNReady math and English/language arts scores), 2) student absenteeism, 3) teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) teacher observations. Specifically, this study focused on a single, rural school district in the First Region of Tennessee. This quantitative study was archival in nature based on secondary data analysis. To supplement, quantitative research “seeks to establish relationships and explain causes of changes and measured outcomes...” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 12). In addition, archival research is an “investigation of hard data from files that organizations or companies” have already obtained prior to the research (WPI, 2019, p. 1). As a result, this study examined the relationship among the aforementioned factors, which were determined based upon data that were previously collected by the organization of the school system. The data were collected through numerical records stored in the Skyward database, Microsoft Excel, Google Drive, and Google Sheets by the participating district’s Central Office personnel. This chapter contains the research questions and null hypotheses used to guide the study, population, sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and a summary of the chapter.

#### **Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

The following seven research questions were used to direct the study of chronic teacher absenteeism and its relationship with 1) student achievement (TNReady math and English/language arts scores), 2) student absenteeism, 3) teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) teacher observations:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores?

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores?

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent?

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores?

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores.

Research Question 6: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores?

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores.

Research Question 7: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score.

### **Population and Sample**

One public school system in the First Region of Tennessee participated in this study. The school district is a PK-12 public school system, located in a rural setting. The school district was chosen because it was a local district and data were more readily accessible to the researcher. The district has four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. As of the 2018-2019 school year, the district had 172 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers and 2,278 students. There was a 15:1 student to teacher ratio per classroom. Student enrollment was 87% white and 13% minority, with the minority percentage majorly consisting of Hispanic students. In terms of gender, 53.2% of the total student population was male and 46.8% were female. Of the total 2,278 students, 20% were chronically absent in the district by the end of the 2018-2019 academic year. There was no data for chronically absent teachers.

Because the study was based on analyzing archival data, there were no live participants; all data were collected from participants through routine operations by the employer prior to the research study. For example, for each day that a teacher is absent, their name, type of absence, number of days absent, and the substitute's name are all recorded on a paper document at the

school level. At the end of each month, paper documents are transferred to Central Office where Human Resources personnel enters and maintains the aforementioned information into an electronic Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. All daily student attendance is entered into the Skyward database by the school level secretary and is maintained by the school district's EIS Data Analyst at Central Office. Regarding teacher TVAAS growth and evaluation scores, the Secondary Curriculum Supervisor maintains all such records in a Google Sheets document. Student TNReady scores are archived in Google Drive as they are uploaded from paper copies distributed by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).

For this study, only teachers and students in the K-8 grand band were used. Teachers and students in grades 9-12 were not included in the study due to the fact that student attendance is taken per class period as opposed to attendance for the entire school day. In addition, only data pertaining to teachers from the core subjects (math, English/language arts, science, and social studies) were used in the research because of availability of individual teacher TVAAS growth scores and student TNReady scores. Only TNReady scores for math and English/language arts were used due to field testing in other academic areas for the 2018-2019 school year. As a result, the sample size consisted of 78 core-subject teachers from the content areas of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies and 1,491 students (kindergarten through eighth grade). This study examined teacher absence rates and scores and student absence rates and scores over the single 2018-2019 academic year.

### **Instrumentation**

Because this quantitative study was based on archived data, various database systems were used as the instrument for data collection. Skyward, Google Sheets, Google Drive, and Microsoft Excel were employed to maintain all archived records. The data for this study were

pre-existing and collected through ongoing operations performed according to the job duties of Central Office personnel. Data were pulled from Skyward for student attendance, Microsoft Excel for teacher attendance, Google Sheets for teacher TVAAS growth and evaluation scores, and Google Drive for student TNReady scores. Student attendance data were transferred to Microsoft Excel and provided to the researcher using a USB thumb drive. Teacher attendance was printed from Microsoft Excel and given to the researcher in the form of paper copies. The researcher was granted access to Google Drive for student TNReady scores; access to the Google Sheets document was also granted to the researcher for teacher TVAAS growth scores and teacher evaluation scores. The archived collections were maintained, transferred, and reported to the researcher with confidentiality relating to faculty, students, and the school system as a whole.

### **Data Collection**

Before the research was conducted, permission was received from Milligan College and the Milligan College Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). With permission from the Director of Schools from the participating school district (Appendix B), data were collected from Central Office personnel because it is archived at this location. Permission was granted on July 9, 2019 after the completion of the 2018-2019 school year. Regarding teacher attendance, the number and type of teacher absences (personal, sick, administrative, and bereavement) from the single middle school and each of the four elementary schools in the school district were collected via paper copies from Human Resources personnel. Teachers' individual TVAAS growth and evaluation scores and students' TNReady scores were also archived in Google Sheets and Google Drive, respectively, and maintained by the Secondary Curriculum Supervisor. Data were shared with the researcher via Google Drive. Student attendance is regularly archived and maintained by the EIS Data Analyst and the Technology Supervisor through the Skyward

database; data were electronically shared with the researcher using a USB thumb drive. All data pertained to the 2018-2019 academic year and was collected by the researcher in the fall of 2019.

### **Data Analysis**

After all data were obtained, they were organized into an electronic spreadsheet for the researcher to analyze. All identifying information, including names of participants were removed in order to maintain confidentiality. All data were analyzed using a quantitative method; statistical analyses were conducted using IBM-SPSS for MacOS. A Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient was used to answer research questions 1-5. The Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient determines "whether or not a high score on one variable is associated with a high score on the other" (Muijs, 2011, p. 124). The Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was a relationship between teacher attendance and teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, teacher attendance and teacher evaluation scores, teacher attendance and student TNReady scores, and teacher attendance and student attendance. Means and standard deviations were also computed for each variable.

For research questions 6 and 7, a multiple linear regression analysis was used. Confidence levels were established at 95% and data were analyzed at the .05 level of significance. The multiple linear regression analysis allows researchers to examine the relationship between multiple predictor (independent) variables and one criterion (dependent) variable (Muijs, 2011). In regard to the research, the multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine which predictor variable had the most significant impact on the criterion variable. In this case, teacher attendance and student attendance were the predictor variables. For research question 6, the criterion variable was student achievement scores, and for research question 7 the

criterion variable was teacher TVAAS individual growth scores. Means and standard deviations were computed for research questions 6 and 7.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 details the purpose for the research, the research questions with null hypotheses, and the research methodology. A detailed discussion of the research design was provided in the event that researchers may replicate the study for future purposes. Information regarding the population and sample of the study was also offered. Finally, the specific procedures used to statistically analyze the data were discussed so as to establish a technical understanding for the resulting outcomes of the study.



## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not a correlational relationship existed between teacher attendance and 1) student achievement (TNReady math and English/language arts scores), 2) student absenteeism, 3) teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and 4) teacher observations. This chapter includes the results and findings from statistical data analyses stemming from the seven research questions that guided the study.

#### **Demographic Data**

The population of the study consisted of 78 FTE teachers in the major content areas of math, science, social studies, and English/language arts. Data for all teachers were available regarding total absences, total numbers associated with each type of absence (personal, sick, or administrative), and individual cumulative evaluation scores; however, only data for TVAAS individual growth scores were available for teachers who taught a tested subject at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. As in the case of science, the TNReady test was only a field test and did not count towards TVAAS individual growth; teachers in this field elected to take a school-level TVAAS growth score. As a result, only math and English/language arts teachers were used in comparison to student achievement scores to identify a true correlational relationship between their attendance and their students' achievement levels. Of the 78 teachers, 68 teachers were female, 10 were male, and 15% were chronically absent. All teachers in the study were classroom teachers.

Regarding the student population, math and English/language arts TNReady scores and attendance averages (total and chronic) of 1,491 students in grades kindergarten through eighth

grade were used in the study. Among the total number of K-8 students, 54.7% were male and 45.4% were female.

### **Findings**

The results of the study were broken down according to each research question. Research questions 1-5 guided the statistical analyses of correlational relationships among the number of days teachers were absent and 1) student achievement scores, 2) student attendance, 3) individual TVAAS growth scores of teachers, and 4) teacher observation scores. Research questions 6 and 7 were based on the level of predicted impact of teacher attendance and student attendance on student achievement and teacher TVAAS growth scores, respectively.

It is important to note that student achievement scores were based on the scale score the student received as a result of their completion of the end of year TNReady test; data for student achievement were not based on performance level. Performance levels are as follows: 1 – Below Grade Level; 2— Approaching Grade Level; 3— On Track/On Grade Level; 4— Mastered Grade Level (TDOE, 2020b). While all tested students receive both a scale score and a performance level, scale score equivalencies for performance levels vary across grade levels and subject areas (Appendix C). Hence, performance levels were not used in the study due to their inconsistent nature.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores?

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores.

A simple correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between a teacher's number of days absent from school and their students' end of year math achievement scores during the 2018-2019 academic year. An insignificant, positive, weak correlation was found ( $r(24\ df) = .369, p = .076$ ). To determine the variance explained by the total number of teacher absences on student end of year math achievement scores, a coefficient of determination was computed. The results ( $r^2 = .136$ ) suggest that 13% of the variance in students' end of year math achievement scores can be explained by teachers' total number of absences. There was a weak positive relationship demonstrating that as teacher absences increased, so did students' scale scores for the end of year math achievement test; however, the relationship was found to be insignificant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student Math Achievement Scores*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	11.56	.369	.076	.136
Student Math Achievement Scores	330.91			

\*Note.  $p < .05$

**Research Question 2**

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores?

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores.

A simple correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between a teacher's number of days absent from school and their students' end of year English/language arts achievement scores during the 2018-2019 academic year. An insignificant, negative, weak correlation was found ( $r(24\ df) = -.150, p = .484$ ). To determine the variance explained by the total number of teacher absences on student TNReady English/language arts achievement scores, a coefficient of determination was calculated. The results ( $r^2 = .0225$ ) suggest that only 2% of the variance in students' end of year English/language arts achievement scores can be explained by teachers' total number of absences. There was no significant relationship between the two variables; therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student English/language arts Achievement Scores*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	11.56	-.150	.484	.0225
Student ELA Achievement Scores	334.49			

\*Note.  $p < .05$

### Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent?

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent.

A simple correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between a teacher's number of days absent from school and the average number of days their students are absent. An

insignificant, negative, weak correlation was found ( $r(76\ df) = -.017, p = .883$ ). To determine the variance explained by the total number of teacher absences on average student absences, a coefficient of determination was calculated. The results ( $r^2 = .001$ ) suggests that less than 1% of the variance in average student absences can be explained by teachers' total number of absences. The  $p$ -value was not significant, demonstrating no significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

*Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Student Absences*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	11.56	-.017	.883	.001
Average Student Absences	9.56			

\*Note.  $p < .05$

#### Research Question 4

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score.

A simple correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between a teacher's number of days absent from school and their TVAAS individual growth scores. An insignificant, negative, weak correlation was found ( $r(41\ df) = -.068, p = .674$ ). To determine the variance explained by the total number of teacher absences on teachers' TVAAS individual growth scores, a coefficient of determination was conducted. The results ( $r^2 = .005$ ) suggests that less than 1% of the variance in teacher TVAAS individual growth scores can be explained by

teachers' total number of absences; therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

*Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Teacher TVAAS Growth Scores*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	11.56	-.068	.674	.005
Teacher TVAAS Growth Scores	2.74			

\*Note.  $p < .05$

### Research Question 5

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores?

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores.

A simple correlation was conducted to determine the relationship between a teacher's number of days absent and their annual observation scores. An insignificant, positive, weak correlation was found ( $r(75\ df) = .000, p = .999$ ). To determine the variance explained by the total number of teacher absences on teachers' annual observation scores, a coefficient of determination was calculated. The results ( $r^2 = .001$ ) suggests that less than 1% of the variance in teachers' annual observation scores can be explained by a teacher's total number of absences. Because Pearson's  $r = .001$ , there was no correlational relationship between the two variables; teacher absences had no effect upon the outcome of teacher annual evaluations. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The results are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

*Correlation Coefficients of Number of Teacher Absences and Teacher Observation Scores*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	11.56	.001	.999	0
Teacher Observation Scores	4.18			

\*Note.  $p < .05$ 

### Research Question 6

Research Question 6: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores?

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict student end of the year achievement scores in 2018-2019 based on total teacher absences and average student absences during the same school year. A significant regression equation was found [ $F(2, 40) = 9.829, p = .001$ ] with an  $R^2$  of .330. This suggests that 33% of the variance in student achievement scores could be explained by the predictor variables. Results also suggested that 67% of the variance in student achievement scores could be explained by variables other than the predictor variables. To determine which predictor variables were significant predictors of students' achievement scores on the TNReady test, *Beta* scores were examined. Teacher absences had a *Beta* score of .022,  $p = .867$ , while student absences had a *Beta* score of  $-.575, p = .001$ . Hence, only student absenteeism was a significant predictor of students' achievement scores on the TNReady test. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

*Coefficients of Number of Each Predictor Variable on Student Achievement Scores*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	.059	.022	.169	.867
Average Student Absences	-5.60	-.575	-4.43	.001*

\*Note.  $p < .05$

### Research Question 7

Research Question 7: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score?

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference between teacher absences and student absences, and which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict teacher's TVAAS individual growth scores based on total teacher absences and average student absences during the 2018-2019 school year. A significant regression equation was not found [ $F(2, 38) = 2.238, p = .121$ ] with an  $R^2$  of .105. This suggests that 10% of the variance in teachers' TVAAS individual growth scores could be explained by the predictor variables. Results also suggested that 90% of the variance in TVAAS individual growth scores could be explained by variables other than the predictor variables. To determine which predictor variables were significant predictors of teachers' TVAAS individual growth scores, *Beta* scores were examined. Teacher absences had a *Beta* score of  $-.091, p = .558$ , and student absences had a *Beta* score of  $-.318, p = .045$ .

Therefore, only student absenteeism was a significant predictor of teachers' TVAAS individual growth scores, and the null hypothesis was rejected. The results are displayed in Table 7.



Table 7

*Coefficients of Number of Each Predictor Variable on Teacher TVAAS Individual Growth Scores*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Total Number of Teacher Absences	-.016	-.091	-.591	.558
Average Student Absences	-.211	-.318	-2.069	.045*

\*Note.  $p < .05$

### Summary

The statistical findings of this study indicated overall results of a weak correlation existing as a result of high totals of teacher absences in a given academic year; hence, the impact thereof is also minimal. In some cases, teacher absences had little to no correlational with the dependent variables addressed in the study which sheds light on the fact that other factors have a stronger impact on the variance of outcomes in teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, annual evaluation scores, and, to an extent, student achievement scores. Overall, student absences had a greater impact on student achievement and teacher performance outcomes than teacher absences. The following chapter elaborates on the discussion of the results yielded in the archival study.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The need for consistent school attendance among students and teachers is an increasing concern for school districts. Many studies have been conducted to determine the reasons behind chronic student absenteeism, but less research has been carried out to identify factors behind chronic teacher absenteeism. Regardless of the many varying reasons as to why both students and teachers miss school more frequently, the effects thereof take precedence. Research studies have suggested that student absenteeism has a remarkably negative effect on the outcomes of their learning journey. Specifically, chronic student absenteeism hinders student achievement, social relationships, and behavior, and it influences how students will function and behave as adults (Goldstein, 2015; Gottfried, 2019; Patnode et al., 2018). What is more, the existing research demonstrates that teacher absenteeism also affects student outcomes and teachers' own productivity as professionals (Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2019; Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2008; Rothman, 2001). The need for consistent school attendance on both the parts of the teacher and the student is essential for the success of their respective professional and educational journeys.

This chapter contains a summary of the findings, discussions, and conclusions of the research study. In addition, this chapter includes recommendations for further research and for readers who may use the results of the study for informative and educational purposes regarding the implications of teacher and student attendance. The purpose of this quantitative archival study was to examine the relationships of teacher attendance with student achievement on the end of year TNReady test (both math and English/language arts), student attendance, teacher TVAAS individual growth scores, and teacher evaluation scores. This was an archival study

based on pre-existing data collected by the researcher from personnel at the Central Office of the participating school district. The research questions which guided the study are as follows:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year math achievement scores?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and student end of the year English/language arts achievement scores?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and the number of days students are absent?

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their TVAAS individual growth score?

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between the number of days teachers are absent during a school year and their annual observation scores?

Research Question 6: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of student end of the year achievement scores?

Research Question 7: Between teacher absences and student absences, which is a better predictor of a teacher's TVAAS individual growth score?

### **Summary of Findings**

The statistical analyses reported in this study were based on seven research questions and seven null hypotheses. When measuring teacher attendance with each variable independently, results showed that there was no significant relationship between teacher attendance and student achievement scores, teacher attendance and student attendance, teacher attendance and teacher evaluations, and teacher attendance and TVAAS individual growth scores. When measuring both

teacher attendance and student attendance against TVAAS growth scores, there was no significant relationship with teacher attendance, but student attendance was a strong predictor of teacher TVAAS growth scores; in addition, when examining which variable was a better predictor of student achievement, there was a significant relationship between student achievement and student attendance. Teacher attendance was not a strong predictor of student achievement on the end of year TNReady test.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The role of attendance in school is undeniably a crucial one as its impact extends far beyond the simple gesture of being present and accounted for in the classroom. In today's society, school districts are facing a daunting task of combatting both chronic absenteeism among students and the ever-growing numbers of chronic absenteeism among teachers. The latter is most certainly an issue that has been underlying for decades and is now emerging as a major concern for school districts across the country. Until more recently, teacher chronic absenteeism has not received much attention, but the reasons as to why are unclear (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). Although some speculate teacher absenteeism has not been highlighted due to union resistance or policymakers' hesitance to bring teachers into a negative spotlight (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). Regardless of teacher absenteeism being at the forefront of educational issues, many researchers and scholars would argue that the absence of a teacher from the classroom has tremendous impacts upon teachers, themselves, and their students (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2019; Lee et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2008; Rothman, 2001). Years of previous research has established that teachers are the most impactful school-based influence in student learning (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). Their influence extends beyond academic achievement and test scores, but also impacts student attendance, social and emotional

skills, suspension rates, and even college attendance (Hansen & Quintero, 2020). As a result, teachers must physically be in the classroom in order to offer such enormous benefits to students; however, the results from this study do not support the previous research.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question one sought to examine whether or not there was a significant relationship between the total number of days teachers were absent in the participating school district and how well their students performed on the TNReady math achievement test. The results showed that the relationship was weak and insignificant. According to this study, it appeared that teacher absences did not have a strong relationship with student achievement in math in the school district, and therefore, there was little academic impact if teachers were frequently absent from the math classroom. This finding is in direct contrast to the research studies which found a significant correlation between teacher absenteeism and student math achievement (Miller et al., 2008; Swaak, 2018). Swaak (2018) noted that 10 teacher absences are equivalent to 15-25 days of lost instruction in math for students. One would expect to find similar results in this study, but because the findings did not support the previous research, it is important to explore why. The lack of correlational significance may have stemmed from a lack of data. Minimal data were available in terms of student TNReady math scores due to the small size of the school district and the even smaller sample of math scores. However, it is possible that the data did not represent a significant correlation because the rural school district is used to missing more time due to frequent snow in the winter months and, thus, teachers prepare students more diligently for math during the instructional time they have with them.

### **Research Question 2**

Research question two examined whether or not there was a relationship between the total number of teacher absences and student English/language arts scores on the end of year TNReady test. Similar to research question 1, the findings for research question 2 illustrated a weak insignificant relationship between teacher absences and student test scores. In fact, the variance percentage was lower for English/language arts scores than math scores, demonstrating that teacher absenteeism had a lesser correlation with English/language arts scores. Among other researchers, Swaak (2018) argued that 10 teacher absences directly aligned to a 6-10 day loss of English/language arts instruction. Therefore, the results of the study should have demonstrated a strong correlation between the two variables; however, an insufficient amount of available data regarding student test scores in English/language arts may have played a role in the lack of significance. It is important to note, however, that if a longitudinal study was conducted over time, perhaps more of a correlation would have been present.

### **Research Question 3**

Regarding research question three, which sought to identify whether or not there was a relationship between teacher absenteeism and student absenteeism, an insignificant weak correlation was found. Less than 1% of the variance in student absences was determined by teacher absences, thereby demonstrating that teacher attendance has little to no influence on whether or not students attend school regularly. The literature concerning student absenteeism reflected that most students are chronically absent as a result of their socio-economic status, lack of parental involvement, negative peer-relationships, and an overall disinterest in school (Gase et al., 2016; Havik & Ertesvåg, 2015; Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Although teacher influence plays a role in students' desire to attend school in terms of curriculum and instruction style, teacher

attendance, or the lack thereof, was not identified as a major cause for student absence in previous studies (Gase et al., 2016). The findings of this study correlate with the findings in the literature in the sense that students are more likely to be absent on the part of personal reasons as opposed to teacher influence.

#### **Research Question 4**

In response to research question four, an insignificant weak relationship was found between teachers' total absences and their TVAAS individual growth scores. According to the findings, less than 1% of the variance in TVAAS growth scores could be explained by teachers' absenteeism; hence at least 99% of the variance in TVAAS growth scores can be explained by factors other than whether or not teachers are consistently present in their classrooms. TVAAS individual growth scores are based on the measurement of student academic growth on standardized testing from year to year. Growth scores only serve as one component of the entire Tennessee teacher evaluation model. Consequently, to say that teacher attendance has an impact on TVAAS growth scores also argues that it has an impact upon student academic growth, but data regarding specific student growth measures were unknown and, thus, not examined in the study. Simultaneously, student growth is related to student achievement scores, and, as seen with the results from research questions one and two, teacher attendance had little correlation with achievement. This could also be a factor as to why teacher absences did not show a strong relationship with teacher TVAAS individual growth scores. It would seem likely that if teachers were consistently present at school, they would be able to make gains with and grow their students academically; however, since the findings demonstrated an insignificant correlation between the two variables, it appeared that teacher attendance does not have a strong effect upon their individual TVAAS growth scores.

**Research Question 5**

Research question five examined whether or not a relationship existed between teachers' total absences and their annual in-class evaluation scores. It would seem likely that if a teacher is chronically absent, their instructional quality would suffer. There are some possible hypotheses as to why there was not a significant relationship present. For example, tenured teachers may feel comfortable being absent more frequently and, due to their experience, may simply perform better during evaluations, regardless of how often they miss school; yet, there is little research to support this hypothesis. However, Jacobs & Kritsonsis (2007) identified that veteran teachers with twenty-three to twenty-five years of experience were absent more frequently than novice teachers. A longitudinal study would be a better measure of whether or not a correlation exists between teacher absenteeism and their in-class evaluations because the dichotomy between teacher absences and instructional loss equivalencies are based on long-term measures (Swaak, 2018). For the present study, however, it was found that a weak and insignificant correlation was present between the two variables. Teacher absenteeism had no impact on their in-class evaluation scores for the 2018-2019 school year.

**Research Question 6**

Research question six pursued to ascertain whether teacher attendance or student attendance was a better predictor of student achievement scores on the TNReady test. For this statistical analysis, English/language arts scores and math scores were not examined separately. The study showed that a significant relationship existed with regard to student attendance and student achievement scores; therefore, student attendance was a stronger predictor of how well students performed on the TNReady test at the end of the school year, regardless of the subject. Teacher attendance, however, was not a strong predictor as the  $p$ -value far surpassed the



significance level of .05. Through research questions one and two, it was evident that teacher absenteeism had little to no effect on students' achievement in math and English/language arts, but the significant relationship which existed between student attendance and student achievement corroborated previous research from the literature. The findings were consistent with the literature review, demonstrating that the more often students are in school, the better their academic performance will be (Allensworth & Evans, 2016; Gottfried, 2019; Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Students have a direct impact on their own learning, and if they are not present to acquire the knowledge, then the knowledge gap will widen. Even if the teacher is absent, students still have the opportunity to gain knowledge and practice skills with the positive guidance of a substitute teacher (Bekingalar, 2015). In sum, as long as students are present in school, they are learning.

### **Research Question 7**

Research question seven examined which variable was a better predictor of teacher TVAAS individual growth scores— student absenteeism or teacher absenteeism. The results indicated a significant relationship was found with student absenteeism, but teacher absenteeism did not have a strong impact on the TVAAS growth scores teachers individually received. The significance level of student absenteeism was right on the line of significance at  $p = .045$ , whereas the significance level for teacher absenteeism was much higher than .05. The findings from research question seven corresponded with the results found in research question six— student absenteeism is a key factor in how well students academically perform and, consequently, how well teachers perform on their growth scores. Accordingly, “TVAAS measures student academic growth on state standardized assessments to provide evidence of teachers' impact on student learning” (SCORE, 2017).

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to the availability of data regarding student achievement scores in both math and English/language arts and teacher TVAAS individual growth scores. To begin with, math and English/language arts scores were limited to only the teachers who taught the subject during the 2018-2019 school year; thus, while data for 78 total core-subject teachers were included in the overall study, only data for 25 math teachers and 24 English/language arts teachers were included for research questions one, two, and four. Only math and English/language arts data were included in the study for the aforementioned research questions because the Science TNReady test for the 2018-2019 school year was a field test, therefore, no achievement scores existed for the research. In addition, science teachers had no individual TVAAS growth scores for the 2018-2019 school year, and as such, were required to take on the school level TVAAS growth for their scores. Social studies testing data were not included because it was not a tested subject for second and third grades, and thus, data were not available. Kindergarten and first grade were not tested subjects either. As a result, only testing data and TVAAS individual growth scores were examined for students in third through eighth grade math and English/language arts. The limited amount of data, in turn, limited the study in terms of significant correlations, thereby possibly affecting the validity of the study.

### **Conclusions**

From the results of this study, three conclusions were drawn. The first conclusion is that student attendance directly affects student achievement outcomes. If a student is present and engaged in class, they can make great gains academically. If they are not present, they cannot engage, and therefore, they cannot build knowledge (Gottfried, 2019; Patnode et al., 2018). This conclusion is supported by the literature review, demonstrating that chronic student absenteeism

has detrimental effects on reading and math achievement, specifically, as well as on social-emotional outcomes (Denham, 2006; Gottfried, 2019; Patnode et al., 2018). For students, school attendance is crucial for acquiring knowledge, whether they are conducting experiments in science, completing a close read in English/language arts, analyzing a word problem in math, or simply sitting in class without completing any work. The simple exposure they receive by just being in an educational setting helps students increase their understanding and knowledge. Such opportunities are not possible when students are absent from school.

The second conclusion drawn from this archival study is that teacher attendance does not necessarily mean that students are academically growing and achieving. While many studies from the literature review stated that teacher absenteeism has negative effects on student achievement, the findings from this study suggests that teacher absenteeism has less of an impact than what many may think (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2008; Miller, 2012). Many people attend work just for the sake of being present and accounted for, but that does not necessarily mean that they are actually being productive. The same goes for teachers. Just because teachers are present in the classroom does not mean that what they are doing for students is instructionally beneficial. Simultaneously, if a teacher is absent frequently but making the most of his or her time when they are in the classroom, they could make great academic gains with their students. Indeed, as the literature review provided, teachers have a significant influence on students in regard to the whole child. Their impact is not solely academic. For example, Gershenson (2016) stated, “Teachers potentially increase student attendance through some combination of fostering a passion for learning, increasing student engagement, creating a strong sense of community in the classroom, and stressing the importance of regular attendance” (p. 128). By the same token, teachers have the potential to

influence students' academic achievement through the same passionate encouragement. The findings from this study demonstrated that no significant relationships were present with teacher attendance, both on the part of student achievement (TNReady scores) and teacher achievement (TVAAS growth and evaluation scores); thus, the exploration of what teachers are doing with their time with students, and how effective they are at their job, must be further considered.

The third conclusion drawn from the results of the study is that teacher attendance does not necessarily constitute the professional growth and achievement of teachers. To reiterate, being present on the job does not determine job productivity and efficiency. As seen with the results from the present study, teacher absenteeism had little to no significant relationship with their in-class evaluation scores or their TVAAS individual growth scores. If no strong correlation is present, accordingly, it must be considered why this is the case. What does it mean for the teacher with high attendance but poor evaluation scores? How does a teacher with poor attendance obtain high scores on in-class observations? According to the literature, the linking factors are job satisfaction and students.

Previous research stated that job satisfaction encompasses a teacher's desire to not only be present for work, but to also fulfill their job duties to their fullest capability. If the teacher with high attendance but poor scores had more job satisfaction, imagine the outcomes they could experience for both themselves and their students. Simultaneously, the teacher who outperforms on evaluations but is chronically absent could see even more gains within themselves as a professional and with the academic performance of their students if they were more satisfied with their job and motivated to be present at work. The Steers and Rhodes' model of employee attendance corroborated the philosophy of job satisfaction and its effect upon employee performance, thereby framing additional possibilities for why the results of this study found no

correlation between teacher attendance and their performance measures.

On the other hand, student absenteeism was a major factor in their own achievement and the performance achievement of teachers. While not necessarily a factor in teacher evaluations, student attendance showed a strong correlation with teacher TVAAS growth scores. This is comparable to the findings from research question six in the sense that students' attendance numbers affected how they performed on their achievement tests, thereby affecting the TVAAS growth scores teachers received. The primary takeaway from the research is the importance of acknowledging the crucial role students play in the educational world. Indeed, educators work to mold and prepare students as they are the central focus of the job; but what is more is that the relationship between teachers and students is reciprocal. Students affect teachers just as much as teachers affect them.

### **Recommendations**

This quantitative archival study was designed to explore the existence of significant relationships of teacher absenteeism with student absenteeism, student achievement on the TNReady test, and teacher achievement (TVAAS growth and evaluation scores). The data collected from 2018-2019 reflected a lack of correlational significance on the part of teacher absenteeism but demonstrated a strong effect due to student absenteeism. The results of the present study can be used to inform school districts about the influence of teacher absenteeism and corroborate the influence of student absenteeism on educational outcomes.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The following recommendations for practice are made based on the findings of the archival study:

1. Since student absenteeism demonstrated a significant relationship with student achievement, it is suggested that schools implement an effective district-wide strategy for combatting chronic student absenteeism.
2. Administration may seek to implement best practices in terms of promoting job satisfaction among employees.
3. It is suggested that administration survey all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents concerning absenteeism and how to further their interests in being present at school; implementation of interests should occur as much as reasonably possible.
4. It is recommended that teachers implement best practices in the classroom to further their effectiveness and use of time with students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. It is recommended that the study be replicated using data from all core academic subject areas to better identify correlations with teacher absenteeism and student absenteeism.
2. It is recommended that the study be replicated with a larger population in order to increase generalizability across the First Region of Tennessee in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of whether or not teacher absenteeism is correlated with teacher and student performance outcomes in rural school districts.
3. It is suggested that the study be replicated with a larger population in order to increase generalizability across the First Region of Tennessee in order to gain a more

comprehensive understanding of whether or not teacher absenteeism is correlated with chronic student absenteeism in rural school districts.

4. A qualitative study may be conducted to determine further information in reference to how teachers perceive their attendance and the effects thereof upon their students and themselves.
5. A longitudinal study would be helpful to understand if and how teacher absenteeism affects student absenteeism, student achievement, and teacher achievement over time as opposed to a single academic year.

Based on the results of the research study, the researcher concludes that student absenteeism is a major factor in student achievement; however, more research must be conducted to determine the extent to which teacher absenteeism influences student outcomes and their own outcomes as professionals. The influence of teacher presence goes beyond the mere fact of being physically present in the classroom; teachers must be present in their instruction and in their support for students in order to see progress. How teachers spend their time in the classroom is the true question, and if teachers can find further ways to accentuate their joy and passion for teaching, then their attendance, and the attendance of students, will organically improve.

## REFERENCES

- Alderfer, C. P. (1969). An empirical test of a new theory of human needs. *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance*, 4(2), 142–175. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(69\)90004-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(69)90004-X)
- Allensworth, E. & Evans, S. (2016). Tackling absenteeism in Chicago. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 98(2), 16-21.
- Balfanz, R. & Byrnes, V. (2012). The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools. *Center for Social Organization of Schools*. Retrieved from [https://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport\\_May16.pdf](https://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf)
- Bekingalar, L. (2015). *Examining opinions and perceptions regarding substitute teachers and their impact on student learning*. (Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida). Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/671a/7e5dd833cc2db9a3453b28fab589ca63a6e5.pdf>
- Boonk, L., Gijsselaers, H. J., Ritzen, H., & Brand-Gruwel, S. (2018). A review of the relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic achievement. *Educational Research Review*, 24(1), 10-30.
- Branco, R. D. (2019). *Decreasing chronic absenteeism rate for students with disabilities: One call or text at a time*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://rdw.rowan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3704&context=etd>
- Bruno, J. (2002). The geographical distribution of teacher absenteeism in large urban school district settings: Implications for school reform efforts aimed at promoting equity and excellence in education. *Education Policy Analysis*, 10(32), 1-3.



- Buck, D. (2019). What's behind the epidemic of chronic teacher absenteeism? *Foundation of Economic Education (FEE)*. Retrieved from <https://fee.org/articles/whats-behind-the-epidemic-of-chronic-teacher-absenteeism/>
- Chang, H. N. & Romero, M. (2008). Present, engaged, and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_837.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf)
- Denham, S. A. (2006). Social-emotional competence as support for school readiness: What is it and how do we assess it? *Early Education and Development*, 17(1), 57-89.
- Durborow, A. D. (2017). *Factors contributing to the problem of student absenteeism in a rural school*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d110/e24578832be451097087b127a6b0d2a7f270.pdf>
- Elger, D. (n.d.) Theory of performance. *Expectations of Faculty in Higher Education, University of Idaho*. Retrieved from [https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ele/scholars/Results/Workshops/Facilitators\\_Institute/Theory%20of%20Performance.pdf](https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ele/scholars/Results/Workshops/Facilitators_Institute/Theory%20of%20Performance.pdf)
- FindLaw. (2020a). Compulsory education laws: Background. Retrieved from <https://education.findlaw.com/education-options/compulsory-education-laws-background.html>
- FindLaw. (2020b). State compulsory education laws. Retrieved from <https://education.findlaw.com/education-options/current-state-developments-in-compulsory-education.html>

- Gase, L. N., DeFosset, A., Perry, R., & Kuo, T. (2016). Youths' perspectives on the reasons underlying school truancy and opportunities to improve school attendance. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(2), 299-320.
- Gershenson, S. (2016). Linking teacher quality, student attendance, and student achievement. *Education Finance and Policy, 11*(2), 125-149.
- Goldstein, D. (2015). Inexcusable absences: Skipping school is a problem, but why is it a crime? *The Marshall Project*. Retrieved from <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/03/06/inexcusable-absences#.mtO3pAORA>
- Gottfried, M. A. (2019). Chronic absenteeism in the classroom context: Effects on achievement. *Urban Education, 54*(1), 3-34.
- Griffith, D. (2017). Public schools' billion-hour teacher absenteeism problem. *Thomas B. Fordham Institute*. Retrieved from <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/public-schools-billion-hour-teacher-absenteeism-problem>
- Haines, S. J., Gross, J. M., Blue-Banning, M., Francis, G. L., & Turnbull, A. P. (2015). Fostering family–school and community–school partnerships in inclusive schools: Using practice as a guide. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 40*(3), 227-239.
- Hansen, M. & Quintero, D. (2020). We should be focusing on absenteeism among teachers, not just students. *Brookings*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/01/27/we-should-be-focusing-on-absenteeism-among-teachers-not-just-students/>

- Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvåg, S. K. (2015). School factors associated with school refusal-and truancy-related reasons for school non-attendance. *Social Psychology of Education, 18*(2), 221-240.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959). *The motivation to work* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Jacob, B. A. & Lovett, K. (2017). Chronic absenteeism: An old problem in search of new answers. *Brookings*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/chronic-absenteeism-an-old-problem-in-search-of-new-answers/>
- Jacobs, K. D. & Kritsonis, W. A. (2007). An analysis of teacher and student absenteeism in urban schools: What the research says and recommendations for educational leaders. *The Lamar University Electronic Journal of Student Research*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499647.pdf>
- Jones Jr., W. L. (1967). *A history of compulsory school attendance and visiting teacher services in Louisiana*. (Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana). Retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2339&context=gradschool\\_disstheses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2339&context=gradschool_disstheses)
- Lee, M., Goodman, C., Dandapani, N., & Kekahio, W. (2015). Review of international research on factors underlying teacher absenteeism. *The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance*. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/642a/231beea6698cf9ace2e647f7e1898de68d4e.pdf>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>

- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence based inquiry* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Merod, A. (2018). School divisions focus on building relationships to reduce chronic student absenteeism. *The Winchester Star*. Retrieved from [https://www.winchesterstar.com/school-divisions-focus-on-building-relationships-to-reduce-chronic-student/article\\_b21c8c9e-55f0-510c-9fe0-2e5e3cb362aa.html](https://www.winchesterstar.com/school-divisions-focus-on-building-relationships-to-reduce-chronic-student/article_b21c8c9e-55f0-510c-9fe0-2e5e3cb362aa.html)
- Miller, R. (2012). Teacher absence as a leading indicator of student achievement. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED536902.pdf>
- Miller, R. (2008). Tales of teacher absence. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2008/10/pdf/teacher\\_absence.pdf](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2008/10/pdf/teacher_absence.pdf)
- Miller, R. T., Murnane, R. J., & Willet, J. B. (2008). Do teacher absences impact student achievement? Longitudinal evidence from one urban school district. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w13356.pdf>
- Moored, G. (2012). A closer look at teacher leave benefits: An apples to apples comparison. *National Council on Teacher Quality*. Retrieved from [https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/A\\_Closer\\_Look\\_at\\_Teacher\\_Leave\\_Benefits\\_An\\_Apples\\_to\\_Apples\\_Comparison\\_NCTQ\\_Report](https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/A_Closer_Look_at_Teacher_Leave_Benefits_An_Apples_to_Apples_Comparison_NCTQ_Report)
- Muijs, D. (2011). *Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS* (Second Edition). Sage Publications.
- Musaddiq, T., Prettyman, A., & Smith, J. (2019). School messaging platforms and student attendance. *Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies: Metro*

- Atlanta Policy Lab for Education*. Retrieved from [https://gpl.gsu.edu/files/2019/06/Attendance-Nudges\\_20190628.pdf](https://gpl.gsu.edu/files/2019/06/Attendance-Nudges_20190628.pdf)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). Fast facts- Teacher trends. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28>
- Nauer, K. (2016). Battling chronic absenteeism. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 98(2), 28-34.
- Nittler, K. & Alfuth, J. (2016). September 2016: Teacher leave. *National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)*. Retrieved from <https://www.nctq.org/blog/September-2016:-Teacher-leave>
- Office of Civil Rights (OCR). (2020). Civil rights data collection. *U.S. Department of Education*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html>
- Patnode, A. H., Gibbons, K., & Edmunds, R. (2018). Attendance and chronic absenteeism: Literature Review. *Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement*. Saint Paul, MN: University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development. Retrieved from <http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/resources/format/pdf/Chronic%20Absenteeism%20Lit%20Review%202018.pdf>
- Renfro, E. S. (2019). *Servant leadership measures in PK-12 schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee). Retrieved from <https://dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5061&context=etd>
- Rogers, T. & Feller, A. (2018). Reducing student absences at scale by targeting parents' misbeliefs. *Nature Human Behavior*. Retrieved from [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/todd\\_rogers/files/rogers\\_sdp\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/todd_rogers/files/rogers_sdp_-_final.pdf)

- Ross, T. (2016). The differential effects of parental involvement on high school completion and postsecondary attendance. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(1), 1-38.
- Rothman, S. (2001). School absence and student background factors: A multilevel analysis. *International Education Journal*, 2(1), 59-68.
- Sawchuk, S. (2015). Teacher evaluation: An issue overview. *Education Week*, 35(3). Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/teacher-performance-evaluation-issue-overview.html>
- Sheldon, S. B. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100, 267–275.  
doi:10.3200/JOER.100.5.267-275.
- Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. *School Community Journal*, 14(2), 39-56.
- Smythe-Leistico, K., & Page, L. C. (2018). Connect-text: Leveraging text message communication to mitigate chronic absenteeism and improve parental engagement in the earliest years of schooling. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 23(1-2), 139-152.
- State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE). (2017). Policy brief: Understanding TVAAS student growth data and Tennessee's teacher evaluation system. *TNScore*. Retrieved from [https://tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/TVAAS\\_PolicymakerBrief2017.pdf](https://tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/TVAAS_PolicymakerBrief2017.pdf)
- Swaak, T. (2018). Nearly 30 percent of teachers are chronically absent: How Rhode Island is using ESSA to move the needle. *The74Million.org*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.the74million.org/nearly-30-percent-of-teachers-are-chronically-absent-how-rhode-island-is-using-essa-to-move-the-needle/>
- Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). (2019). Chronic absenteeism. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/chronic-absenteeism.html>
- Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). (2020a). Educator evaluation. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/education/teaching-in-tennessee/teacher-evaluation.html>
- Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). (2020b). TNReady. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/education/assessment/tnready.html>
- Tennessee Department of Education: TEAM (TDOE). (2020c) TVAAS. Retrieved from <https://team-tn.org/tvaas/>
- Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). (2019). Tennessee value-added assessment system. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/tvaas.html>
- UKEssays. (2018). Managing absenteeism theories in organisational behaviour management essay. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/management/managing-absenteeism-theories-in-organisational-behaviour-management-essay.php?vref=1>
- Wang, M. T., Brinkworth, M., & Eccles, J. (2013). Moderating effects of teacher–student relationship in adolescent trajectories of emotional and behavioral adjustment. *Developmental psychology*, 49(4), 690.
- Wang, M. & Sheikh-Khalil, S. (2014). Does parent involvement matter for student achievement and mental health in high school? *Child Development*, 85(2), 610-625.
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute Authors (WPI). (2019). Research methodology. *Worcester Polytechnic Institute*. Retrieved from <https://libguides.wpi.edu/c.php?g=355454&p=2396446>

## APPENDIX A

## IRB Approval



Date: July 19, 2019

From: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Milligan College

Re: *The Relationship between Teacher Absenteeism and TVAAS Growth and Observation Scores, Student Achievement, and Student Absenteeism in a Rural School District in the First Region of Tennessee*

Submission type: Revised Submission

Dear Alexa,

On behalf of the Milligan College Institutional Review Board (IRB), we are writing to inform you that your study *The Relationship between Teacher Absenteeism and TVAAS Growth and Observation Scores, Student Achievement, and Student Absenteeism in a Rural School District in the First Region of Tennessee* has been approved as expedited. This approval also indicates that you have fulfilled the IRB requirements for Milligan College.

All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission, meaning that you will follow the research plan you have outlined here, use approved materials, and follow college policies.

Take special note of the following important aspects of your approval:

- Any changes made to your study require approval from the IRB Committee before they can be implemented as part of your study. Contact the IRB Committee at [IRB@milligan.edu](mailto:IRB@milligan.edu) with your questions and/or proposed modifications.
- If there are any unanticipated problems or complaints from participants during your data collection, you must notify the Milligan College IRB Office within 24 hours of the data collection problem or complaint.

The Milligan College IRB Committee is pleased to congratulate you on the approval of your research proposal. Best wishes as you conduct your research! If you have any questions about your IRB Approval, please contact the IRB Office and copy your faculty advisor if appropriate on the communication.

Regards,

The IRB Committee



## APPENDIX B

Letter to School District  
Permission to Conduct Study

TO: \_\_\_\_\_, Director of Schools

FROM: Alexa L. Renfro Transki

DATE: July 5, 2019

SUBJECT: District Permission to Conduct Study

I would like to request your permission to conduct a research study in \_\_\_\_\_ as part of my doctoral dissertation and action research project at Milligan College. The purpose of this correlational quantitative study is to explore the relationship between teacher absenteeism and TVAAS growth and observation scores, student achievement, and student absenteeism.

In order to complete the research study, I will need to access teacher names, teacher absences, teacher TVAAS growth and observation scores, student names, student absences, and student achievement TCAP scores. I will be using teacher absences and scores and student absences and scores from 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019. Finding a relationship between these factors could assist the school district in creating awareness of teacher absenteeism and its effects upon student absenteeism and student achievement scores, as well as its impact on teacher TVAAS growth and observation scores. With the awareness in mind, teachers may be reflective of their absences and how it impacts their own performance and the academic performance and attendance of their students. The study may also support decisions made by district personnel to better determine if a change in teacher absence policy must occur. It may also help to isolate a possible factor in low performance and promote measures to reduce teacher absenteeism in order to improve teacher and student achievement.

While identifiable information may be used in the process of gathering teacher and student data, all identifiable information will remain confidential and will be disposed of properly. Names and schools will not be referenced in this study. Confidentiality of students, teachers, and the school district will be upheld with the utmost integrity.

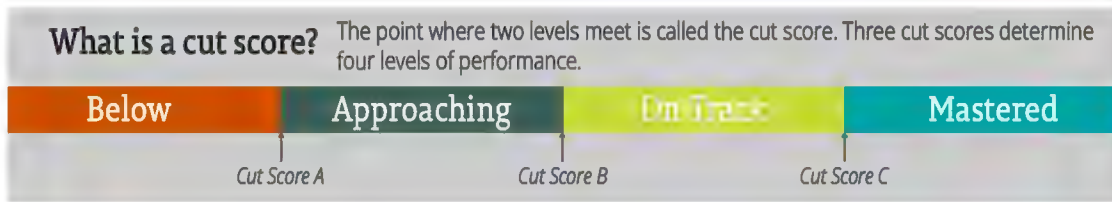
I will be conducting this study under the supervision of Milligan College. I believe the results of this study will allow \_\_\_\_\_ to better serve students and teachers. I sincerely appreciate your consideration and cooperation. Thank you!

Best,

Alexa L. Renfro Transki

APPENDIX C

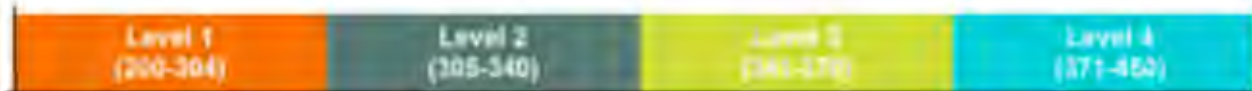
TNReady Performance Level Indicators



2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Math\*

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade English/Language Arts\*

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Math



3<sup>rd</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



4<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



4<sup>th</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



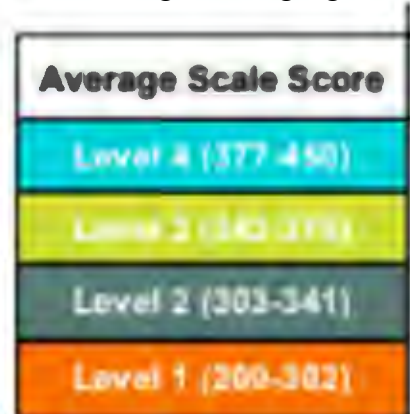
5<sup>th</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



6<sup>th</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



7<sup>th</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



8<sup>th</sup> Grade English/Language Arts



\*Note: Performance level indicators not available.