

**The Effects of an Examination Exemption Policy on  
Absenteeism and Student Achievement**

Timothy W. Shelby

The Effects of an Examination Exemption Policy on Absenteeism  
and Student Achievement

A Field Study

Presented to

The College of Graduate Studies

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Education Specialist

Timothy W. Shelby

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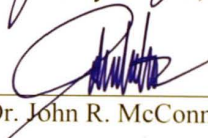
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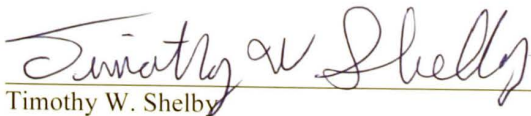


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## DEDICATION

This field study is dedicated to my family. Without their constant support and encouragement, it would have been impossible to stay focused and complete this program of study. This journey of being a student and teacher was not easy but they cheered me on the entire way.

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## ABSTRACT

TIMOTHY WADE SHELBY. The Effects of an Examination Exemption Policy on Absenteeism and Student Achievement (under the direction of Dr. James Gary Stewart).

Students across the United States are missing school at an alarming rate. School districts wish to combat this issue by developing incentives to increase student attendance and promote achievement likewise. An examination exemption policy will provide students with a motive to attend school. Students that attend school and have a limited number of absences will be able to become exempt from their final examinations under an examination exemption policy. The effects of an examination exemption policy regarding student absenteeism and student achievement were studied to determine if such a policy has a statistical difference between the variables. Gender and socioeconomic status will also be examined to determine their level of involvement. This information can be used by Robertson County schools to determine the effectiveness of the examination exemption policy. This study may eventually provide the district with information to adjust the policy for maximum effectiveness.



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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Currently, the State of Tennessee has a compulsory attendance policy that mandates students 17 years of age and younger attend school to receive an education (TCA 49-6-3001). This mandatory attendance allows students to receive the proper instruction that they need in order to flourish (Chronic Absenteeism, n.d.). However, students who do not attend school regularly do not receive the appropriate instruction required to maximize their learning experience. This has led to students being at-risk for not completing school in a timely manner and having lower achievement scores, especially those with chronic absenteeism. Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) pointed out that attendance can also indicate dangers for future education of students. Students with attendance issues are also not learning the proper skills that are needed later in life. These skills include good habits for work and self-discipline. Students with underdeveloped work habits will have issues achieving and maintaining employment later in life (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). In the 2013-2014 school year, more than six million students across the United States missed 15 or more days of school (Chronic Absenteeism, n.d.). Therefore, many school districts are developing incentives to combat the issue of absenteeism. A rural school district in Middle Tennessee has developed an examination exemption policy. The examination exemption policy allows students to become exempt from final examination based on a set number of allowed absences. The exemption policy for this school district is based on three criteria: grades, number of absences and tardies, and behavior (Robertson County School Board Policy 4.7001).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this field study was to investigate the influence of an examination exemption policy on high school student absenteeism and achievement. The independent variable is the examination exemption policy that has been established and implemented by the rural Middle Tennessee school district used for this study. The dependent variables for this study are the number of absences among high school students and achievement levels with regards to end-of-course (EOC) testing now known as TNReady. The examination exemption policy was implemented starting with the 2015-2016 school year. For this study, students in grades 11 and 12 will be included in the sample. These students' absenteeism will be examined beginning their freshman year of high school until the completion of the 2016-2017 school year. Absentee numbers will be examined for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years before the examination exemption policy was implemented. Absentee numbers will be reexamined for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years after the examination exemption policy went into effect. EOC scores will be examined for the same school years to measure achievement levels before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy.

### **Significance of the Study**

In the realm of absenteeism, numerous factors present themselves which helps to explain the reasons behind a student absenteeism. Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) examined factors associated with absenteeism and found that most absences relate to the level of commitment that a student and a parent have toward the educational setting. School systems can use this information to create a culture that can encourage student attendance.



Several groups will benefit from this study. The first group to benefit from this study is the school used in this study. The school can use the results to decrease student absenteeism, especially those with chronic absenteeism, in the future. The school district will also benefit by seeing the effects that school board policy is having on a local school. The results can be used to obtain success in the other schools within the school district and how the policy might be altered to further improve student attendance. This study can also lead to further investigation into the topic.

### **Research Questions**

1. Does the existence of an examination exemption policy lead to the decrease in the number of absences among high school students?
2. Does the existence of an examination exemption policy lead to an increase in achievement levels among high school students?
3. Do students from low socioeconomic status attend school less when compared to peers from a higher socioeconomic status?
4. Does gender affect the number of absences seen among high school students?

### **Null Hypothesis**

1. There will be no statistically significant differences in the number of absences for students prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the number of absences for students after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.
2. There will be no statistically significant differences between student EOC scores prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and student EOC scores after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.

3. There will be no statistically significant difference between the number of absences among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students from high socioeconomic backgrounds.
4. There will be no statistically significant differences between the number of absences seen in male and female students.

### **Limitations**

1. The first limitation to this study centers around a change to the policy after the school board voted to implement the policy. At the inception of the policy, students were able to be exempt from both mid-term examinations and final examinations for the class. The criteria for the policy reset during each grading period. After an examination of the wording of the policy, the school board decided that the policy is only meant for the exemption from the final exam.
2. The second limitation to this study was that the test used to measure achievement changed during the course of the study timeframe. During the beginning of the timeframe for the study, the State of Tennessee used the EOC to assess achievement levels in certain core subject areas. In the 2015-2016 school year, the State of Tennessee made a change in testing to move away from solely multiple-choice test items. The new test is now known as TNReady.
3. The third limitation to the study was an unusually high amount of absences due to sickness. This high number of sick students occurred during the spring semester of the 2015-2016 school year. During this time, the Director of Schools closed school for 2 days plus the weekend and an already planned school closure in order to combat more students being exposed.

### **Assumptions**

1. One assumption in this study is that teachers keep a clear and accurate account of student attendance for their class.
2. Another assumption is that the examination exemption policy is followed with fidelity among all faculty members in the school.
3. Another assumption is that students perform to the best of their abilities on EOC and TNReady testing.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. Compulsory attendance – “The compulsory attendance law requires all children in Tennessee to attend school between six (6) and seventeen (17) year of age, both inclusive” (Tennessee Board of Education, 2017).
2. Chronic Absenteeism – Students that have missed a minimum of 15 school days in a year (Chronic Absenteeism, n.d.).
3. End of Course (EOC) – The end-of-course exam is a multiple-choice test that is given to high school students in certain courses to assess their achievement levels for the course (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2016).
4. TNReady – “State test with questions that mirror what students are expected to know and be able to do in order to be on track for the next step in their educational journey that includes tests in math, English language arts, social studies, and science in grades 3-11” (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2016).
5. Truancy – “Students miss a set number of days from school without valid reasoning” (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The importance of attending school to receive an appropriate education and reach set achievement levels has been examined through various studies. Moreover, the importance of an education dates back to the creation of the United States when the founding fathers charged the individual states with ensuring the education of the youth. The states have taken this charge and ensured that everyone is guaranteed the right to a free education. Compulsory attendance laws have been established to mandate that all children from the ages of 6 to 17 attend school. In Tennessee, this law is known as Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) Title 49, Section 6, Chapter 3001 (Blevins, 2009).

Absenteeism is a problem numerous school districts across the country face. A more thorough inspection of what absenteeism is needed. Once this understanding has been derived, then researchers can provide further insight on the issue. To combat this issue, researchers need to understand the factors that cause absenteeism. Understanding the motives behind and ramifications of student absences are important. The data can be used to help federal, state, and district boards of education develop programs to reduce the numbers of absences seen in the educational setting.

Absenteeism can have a profound impact on a student outside of the realm of education as well. When students are not present at school, they cannot receive the proper education that is needed later in life, whether this includes students attending college or those students that will be entering the workforce. Students are learning critical life skills during their educational career. For example, students are learning to become disciplined at this point in their life. Students will need this discipline in college



to meet deadlines and to ensure they attend classes when no one is present to monitor their actions. This discipline translates into the workforce as well. In the workforce, students will have demands placed on them and will need to ensure that they are present during times that are required for them.

### **Identification of Variables**

During the first part of the study, student attendance before and after the implementation of an examination exemption policy was selected to serve as the dependent variable. The independent variable for this study related to the presence of an examination exemption policy. This independent variable was chosen in response to a rural school district in Middle Tennessee that implemented such a policy during the 2014-2015 school year. The examination exemption policy allowed students a set number of absences (excused whole-day, excused early dismissals, and excused tardies) while being exempt from their final examination in each course. A student also had to meet a grade requirement and behavior requirement. This study also used the independent variables of gender, behavior, and socioeconomic status. These factors were also included in determining their role in student attendance. Behavior particularly was included in the study since the examination exemption policy for the rural school district also included behavior as part of the exemption policy.

The second and final part of this study continued to use the presence of the examination exemption policy, gender, and socioeconomic status as the independent variables. An examination of achievement levels for students will serve as the dependent variable in this portion of the study. Achievement levels were obtained from EOC scores in the subject area of English. The subject area of English was chosen due to the



presence of an EOC for each grade level of English and all students are required to take this examination. However, it should be noted that students in grade 12 do not have a required EOC for any subject. Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) discussed the fact that student achievement is tied to the presence of a student's attendance. Blevins (2009) also stated, "regular school attendance precedes school achievement" (p. 12). Therefore, this study considered the number of days that a student missed in relation to their achievement on state testing.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

An understanding of absenteeism must be established to reduce the number of absences that are seen daily across the United States. Public education is based on the notion that students will attend school on a consistent basis (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). People across the nation and the world are of the same mind that for our youth to receive an education, they must be in school. However, millions of students are absent from the classroom daily. When students are not in the educational setting, their ability to learn is hindered and their success through class participation is lowered (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016).

Knoster (2016) defined chronic absenteeism as any instance that a student has multiple or continued absences in excess of 15 days in one school year, regardless of excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism can also be defined as a student missing 10 percent or more of the total number of school days in one school year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Typically, this means that students are missing roughly 18 days of school in one year. Some districts have a higher number of days for classifying a student as chronically absent, 20 days, while others have a lower number of days, 15 (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

However, this is also subject to the school district's policies. This number is not dependent upon the excuse for an absence, but merely the total number of days that a student missed in each school year. Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) also pointed out that the number of absences does not have to reflect an entire school day. Students may only miss one class but may miss this class on a continual basis resulting in chronic absenteeism from that class. There are even cases where a student was classified as excessively or severally chronically absent. For this case, the student was absent from school 20 percent or greater of the school year. This translated into the students missing a minimum of 40 school days in one academic year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

The concern that presents itself with the severity of chronic absenteeism is the fact that schools and districts across the nation are not required to report this number to the state or federal level (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). A few states across the nation do gather this information and make it available for others to see and use. More states appear to be including this information in their attendance reports. The reasoning behind this is because chronic absenteeism has been found to be an early indicator of student dropout rates (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The chance of a student dropping out of school increased significantly with just one year of chronic absenteeism (Knoster, 2016). However, this lack of reporting causes an injustice to the field of education. School districts cannot properly address the issue of chronic absenteeism when the numbers are not understood. Another injustice is served to the students when they are not correctly identified as chronically absent. Methods to reduce the number of absences cannot be implemented until this crucial step has taken place. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) point out that this lack of evidence was the reason that many different modifications in the field of

education fail to have any effect. They continued to argue that not addressing such an issue harmed any improvements made in education, especially when our world today relies on the education of the youth.

The identification of the types of students that are more likely to miss 10 percent of school or more is essential to reducing chronic absenteeism. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) found that students from low socio-economic families tend to be the students with the most cases of chronic absenteeism. They also focused on the fact that these students are the ones that needed to receive an education the most in order to overcome this hurdle and move away from poverty. There is evidence from some states that one in every five students do not attend school on a consistent basis. This number changes to one in every three students who do not attend consistently in areas with high poverty (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Another subset of students that are more likely to miss more than 10 percent of schools is those with disabilities (Knoster, 2016). Race and ethnicity can also be used to determine which students will have a higher likelihood of chronic absenteeism. Native Americans have a 50 percent greater chance of being chronically absent when compared to the Caucasian population (Knoster, 2016).

Students in special education are also affected by chronic absenteeism. Usually, students in special education are found to have a variety of physical health issues and mental health issues that can cause them to become chronically absent (Christani, Revetti, Young, & Larwin, 2015). Knoster (2016) points out that, “students with disabilities are 34.0% more likely to be chronically absent than their peers, while English Learner (EL) students are 22.0% more likely” (p. 5).



Teague (2002) also found that absenteeism tended to increase during high school. Along with this information, the study revealed that during the first three years of high school, girls were more likely to miss school when compared to boys. However, this does not mean that chronic absenteeism only begins once students reach the high school level. Knoster (2016) suggests that a student who does not attend school on a consistent basis from an early age will only increase the chances of becoming or staying chronically absent in later years of education. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) discovered that students are chronically absent from the beginning of their educational career. The number of students who are chronically absent decreases as students move to grades four and five. An increase in the number of students chronically absent begins again when a student enters middle school and continues to increase throughout the rest of high school with grade 12 experiencing the highest number of students who are chronically absent (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Because of the reality of not being able to accurately measure chronic absenteeism, it is not known how widespread this issue actually is. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) were able to find six states that collected data on chronic absenteeism. The researchers could take this data and generalize to the entire nation an overall estimate of the number of students that are consistently absent from school. In the United States, there are estimated to be about 50 million students that are a part of the public education system. Of these students, it is then estimated that between 5 and 7.5 million students do not attend school on a consistent basis (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

The number of students that do not attend school on a regular basis is astounding. To truly understand the magnitude of this number, one must understand how this number

is created. It should also be noted that reporting categories from each of the six states used in the study by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) do not measure chronic absenteeism in the same manner. The thought of an urban school district would bring to mind that more students would be chronically absent due to a higher level of poverty and a greater distribution of ethnicities in comparison to a rural school district. However, in the state of Florida, the county with the greatest chronic absentee rate is Taylor County. This county is a rural school district and sees over 25 percent of its' students missing more than a month of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). However, it should be noted that there is no statistical difference in the relationship between urban and rural areas.

One must also understand that chronic absenteeism can also begin in elementary school. In some school districts, there are up to a third of elementary school students that do not attend school on a regular basis. This number continues to increase as students progress through higher levels of education. For the high school level of education, one-half or more of the students are not attending school regularly (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). When examining the middle and high school years, it was found that almost half of students have missed at least a month of school and 18 percent of students missing two or more months of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

An examination of how often students are likely to miss school also influences chronic absenteeism. For some students, their absences were random within a one-year time frame while others showed a more persistent level of absences (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). A closer examination of the student's absences reveals how many times a student was chronically absent during their middle school and high school career for a group of students followed from grade 6 through grade 12. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) showed



that close to 40 percent of these students were chronically absent in three years meaning that at least three months of school were missed during this time span. The study also found that 10 percent of the students were chronically absent for five or more years within the study period. This resulted in a student missing a minimum of half a year of school or more. This portion of the study helped the researchers conclude that chronic absenteeism is not isolated to one school year in many cases, but affects subsequent years as well (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

### **Truancy**

The idea of truancy varies among countless individuals in education. One state or district might qualify students with four unexcused absences as being truant, while another considers a student to be truant for missing one class without a valid excuse (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009). Blevins (2009) described truancy as an unexcused absence according to teachers, districts, and student. In this case, the student had no valid reason for missing school and did not try to provide a reason for their absence. Another definition of the term was when students miss a set number of days from school without valid reasoning (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) also gave the impression that truancy did not give a clear picture as to the overall total of absences seen across the United States. School districts are aware that students can and have to miss school for certain reasons. Therefore, many districts attempt to limit the number of days that a student is out before a student is deemed as truant, usually by allowing students to have a certain number of unexcused absences. Once this set limit has been reached, the district can then have the student filed as truant.

Students that have been deemed as truant will be recorded as such. There are some states that require both the student and the guardians to appear in court for the infraction and could be liable for a time in jail (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009). This is in an attempt to have parents and students understand the importance of an education as well as comply with attendance laws governing each state. However, Enea and Dafinoiu (2009) found that such measures are often ineffective. The experience can be haunting to an already struggling family and would result in the child missing more school due to being held in detention.

One must consider the factors that are causing a student to become truant. The reasons that a student becomes truant from school can range from emotional problems all the way to teenage pregnancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009). The teachers, school, and district must keep in mind that students have a variety of factors that happen in their daily lives outside of a school building. There are children that do not feel safe at home and cherish any thought of being at school to escape the horrors of their home-life. There are also students that have some of the same fears when they enter the school building. For them, these fears are a driving cause for not attending school. Blevins (2009) also reminded us that truancy does not mean that a student is missing the entire school day. The student can be present at school but skips certain classes during the day. Truancy can also carry with it the stigmatism of irresponsible behavior that ranges from small crimes to extreme violence (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009). Blevins (2009) adds to this ideology by stating that truancy is often a warning of delinquent behavior.

In order to reduce the number of truant students, districts must develop a better protocol to encourage students that fit this profile to attend school. Enea and Dafinoiu

(2009) share several attempts that have been made to reduce the number of truanancies across the United States. For high school students, many are seeking the privilege to earn a driver's license. For some states, the ability to receive this license is tied to school grades and attendance. One school is even mentioned going to the extreme of purchasing alarm clocks for students. Other methods that are discussed by Enea and Dafinoiu (2009) in their study are the use of motivational interviews. For the purpose of their study, behavior contracts were used in order to reduce the number of truanancies. In the contract, students and a mentor developed a contract showing the number of days the student was allowed to miss during the next week. The following week, a discussion would take place and a new contract would be made. Along with the contract, a reinforcement was used. However, for the reinforcement to be effective, it must happen immediately and be continuous from the onset of the program (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009).

### **Causes of Absenteeism**

Absenteeism cannot be reduced until an understanding of what leads students to be absent is confirmed. Absenteeism is a disease that courses through the halls of a school building. Students see the attendance of others and feel encouraged that they too can be absent from school (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). Students are absent from school due to a multitude of reasons. The reasons range from health issues, to environmental factors of the school, to personal factors that are unrelated to school. One must also realize that the reason a student is absent is different for each and every student in a school building and across the nation. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) placed these reasons into three categories in which students did not attend school:



1. Sometimes students cannot come to school because circumstances or obligations compel them to be somewhere else during the school day.
2. On other occasions, students will not attend school because they are actively avoiding interactions or events in school or on the way to or from school.
3. Finally, sometimes students just do not go to school, not because there is something preventing or compelling them to stay away, but because they (or their parents or guardians) decide not to attend because they would prefer to be elsewhere, or just do not want to make the effort required to get to school (p. 29).

Reforms to reduce absenteeism can be created, however, until the root cause for each student is determined, the reforms have no power. Teague (2002) stressed the fact that attendance practices during this time in a young person's life will continue to adulthood.

One must understand that there are reasons that present themselves in which the student cannot go to school. The reason that often ranks the highest in regards to the reason that a student cannot go to school is due to illness (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Illness can have a large range and can be severe depending on chronic conditions.

However, illness is usually not linked to chronic absenteeism. Balfanz and Byrnes state that less than six percent of students miss more than 11 days of school because of illness.

Christani, Revetti, Young, and Larwin (2015) found that student health comprises 36 percent of attendance issues while mental health is responsible for 24 percent of attendance. Students with disabilities will often be absent numerous times in relation to illness or injury.

The home life of a student will also influence attendance at school. If a child does not have a clear picture of where they are living, school will become less of a priority in the child's life. Transition times for a family will also influence the living conditions for a student and family. If the family has to move due to financial issues or if a child is in foster care, then he or she might change schools frequently resulting in an increase in the number of days absent from school (Balfanz & Barnes, 2012). This is also known as a family factor (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). For families that live in poverty, the student may need to work to help support the family. This can cause the student to see school as less important since the need to provide for the family is greater. A student may also have to help care for younger siblings during the school day so that parents can work (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The parent has a great control on a child's attendance at school. If the parent does not view school as important, then the student may not see the importance of education either (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) allude to the fact that today students are managed less by parents when compared to previous generations. One final reason that students cannot go to school, relates to the involvement with the court system. Students may have to miss school to attend court hearings or are detained for behaviors committed outside of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Some students across the nation will not go to school for a multitude of reasons. These reasons come from a more individual factor resulting in students usually not feeling safe at the school (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). Students are trying to avoid a fear in this instance. Students that are often bullied, harassed, or encounter a negative interaction on the travel to and from school decide that it is more productive to



be absent from school than to face such consequences. (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

There are other students that lack confidence in themselves and have not developed social skills to interact with their peers (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). Adolescents are continually trying to discover themselves as they grow and mature (Blevins, 2009). This discovery can result in the student wanting to remove themselves from any situation that puts pressure on them to interactive with others. For some, the lack of clean clothes or clothes like their peers deters them from attending school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) suggested that siblings also influence the attendance rate of other siblings. When one child witnesses another student miss school, then they are more likely to mimic that behavior.

There are also certain times in a child's life in which the fear of the unknown hinders wanted behavior. When a student enters a new school, there is a certain level of insecurity (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). During this time period, students are uncertain if they will be welcome in the school, if friends will be made, or if they will be accepted for themselves. This feeling of uncertainty does not always come from the fact that a student has moved to a new area. When students enter certain grade levels, kindergarten, sixth grade, and typically ninth grade, they are also moving to a new school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The new school environment might present a longer than normal adjustment period or an unfriendly school environment.

There are also students who give no reason for not attending school. For students such as this, school does not hold value to either themselves or their parents (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). This lack of caring seen by the student can also be motivated by different school factors. The rules that govern school attendance can cause a student to feel less

welcome and can result in a greater absentee rate (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016). This often comes when a school does not consistently enforce the rules regarding attendance. The relationship with teachers and administrators will also influence the attendance rate of students. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) indicate that more than 50 percent of students feel that teachers are unaware of the absence or do not care when they are absent. Demir and Akman Karabeyoglu (2016) concluded similar findings in that “students of teachers who do not respect students, ignore the variety of needs of students and cannot manage the class have greater absenteeism” (p. 48). The school needs to create an environment of caring. School environments that a student does not feel a commitment to will result in greater absentee rates (Demir & Akman Karabeyoglu, 2016).

One final reason for absenteeism relates to the academics of the school. Teague (2002) brings to one’s attention that ineffective teaching, a poor learning environment, and unsuitable curriculum as reasons for absenteeism. Christani et al. (2015) discussed the fact that academic boredom and other academic related issues account for 40 percent of the reasons that some high school students miss school. Students that have a greater relationship with a teacher will become more engaged in class and will have less academic issues (Blevins, 2009). Discipline will also result in a student being absent from school in the form of suspension. This method not only removes the student from the classroom but school as a whole (Christani et al., 2015). Research completed by Christani et al. (2015) suggested that suspension is harmful because students are less likely to complete the education. Students that are behavior problems will also transfer these unwanted behaviors into the community during the time of suspension. This

transference of behavior can further absences when students become in trouble on the criminal level.

### **Methods to Reduce Absenteeism**

Efforts to reduce the number of days that students are absent have taken place in many different forms within the educational setting. Boards of education and researchers will need to examine each method to determine the effects it holds on absenteeism. The most prevalent method that needs to be employed by all schools is to track attendance with fidelity (Knoster, 2016). Students and parents need to be made aware that attendance is not to be taken lightly. With the tracking of attendance, data can then be used to determine trends in rates and identify students that are chronically absent (Knoster, 2016). With the implementation of interventions, all stakeholders need to be involved, student, parent, and school, and make use of different tier levels (Knoster, 2016). Knoster (2016) suggests that the tiers:

- Promote consistent and regular attendance for all students at tier one (e.g., explicitly teaching school rules, displaying attendance data, encouraging parents and students to track attendance.)
- Identifying and initiating individualized interventions with students at risk of falling into patterns of chronic absenteeism at tier two (e.g., establishing routines where a student must check in or check out with an adult at the start and end of each day, assigning student/peer mentors/buddies, providing more routine attendance reports to a student's parents)
- Conducting a comprehensive and intense intervention for students engaging in chronic absenteeism at tier three (e.g., functional behavioral assessments,



ongoing consultations with physicians, mental health professionals, family members, court officials if appropriate) (p. 7).

The ability to track such data will help reduce the number of students that are seen absent on a daily basis (Knoster, 2016).

Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) indicated that a Baltimore school has experienced a drop in the number of chronic absenteeisms. The school district decided that it would be best to split large middle school grades and incorporated K-8 and 6-12 schools. The school system also began to use a tracking system to monitor those students that miss in excess of 10 percent of school. One final approach that was taken by Baltimore school was to begin partnerships with organizations throughout the city and with local government agencies to promote school attendance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The incentives listed above work for this school district, but does that mean that all school districts will see the same results. One issue that is also seen with attendance is the lack of communication that is held with parents when students are absent (Knoster, 2016). This lack of communication demonstrates an even greater need for enhanced attendance tracking.

Students and parents should be the ones that are held responsible for student attendance. This mentality brings relief to the teacher and school, but this often means that schools and school districts will not take the time to examine the culture of the school to see how this might cause absenteeism (Railsback, 2004). However, many school districts are beginning to take different approaches to create cultures that promote attendance (Railsback, 2004). The approaches can take on many different forms depending on the need that a school district identifies. Different incentives will be

examined but one must keep in mind that no single approach is the deciding factor to reduce absenteeism.

Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) suggested different types of programs a school district can employ to reduce absenteeism. The first program that is discussed is known as Diplomas Now. The Diplomas Now program works with non-profits to create positive cultures in schools. The program also uses a system to identify students that are beginning to stray from the path needed to finish school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). This is a program that has paired with an elementary school in Boston to reduce absent students. Through this program, an incentive is held for students that are present for at least 95 percent of a 45-day grading period (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). If a student meets this requirement, then he or she is allowed to attend the “attenDANCE”.

The city of New York is home to more than 1.1 million students. During Michael Bloomberg’s term as mayor, he had students receive wake-up calls from different celebrities encouraging them to get up and go to school. Throughout the city, signs were posted in high traffic areas that asked parents if they knew the location of their child at the beginning of the school day (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Bloomberg also created a “task force” in which they meet and mentor the young students. This program has caused a reduction in the number of students that are chronically absent in the pilot schools (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Attendance Works has the goal of working with schools to reduce the number of students that are consistently absent from school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Many states and local school districts have data on student attendance, but it is not used. Attendance Works wishes to take this information and analyze the data to make informative decision



regarding trends in absenteeism. The state and local school district can take the information provided to set annual goals to reduce the number of students absent. The information in the state of Oregon was made public so that everyone in the state was aware of the issue at hand (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). When the information is available to the local, state, and federal levels, current policies must be examined to help understand and reduce the number of absences seen across the nation.

Another method to reduce the number of absences is known as wrap-around services. The goal of this type of service is to provide support to students at the school that would normally require the student to be absent (Knoster, 2016). In Tennessee, the city of Memphis has begun the effort to include health care in the schools by ensuring that all schools have a nurse present in each school across the district. Knoster (2016) stated, “school data suggests inadequate staffing of medical professionals leads to 18% of students missing at least 18 days of class due to health-related concerns” (p.10). One last strategy that is introduced by Knoster (2016) is that of game-based learning. Through this method, the teacher incorporates a level of gameplay to the curriculum. This allows for students to become better engaged and promote attendance and class participation (Knoster, 2016).

The transition from one school to a new school is a frightening process. There is an increase in the number of students that are absent as they move into high school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In order to reduce the number of students that are absent because of moving schools and to make the transition process easier, freshman academies can be used. The freshman academy is designed for the sole purpose of helping students move from middle and high school (Railsback, 2004). Along with easing the transition

from one school to the next calmer, students must also feel that the faculty and staff of the school care about them. In order for the faculty and staff to show that caring relationship, respect and fairness must be shown to all students (Railsback, 2004). This will allow the student to become part of the overall culture of the school. To ensure that a caring relationship is maintained and established, a mentoring program can be established. Mentoring programs have been shown to create better attitudes toward the thought of school which would in turn increase attendance (Railsback, 2004).

### **Effect Compulsory Attendance Policies**

**school** In the realm of public education, students are required to attend school to gain an education. One must consider the implications of a compulsory attendance policy and the effects that it ultimately has on education. Since elementary and secondary education requires attendance, research on this subject tends to focus on the collegiate level. The justification of an attendance policy is to promote attendance in school so that learning takes place (Gardner, 2012). After all, students that are present in class have a better chance of increased performance in comparison to peers that miss class repeatedly (Snyder, Lee-Partridge, Jarmoszko, Petkova, & D'Onofrio, 2014). This idea is upheld by the fact the education students' learning was lacking and performance suffered (Longhurst, 1999).

There are critics to the existence of such a policy. Snyder, Lee-Partridge, Jarmoszko, Petkova, and D'Onofrio (2014) discussed the feelings shared by an individual who believes that there is not enough evidence to link attendance and performance. In fact, it is felt that an attendance policy would have the opposite effect and cause a student to leave school. Moore (2005) found that students that have the importance of attendance

stressed are more likely to attend the class rather than the implementation of an attendance policy. The attendance policy, in this case, resulted in a penalty for a student with unwarranted absences from the class. Moore (2005) found that this policy did not reduce the number of absences.

The researcher must also consider the type of students with regards to the effect of an attendance policy. Some students are better prepared for academic challenges while another student will have a more trying time with the same concept. The question becomes, do students with greater academic levels have a greater chance of attending school in comparison to a peer that struggles academically (Snyder et al., 2014)? Recall that students do not like to attend school when there is a perceived threat of being different or made fun of. Students that struggle academically may feel that others will perceive them as different or will be harassed. Generally, students with a greater grade point average (GPA) will want to attend school to maintain this level of academic excellence and fear that missing school will cause them to have a decrease in GPA from a lack of understanding material (Snyder et al., 2014). Snyder et al. (2014) did find a statistical relationship between a compulsory attendance policy and higher achieving students. Students with higher academic performance did have better class performance when mandated attendance was set in comparison to average and low academic performers.

The study performed by Schillerstrom and Lutz (2013) sought to examine the effects of an attendance policy on medical students during a portion of their clerkship. The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between student attendance and performance on the clinical test. At the onset of the study, students that were found to be



absent 30 percent during the time of the medical rotation (Schillerstrom & Lutz, 2013). An attendance policy was developed during this study in which medical students were given the chance to acquire three excused absences and have no questions asked as to why the student would not be present. Students were made aware of this policy at the onset of the program and were told this is not meant as merely a day off. Students that did not exceed the policy were allowed to take their exit exam upon the conclusion of the program. Those that exceeded three absences were required to make up days before being allowed to take the exam (Schillerstrom & Lutz, 2013). The results of this study show that students with a lower number of absences did score higher on the exit exam when compared to their peers with a higher number of absences (Schillerstrom & Lutz, 2013). This study leads one to believe that an attendance policy does influence the overall outcome of a students' education.

Self (2012) conducted a study on a macroeconomics class with regards to an attendance policy. The goal of this study was to determine if an attendance policy had any effect on absenteeism and if so, to share the idea that all colleges implement such a policy. Through this study, three groups of students were examined. One group did not have an attendance policy while two others groups were presented with an attendance policy at the onset of the class. However, there was a difference in the attendance policies for the experimental groups. Self (2012) used a positive attendance policy with one group in which students could receive a total of 10 extra points for not being absent. This number of extra points decreased with absences. Self (2012) used a negative attendance policy for the second group in which students lost points, five points for

missing a set number of days depending on the semester. Students incurred additional point deductions for every two or three absences.

Through this study, it was found that seniors are more likely to miss a class than freshmen. Also, if the class was in the early morning, males were more likely to be absent (Self, 2012). Self (2012) did support the claim that students with greater academic excellence were less likely to miss class. Students that were under an attendance policy do attend class on a more consistent basis when compared to a class that is told they are expected to be present, but not required. Self (2012) found that a class with a negative attendance policy is likely to have a smaller number of student that are absent. Students did not want to continue to receive grade deductions for absences. Students under the positive attendance policy did not continue to receive a reward after missing a set number of days. Their reward was conditional and had little to lose by missing more class (Self, 2012). Self (2012) concluded the study by showing that attendance policies with clear boundaries are effective in reducing the number of absences seen by students.

### **Examination Exemption**

During a students' high school career, they will face many different examinations. There is an effort to reduce the number of days that a student is absent by allowing students to become exempt from the final examination in any given class. This is an extension of an attendance policy and ultimately rewarded students for having good attendance (Gardner, 2012). The idea is not new as seen by the study conducted by White (1931). During this timeframe, many believed that teachers would lower the standards at which they taught in order to exempt more students from exams (White, 1931). The findings from this study showed that an examination exemption policy does



little to change the scores that students would have received in the class had there not been an exemption policy (White, 1931).

To promote good attendance, students often need to be encouraged to attend school (Teague, 2002). The school district itself will need to set the parameters of an examination exemption policy. Teague (2002) reported the policy for a school district in Kansas:

Students who meet the following requirements were exempt from semester tests:

- (a) students with an “A” average and three or fewer days of excused absences for the semester, (b) students with a “B” average and two or fewer days of excused absences for the semester, (c) students with a “C” average and one or fewer days of excused absences for the semester, and (d) students with perfect attendance for the semester (p. 45).

An examination exemption policy can increase the rate at which students are present at school. As seen above, an examination exemption policy is tied to grades, which usually are higher when students are present in school.

However, there are some in the field of education that do not believe in using rewards to motivate students and feel that intrinsic motivation suffers as a result (Teague, 2002). Gardner (2012) brought to light that examinations usually take up to four days in order to complete. With the examination exemption policy, attendance is encouraged by allowing students to miss these four days without reason. He went on to state that four days of instruction are lost as a result. However, it should be kept in mind that during those four days, students are testing and instruction has stopped as the course has come to an end. Another issue that is held with exemption policies revolves around the type of

student that benefits the most from this policy. Students that become exempt from their exams are already better students (Gardner, 2012). Students that are academically better usually continue their education on the collegiate level. Students in college are required to take all final exams. High school is a preparation for college and one reason that students should be required to take exams (Gardner, 2012).

One must also consider if the exemption policy has any effect on school attendance. Students that are exempt are generally academically stronger than their peers and rarely miss school as a result (Gardner, 2012). This type of student will also try to ensure that they meet the requirement of such a policy. Gardner (2012) stated:

I saw the good students come to school when they were so sick they needed to be home in bed rather than at school spreading whatever virus they had to others who became sick and I think I can safely say a sick child will not perform well in school (p. 216).

Students that struggle with attendance also struggle academically. This type of student will miss the same amount of days regardless of the reward of not taking exams and missing the end of a semester (Gardner, 2012).

In some instances, students taking the exam are needed and encouraged. One such case would be the examination for advanced placement (AP) courses. An AP course can result in a student gaining college credit, if he or she takes and passes the AP exam, from classes that are taken in high school courses (Jeong, 2009). This is not the only reason that students are needed to take this exam. To gauge the level at which students master the content of the class, the only precise method is for them to take the exam. Jeong (2009) also alluded to the fact that the exam also offers weight for the

course and for the teacher. Of the students enrolled in AP classes, only half take the exam (Jeong, 2009). To encourage students to take this exam, incentives are used, much like being exempt from final exams.

The AP exam is not free and does require students to register and pay for the exam. There are programs that are present to help offset this cost. The government has already helped pay nine million dollars for students of low socio-economic backgrounds (Jeong, 2009). The local school district can also use part of the funding that is received to help offset the cost for students in their district. Students may also earn scholarships based on the results of the AP exams. This would allow the students to not only receive college credit, but also help reduce the cost of college. There are incentives available for teachers and school districts as well. The teacher and district could earn monetary incentives (Jeong, 2009). This would not only help the district gather additional funds to help support low-income students, but also a reason to push the teacher to ensure that content is delivered thoroughly and effectively.

On the collegiate level, students do not have the option to become exempt from final examinations in classes. However, due to the length of some college programs, the option to take an exemption exam is present in order to reduce the number of classes required for graduation (Wiencke, 2002). The University of West Georgia (UWG) decided to employ this method inside of the College of Education. Students were required to take a course in instructional technology. Within the field of education, the use of technology in the classroom is in high demand (Wiencke, 2002). With the increased use of technology, the university felt that many of the students were already versed with the learning outcomes of this class. Students were given the option to take



the course or take the exemption exam and not have to take the course. Wiencke (2002) found that most students preferred to take the course over the exemption exam. Of the students that elected to take the exam, roughly half of those students pass the exam to receive credit for the class. Wiencke (2002) alluded to the fact that many do not take the exemption exam because they do not feel comfortable with some of the software that would be covered in the class and tested on the exam.

### **Student Achievement**

A general fact is that in order for students to learn, they must be present in school. The more times a student is absent from school, academic achievement decreases and the risk of drop-out increases (Christani et al., 2015). Blevins (2009) further demonstrated the effects of absenteeism by stating, “absenteeism negatively impacts a student’s performance on formal and informal assessments, grade point averages, and class grades” (p. 40). Students with chronic absenteeism face these issues, but can also face the risk of unemployment in the future (Gottfried, 2009). After all, students are developing habits that will carry with them through the entirety of their lives.

The evaluation of school absenteeism, especially with regards to student achievement must begin early in the educational process. If a school or district does not begin to monitor these issues until the student is in secondary education, this will often prove to be too late. The monitoring process is often easier at the elementary level since students remain in the same classroom during the entire day. Also, when the monitoring process begins in elementary education, school districts can develop policies to address such issue before absenteeism becomes too large of an issue, especially before students enter secondary education (Gottfried, 2009).

Gottfried (2009) wished to examine the effects of absenteeism on students' achievement, but with regards to whether the absence was excused or unexcused. Gottfried (2009) used a school district in Philadelphia to explain the difference in excused and unexcused absences by stating:

As a rule, the district defines an excused absence as a student's having a note signed by a doctor or parent for a short-term illness, such as a cold or the flu, which lasts for no more than 3 days. A long-term medical illness, such as chickenpox or hospitalization, requires a doctor's signature. In addition, a short-term emergency for immediate families, such as death, is an excused absence, but it cannot last for more than 2 days. In the case of a family death, a death certificate is required upon return. An unexcused absence occurs for a lack of a note upon returning to school. (p. 398)

However, Gottfried (2009) did state that even if a note is presented upon return, the absence can still be considered unexcused if the reason does not relate to the child itself. Behavior issues that result in the student missing school will also be considered unexcused.

Gottfried (2009) examined the achievement level of students with excused absences compared to unexcused absences. The study found that students with a large number of absences that were excused performed higher than students with a large number of unexcused absences. It should still be understood that a large number of absences affects student achievement regardless if the absence is deemed excused or unexcused (Gottfried, 2009). In general, students that tend to have excused absences are



better motivated in school and have a reason to be absent. Students with a large number of unexcused absences are not engaged in school and may lack the social skills needed.

The primary delivery method of content in college comes through the use lecture and classroom discussions (Marburger, 2001). The more students are in attendance, meaning more lectures heard, the better the grade for the class will be (Chen & Lin, 2008). Along with understanding that lectures are the primary source of learning in college, and used in high school, there are also two kinds of students. The first type of student is one that will attend class on a regular basis and the other type of student does not actively think about attending class. One must also remember that the two types of students are not equal. However, the two students are often made equal for research purposes. The first type of student is believed to receive benefits from attending class and creating better learning (Chen & Lin, 2008).

In order to fully determine the level of relationship between achievement and student attendance, one must examine the different student types that will ultimately define the class. The question becomes, do students that are better at performing on tests receive the same amount of benefit when compared to students that have a harder time performing on a test? Ultimately, students that are low performers, and even average performers, will be the most affected by being absent from class (Westerman, Perez-Batres, Coffey, & Pouder, 2011). Students that are high performers more than likely already have an interest in the course and will continue to work even when absent from the class. This cannot be said of the low to average performers.

The relationship between attendance and performance has had much examination on the collegiate level. Researchers have examined the effects that class attendance has

held on the performance of exams for the class in question. Marburger (2001) looked at the relationship between exam performance and performance on exams in a macroeconomics class. In order to properly determine the results of missing a class and test performance, Marburger (2001) tracked both student attendance as well as made note of when the material for each test question was presented in class. This allowed for a more comprehensive study on the effects of attendance and performance. This also allowed Marburger (2001) to test his hypothesis that an incorrect answer on a test was tied to absences during the class that is associated with the question. Marburger (2001) concluded that the average score on an exam was impacted by the number of absences that a student had. Students were also asked to take a survey related to absenteeism and more specifically how many days is acceptable to miss a class. Students concluded that no more than six days should be missed (Marburger, 2001). However, this figure did come from students that had low levels of absences in a class.

Westerman, Perez-Batres, Coffey, and Pouder (2011) sought to further the study of exam performance in relation to attendance by once again examining the factors but examined how levels of students skewed the results. Through this study, Westerman et al. (2011) looked at student absences and test performance. Students were also placed in different ranks of where they were likely to fall in the class. Students that were ranked among the lowest of the quartiles witnessed a 34 percent decrease with each absence of achieving this rank. Students that qualified as average, witnessed a 22 percent decrease in reaching the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile rank with each absence. Students among the top rank only saw a 15 percent decrease in their ranking with each absence (Westerman et al., 2011).

The results from this study show that students with low to average achievement levels benefit the most from being in class (Westerman et al., 2011).

Students that are perceived to perform better in class, and thus have a greater overall GPA, have a lower number of absences (Westerman et al., 2011). This type of student already possesses the needed discipline to direct their studies. This is in comparison to average and low performing students that benefit from being present in school where they will learn the most. This type of student is less motivated to take control of their learning. Westerman et al. (2011) summarized their study in a statement indicating “poor attendance is directly related to reduced academic performance in lower quartile students” (p. 61).

### **Teacher Absenteeism on Achievement**

The student is not the only person that is held responsible for the achievement levels inside the classroom of today. The teacher is present in the classroom to instruct students on concepts that they are expected to learn. Through this instruction, students are learning material to help them meet achievement levels that have been prescribed by the district and state. When a student is not present, he or she is not able to learn the material that is required in order to meet achievement levels as described in the previous section. However, one must consider the level of instruction students receive from the teacher. The amount of instruction that is given can change depending on the attendance of the teacher as well. Knoster (2016) stated that 27 percent of teachers have missed more than 10 school days in a school year. For some states, this number increase to 50 percent and 75 percent.



The absence of the teacher can cause students to feel that attendance is not important while also lowers the achievement levels of students (Knoster, 2016). Many schools have a burden placed on them by many different factors that will lead to lower student achievement. School districts face a high number of teacher turnover and burnout that will lead to the absence of the teacher (Knoster, 2016). To combat the issue of teacher absences, a school district will need to develop incentives to encourage teachers to be present in the classroom.

Teachers are absent for a variety of reasons during the school year. One of the reasons that a teacher is absent is due to illness. However, there are other causes of teacher absences that are much more prevalent in education. Knoster (2016) described the amount of pay to be one of the reasons that teachers become absent or leave the field of education altogether. The climate of the building and the responsibilities that are placed on the teacher can also lead to absences. One reason for teacher absences, and one that is controllable by the school district, relates to training and meetings that take place during the school day (Knoster, 2016).

The school and the district must fight both student and teacher absences. To help reduce the number of absences seen in teachers, a better school climate will need to be created. This new climate would make efforts to reduce the amount of stress that a teacher is under while also addressing other concerns that have been voiced (Knoster, 2016). Banerjee and Duflo (2006) suggested the possibility of hiring more teachers, but on a shorter contract, to relieve pressure placed on teachers due to large class sizes. A school district in Texas decided to match the amount of funding that was placed in a teachers' 401 when they had perfect attendance (Knoster, 2016).



Another idea that has been cited by Knoster (2016) was the use of rewards and celebrations. The use of incentives can cause teachers to reduce their number of absences, but the district must ensure that such a program is truly effective. Monitoring of the teachers' presence and using this as a basis for rewards seems to be the most effective (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006). Banerjee and Duflo (2006) warned that someone that works with or is close to the educators might not be the best person to keep track of the attendance of the teacher and distribution of incentives. Someone from an external location is the best for monitoring attendance to ensure that accurate records are kept so that an incentive program is beneficial.

The school district will also need to reexamine the policies that are in place that governs teacher attendance (Knoster, 2016). A clear expectation given on absences and data must be kept with validity. The teacher should also be required to report any absence directly to their supervisor for approval. The school district will also need to place restrictions as to when personal days are allowed to be used during the school year (Knoster, 2106). Changing the length of the school week can also be another incentive to increase attendance for both teachers and students. School districts on the western side of the United States reduced the school week to four days. Teacher and student attendance increased due to this change. The extra day from school allowed many to schedule appointments during the week that normally would result in an absence by either the teacher or the student (Knoster, 2016).

### **Gaps in the Literature**

The current study seeks to determine if the existence of an examination exemption policy leads to the decrease in the number of absences witnessed among high school

students. The study also seeks to determine if the existence of such a policy leads to the increase in achievement levels for the same group of high school students. The roles of gender and socio-economic status will also be used to determine students that are most likely affected by the exemption policy. This will be done by reviewing the number of absences before and after the examination exemption policy was derived to determine any significantly statistical difference. In the same manner, achievement levels across EOC testing in English will be used to determine any significantly statistical difference. Therefore, this study goes beyond the research that has been previously conducted.

Previous research has studied the effects that attendance had on achievement level of students. Student achievement and attendance show a negative correlation in that students achieve less when they are not present in school. Research has also been conducted to determine what type of student will be most affected by attending class. For much of the research, this focused on high-level students and low-level students. Much of the studies done on student achievement tend to center around university students and why they should attend class. More research is necessary for elementary and secondary education to fully assess the implications that attendance has on achievement. Teacher attendance must also be taken into consideration in the final analysis on achievement. Little studies have been conducted to fully explore the impact that teacher themselves have on achievement levels for students.

In regards to attendance, much research has taken place to identify factors that result in students being absent from school and methods to deter students from continuing trends in absenteeism. Others studies give great detail in regards to the thoughts of chronic absenteeism and truancy. Both are issues that plague the field of education.

However, this research needs to be expanded to each state in order to determine key factors that are shared in order for federal support to be granted. Currently, many of the states across the nation are not required and do not track chronic absenteeism. In order to reduce the number of students that do not attend school on a consistent basis, this data will need to be tracked and researched. Many researchers have delved into the area of improving absenteeism. A plethora of incentives has been researched in order to decrease the number of students not present in schools. Long-term effects of such incentives will need to be examined in order to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of the given incentives.

Two specific incentives used revolve around compulsory attendance policies and examination exemption policies. Research has been conducted to determine the overall effects of an attendance policy. While research does show that compulsory attendance policies have a positive effect on attendance, much of the literature again centers on the collegiate level. One can only assume that literature is not readily available for elementary and secondary education because attendance laws made attendance mandatory in the United States. There is little research that centers around the use of examination exemption policies. The research present does not provide sufficient evidence to justify the use or nonuse of such a program. The research for this area also does not begin to describe the effects the policy has on attendance as a whole. A bridge between policy, attendance, and achievement needs to be established. A more comprehensive study of all topics is needed to help a school district decide the best course of action needed to increase achievement while simultaneously decreasing absenteeism.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Participants**

This study consisted of multiple parts. However, the study used that same sample of students during all sections. The sample included 79 senior students and 69 junior students from the 2016-2017 academic year. Students were tracked from the beginning of their freshman year of high school through the completion of the 2016-2017 school year. The senior class used in this study consisted of 38% females and 62% males. The junior class used in this study consisted of 48% females and 52% males. Students were of average age for each grade level specified. The participants for the study were located in Robertson County in a school that served both middle and high school grades. The participants were selected on the basis of being students in the Robertson County High School prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and after implementation of the policy. Students were excluded from the sample if they did not attend the school used in the study during all years included in the study.

Historical data were used for this study. Data regarding student attendance and gender from participants' freshman year through the completion of the 2016-2017 school year were collected from the attendance clerk of the Robertson County High School. Socioeconomic status was obtained from the administration of the Robertson County High School. Data regarding achievement levels on the English end of course (EOC) examination for the participants' freshman, sophomore, and junior years were obtained from the registrar of the school. There is not an EOC examination for the subject of English during the students' senior year. English is a required course during senior year;



however, some students elected to take a college level course in order to obtain both high school and college credit. Since historical data were used for this study, students were not approached directly for participation in this field study.

### **Materials**

For the purpose of this study, an examination exemption policy will serve as the independent variable. More specifically, the researcher will examine data before the implementation of an examination exemption policy and will once again examine the data after the examination exemption policy was implemented. During this part of the study, absenteeism for each student will serve as the dependent variable. A comparison will take place in the number of absences before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy to determine if a statistical difference was present. In order to account for other factors that can skew the data, gender will also serve as an independent variable. In order to determine the effects socioeconomic status had on absenteeism, data from this area will serve as an independent factor. Ethnicity and race were not included in this field study due to a small variation in the factors for the one Robertson County High School.

The field study also examined achievement levels for students on the English EOC examination. For the purpose of this study, scale scores were used from grades nine through eleven. The independent variables listed above remained the same for this portion of the study. Achievement levels served as the dependent variable for this portion of the study. Achievement levels were gathered for school years before an examination exemption policy existed and again gathered for school years after the policy

was implemented. A comparison of the data will then take place to determine if a statistical difference existed.

### **Procedures**

Data for this study were gathered at the end of the spring 2017 and the middle of the fall 2017 semesters. For the first part of the study, data relating to attendance and gender were collected from the attendance clerk for the one Robertson County High School. Data regarding socioeconomics were obtained from administration of the Robertson County High School. Students are either labeled as economically disadvantaged or not economically disadvantaged. Data was only requested for students that participated in the study. The data obtained included student attendance, gender, and socioeconomic status at the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

The data gathered were used to calculate the number of absences for each student in the junior and senior class beginning with each class's freshman year through the completion of the 2016-2017 school year. Students were given an identification marker so that names were eliminated. The information was then organized to show the number of absences for each student during each academic year. In order to reduce the likelihood of outside factors adversely affecting the results, gender and socioeconomic status will also be examined with regards to number of absences. This data was loaded into SPSS for statistical analysis.

During the second part of the study, the examination exemption policy still served as the independent variable. Absenteeism will also serve as an independent variable during the portion of the study. Data for the scale score on the English EOC served as the dependent variable. English EOC scale scores were collected for each student from

the freshman, sophomore, and junior years for the students in this study. Scale scores were examined for years before the implementation of an examination exemption policy to determine achievement levels. Scale scores will be examined again for the years in which an examination exemption policy was implemented to determine achievement. Finally, achievement levels will be examined and compared to attendance to determine if a statistical difference existed.

After the data were collected, a dependent *t*-test was used conducted to compare the number of absences before the examination exemption policy to the number of absences after the implementation of an examination exemption policy. This test is used to compare all variables simultaneously and to give a more accurate account when using multiple independent variables. SPSS will be used to for all statistical analyses. The researcher will use a statistical significance of an alpha level of .05, to determine the statistical significance. The researcher will use the values produced from the dependent *t*-test to determine if the null hypothesis were to be failed to be rejected,  $p > .05$ , or if the null hypothesis should be rejected,  $p < .05$ . The researcher will compare percentages to determine if a statistically significant difference exists for achievement levels with regards to the examination exemption policy. Percentages were also utilized to compare socioeconomic status and absences and gender to attendance.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The Robertson County School District implemented an examination exemption policy during the 2015-2016 school year with the hope to reduce the number of absences seen in the district. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an examination exemption policy on high school students' attendance and English EOC achievement levels. This chapter presents the analyses of the four research questions on which the study centered. The researcher used a dependent  $t$ -test in order to measure the effect of the exemption policy. A dependent  $t$ -test, also known as a paired-samples  $t$ -test, is used to determine a difference between observed pairs and when participants are the same for each group (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

The researcher also wished to examine the effects that the same exemption policy had on achievement levels for the participants in the study. English EOC scores were selected to measure achievement levels based on the fact that all students are required to enroll in an English class each semester. However, seniors do not take an EOC in English providing a limitation to the study. The researcher will also examine the effects gender has on school attendance as well as socioeconomic status.

#### Research Question One

Does the existence of an examination exemption policy lead to the decrease in the number of absences among high school students?

#### Null Hypothesis One

There will be no statistically significant differences in the number of absences for



Students prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the number of absences for students after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.

To examine this question, attendance records were obtained beginning with the freshman year for the Class of 2017 and the Class of 2018. A student that did not attend the high school examined in the study was excluded. A total of 148 student records were analyzed. The same group of students 148 students were followed through the duration of the field study. The group consisted of 85 male students and 63 female students. Their attendance for all years of the study is included in Appendix C. The total number of absences for all students prior to the examination exemption policy and the total number of absences for all students after the implementation of the examination exemption policy can be found in Table 4.1. The first set of attendance records from the 2013-2014 school year consisted only of the Class of 2017 due to the fact that the Class of 2018 were not high school students. During the 2013-2014 school year and the 2015-2016 school year, students were required to take all examinations in all classes. During those school years, no examination exemption policy was in place. The third set of attendance records came from the 2015-2016 school year in which Robertson County Schools implemented a county-wide examination exemption policy. Finally, the third set of data came from the 2016-2017 school year, the second year that the examination exemption policy existed.

The number of absences was analyzed using a dependent *t*-test in SPSS. This was conducted by using the total number of days absent per student prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the total number of days absent

per student after the implementation of an examination exemption policy. From the dependent *t*-test, a series of data was generated for analysis.

TABLE 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics: Arithmetic Mean, Variance, Standard Deviation, Low and High Number from calculations of absences before and after the implementation of examination exemption policy.*

Groups	Count	Sum	Arithmetic Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation	Low	High
Absences before examination exemption policy (2013-2014, 2014-2015)	148	1192	8.05	42.800	6.54	1.51	14.59
Absences after examination exemption policy (2015-2016, 2016-2017)	148	2540	17.16	173.382	13.36	3.80	30.52

The arithmetic mean for absences before the implementation of an examination exemption was 8.05 and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy was 17.16 as seen in Table 4.1. For the time period before the implementation of the examination exemption policy, 1,192 absences were reported. The standard deviation was 6.54, variance of 42.800, with a range of 1.51 to 14.59. During the time period after the implementation of the examination exemption policy, 2, 540 absences were reported. The standard deviation was 13.36, variance was 173.382, with a range of 3.80 to 30.52.

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the number of absences seen before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy, a dependent *t*-test using SPSS was utilized to analyze the before mentioned data. The results are shown in Table 4.2. According to the paired-samples *t*-test, there was a statistically significant difference between attendance before the implementation of the examination exemption policy and attendance after the implementation of the examination exemption policy.

The researcher used a statistical significance at the alpha level of .05, to determine the level of significance. The researcher will use the values produced by the dependent *t*-test to determine if the null hypothesis were failed to be rejected,  $p > .05$ , or if the null hypothesis should be rejected,  $p < .05$ . The significance level calculated by SPSS is reported as  $p < 0.005$ . Since  $p < .05$ , we reject the null hypothesis that no statistically significant difference existed and accept the alternative hypothesis that a statistically significant difference does exist. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a difference between attendance before the implementation of the examination exemption policy and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. To determine where the difference exists, the sums and means were examined for the number of absences before the policy and the number of absences after the policy. The results are shown in Table 4.2. The sum of absences before the policy was put into place was 1,192 with a mean of 8.05. The sum of absences after the policy 2,540 with a mean of 17.16. This led the researcher to determine that the statistical difference exists after the implementation of the policy.

TABLE 4.2

*Results from Dependent t-test*

Source	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Error Mean	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i> (2- tailed)
Absences before policy vs Absences after policy	10.012	-9.108	.823	-11.068	147	<.005

**Research Question Two**

Does the existence of an examination exemption policy lead to an increase in achievement levels among high school students?

**Null Hypothesis Two**

There will be no statistically significant differences between student EOC scores prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and student EOC scores after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.

To answer this question, EOC achievement levels in English will be examined.

The scores obtained come from English I, English II, and English III. The study consisted of 148 students from the Class of 2017 and the Class of 2018. The same group of students was followed throughout the duration of the study. Students’ achievement scores can be found in Appendix D. The first set of scores comes from the 2013-2014 school year before an examination exemption policy existed. This set of scores only included students in the Class of 2017 due to the fact that students in the Class of 2018 were not high school students. The second set of data came from the 2014-2015 school year. Both grade levels were included during this year. The third set of data came from



the 2015-2016 school year and once again both grade levels were included for this school year. The fourth and last set of data came from the 2016-2017 school year. This set of data only represents the Class of 2018. There is not an EOC English test given to senior students as many have other options for English that year.

The number of students scoring proficient or higher was analyzed using a dependent *t*-test in SPSS. This was conducted by using the total number of students scoring at least proficient before the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the total number of students scoring at least proficient after the implementation of an examination exemption policy. From the dependent *t*-test, a series of data was generated for analysis.

TABLE 4.3  
*Descriptive Statistics: Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Low and High Number from calculations of achievement before and after the implementation of examination exemption policy.*

Groups	Count	Sum	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Low	High
Achievement before examination exemption policy (2013-2014, 2014-2015)	148	165	82.500	44.55	37.95	127.05
Achievement after examination exemption policy (2015-2016, 2016-2017)	148	61	30.500	12.02	18.48	42.52

The arithmetic mean for achievement before the implementation of an examination exemption was 82.500 and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy was 30.500 as seen in Table 4.3. For the time period before the implementation of the examination exemption policy, 165 students scored proficient or above on the English EOC examination. The standard deviation was 44.55 with a range of 37.95 to 127.05. During the time period after the implementation of the examination exemption policy, 61 students scored proficient or above on the English EOC examination; the standard deviation was 12.02 with a range of 18.48 to 42.52.

The data was analyzed by determining the number of students that fell into each of the achievement level categories for each school year. These number can be seen in Table 4.4. These numbers were used to convert to percentages of students that met the requirements for each category by year. These percentages by year can be seen in tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8. The researcher then analyzed this data to determine if a statistical significance existed.

TABLE 4.4  
*Achievement Level Numbers by Student for Each Achievement Level for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 School Years*

Level	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Below	4	8	38	13
Basic	14	26	71	34
Proficient	40	100	30	19
Advanced	11	14	9	3

TABLE 4.5

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Students Scoring at each Achievement Level for the 2013-2014 School Year.*

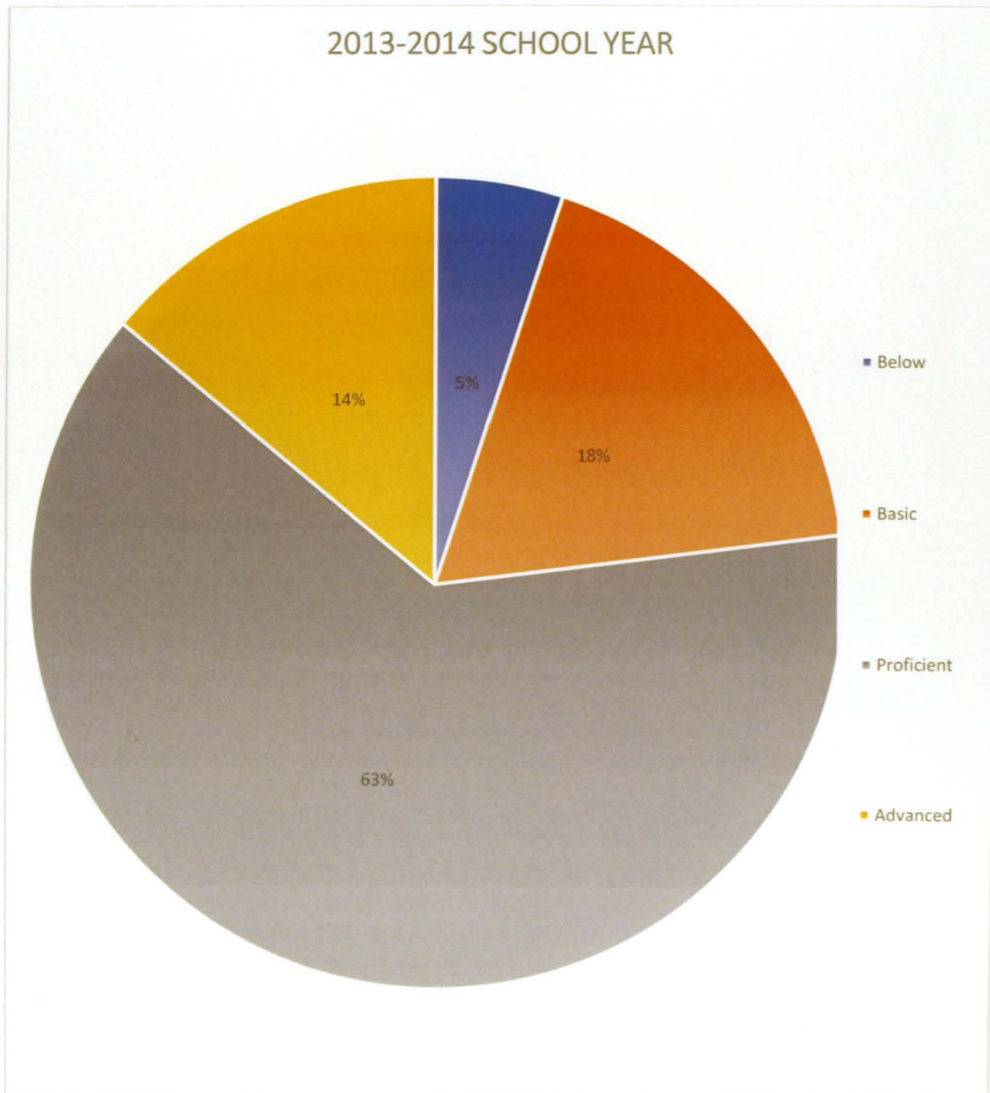


TABLE 4.6

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Students Scoring at each Achievement Level for the 2014-2015 School Year.*

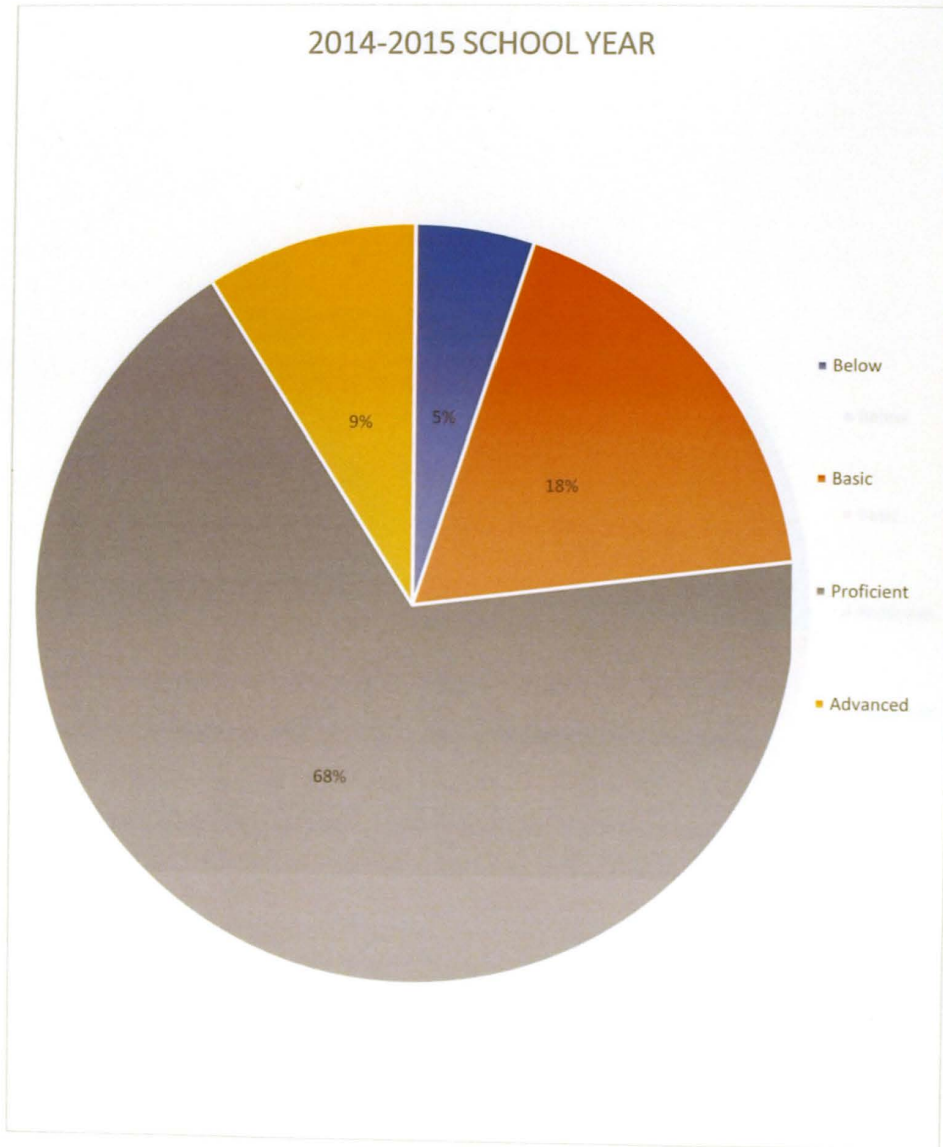




TABLE 4.7

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Students Scoring at each Achievement Level for the 2015-2016 School Year.*

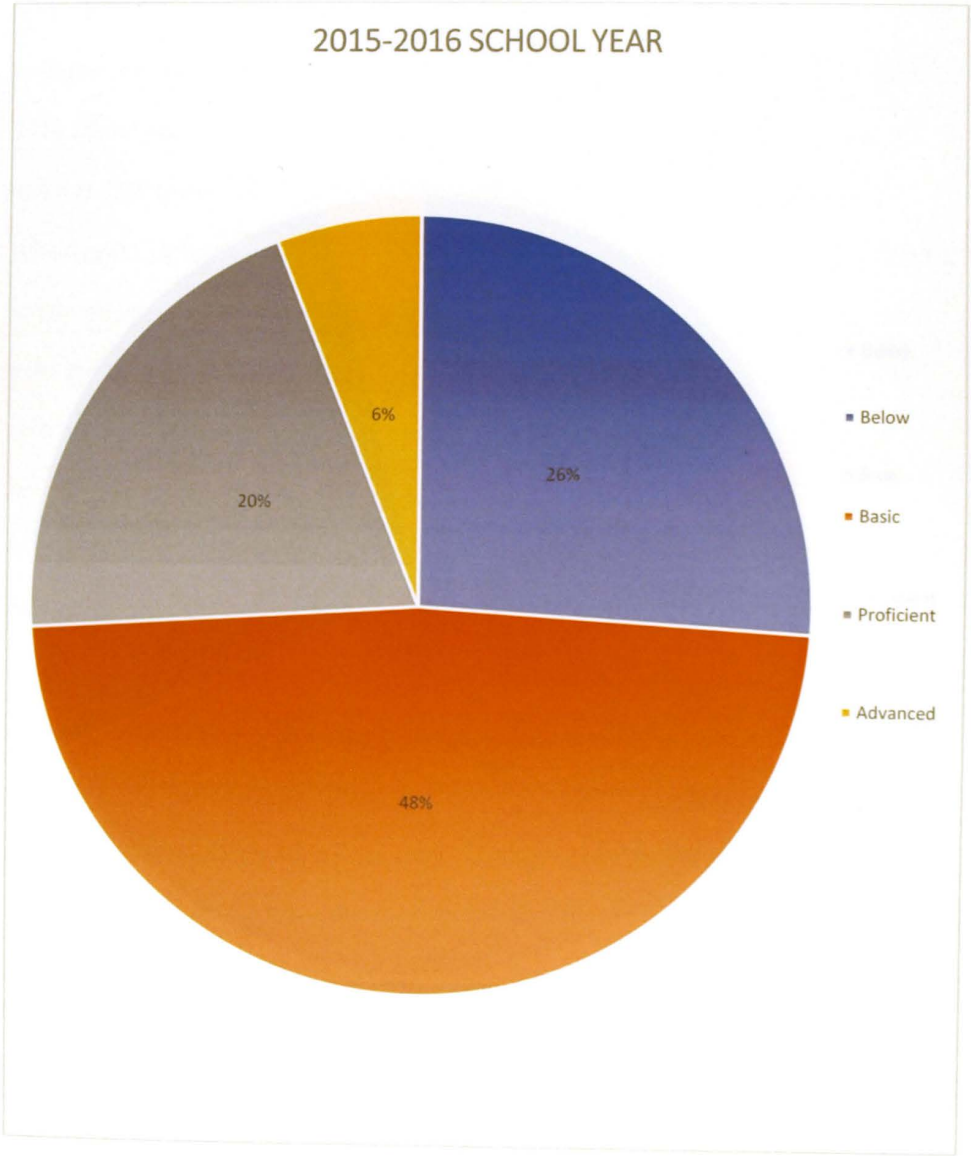
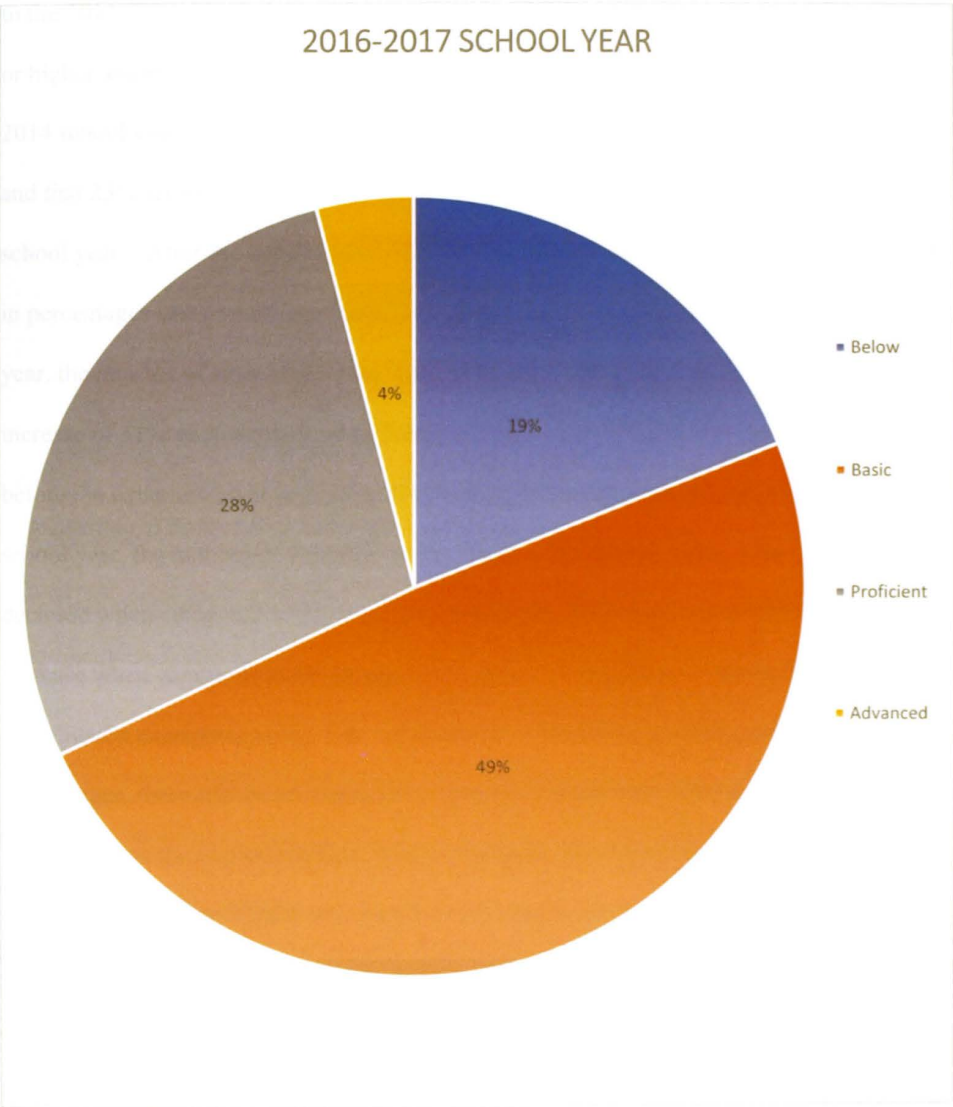


TABLE 4.8

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Students Scoring at each Achievement Level for the 2016-2017 School Year.*



Visually examining the charts illustrates that there is a difference in the achievement levels reported for students during the time of the study. During the timeframe before the implementation of the examination exemption policy percentages of students scoring Proficient or higher remained the same from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. Table 4.5 illustrates that 77% of students scored Proficient or higher and that 23% scored basic or lower on the English EOC tests during the 2013-2014 school year. Table 4.6 illustrates that 77% of students scored Proficient or higher and that 23% scored basic or lower on the English EOC tests during the 2014-2015 school year. After the implementation of the examination exemption policy, a difference in percentages can be witnessed with each school year. During the 2015-2016 school year, the number of students scoring basic or below is 74%. This set of data shows an increase of 51% of students scoring Basic or lower when compared to previous data before the examination exemption policy was implemented. During the 2016-2017 school year, the number of students scoring Basic or lower was 68%. This is a 6% decrease when compared to the previous school year. However, this is still a 45% increase when compared to the number of students scoring Basic or lower before the examination exemption policy was implemented. Therefore, according to the percentages, there will be no statistically significant differences between student EOC scores prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and student

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference between achievement of students prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and student achievement after the implementation of the examination exemption policy, a

dependent *t*-test using SPSS was utilized to analyze the number of student that scored proficient or higher on the English EOC exam. The results are shown in Table 4.9

TABLE 4.9  
*Results from Dependent t-test*

Source	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Error Mean	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i> (2- tailed
Achievement scores before policy vs. achievement scores after policy	56.579	52.000	40.000	1.300	1	.417

The researcher used a statistical significance at the alpha level of .05, to determine the level of significance. The researcher will use the values produced by the dependent *t*-test to determine if the null hypothesis were to be failed to be rejected,  $p > .05$ , or if the null hypothesis should be rejected,  $p < .05$ . The significance level calculated by SPSS reported an alpha level of .417. Since  $p > .05$ , we fail to reject the null hypothesis that no statistically significant difference existed. Therefore, it is concluded that there is not a difference between achievement before the implementation of the examination exemption policy and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy

**Research Question Three**

Do students from low socioeconomic status attend school less when compared to peers from a higher socioeconomic status?



### **Null Hypothesis Three**

There will be no statistically significant difference between the number of absences among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students from high socioeconomic backgrounds.

To answer this question, the number of absences for students that report themselves from a low socioeconomic status will be compared to the number of absences from students that do not report themselves from a low socioeconomic status. The number of absences will be examined for all years for each student in order to make this comparison. A sum will be taken for the number of absences seen for students of low socioeconomic status and sum for those not of low socioeconomic status. These numbers will be used to determine the total number of absences for all students in the study. A percentage will then be used to compare the subgroups. It should also be noted that the school does serve a high number of low socioeconomic students, however, many of the students that attend the school do not submit the proper paperwork to be considered low socioeconomic status.

The same 148 students were used during this part of the study. As seen in Table 4.10, 25 of the 148 students are reported as economically disadvantaged and 123 of the 148 are reported as not economically disadvantaged. The total number of absences reported for the students in the study are 3723 during the course of this study. Percentages for number of absences in each group can be seen in Table 4.11

TABLE 4.10

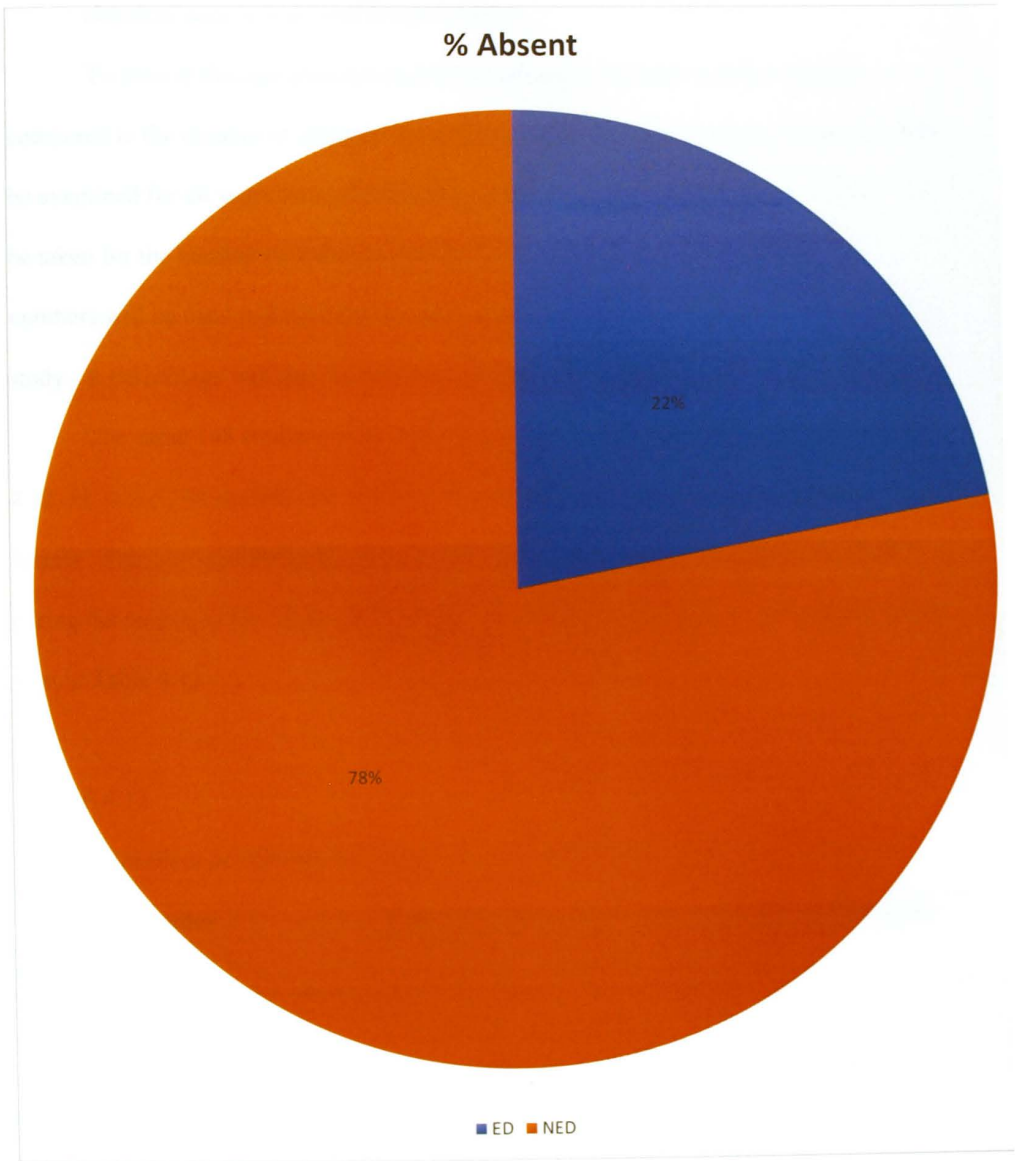
*Socioeconomic Status, Absences per Group, Number of Students per Group*

<b>Socioeconomic Status</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Number of Absences</b>
Economically Disadvantaged	25	829
Not Economically Disadvantaged	123	2894

According to the set of numbers, students that are not economically disadvantaged missed 2065 more days of school when compared to students that are economically disadvantaged. To further illustrate this point, the researcher used a percentage of days missed for each subgroup. This percentage is based on the total number of days missed for all students. According to Table 4.11, students that are of low socioeconomic status represent 22% of the total number of absences for the students in this study. Students that are not from a low socioeconomic represent 78% of the total number of absences for students in this study. These numbers indicate that there is a statically significant difference in the number of absences seen between students from low socioeconomic status and those that are not of low socioeconomic status. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 4.11

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Absences for Economically Disadvantaged and Not Economically Disadvantaged Students.*



**Research Question Four**

Does gender affect the number of absences seen among high school students?

**Null Hypothesis Four**

There will be no statistically significant differences between the number of absences seen in male and female students.

To answer this question, the number of absences for male students will be compared to the number of absences from female students. The number of absences will be examined for all years for each student in order to make this comparison. A sum will be taken for the number of absences seen for male students and for female. These numbers will be used to determine the total number of absences for all students in the study. A percentage will then be used to compare the subgroups.

The same 148 students were used during this part of the study. As seen in Table 4.12, 85 of the 148 students are reported as male and 63 of the 148 are reported as female. The total number of absences reported for the students in the study are 3723 during the course of this study. Percentages for number of absences in each group can be seen in Table 4.13

TABLE 4.12  
*Gender, Absences per Group, Number of Students per Group*

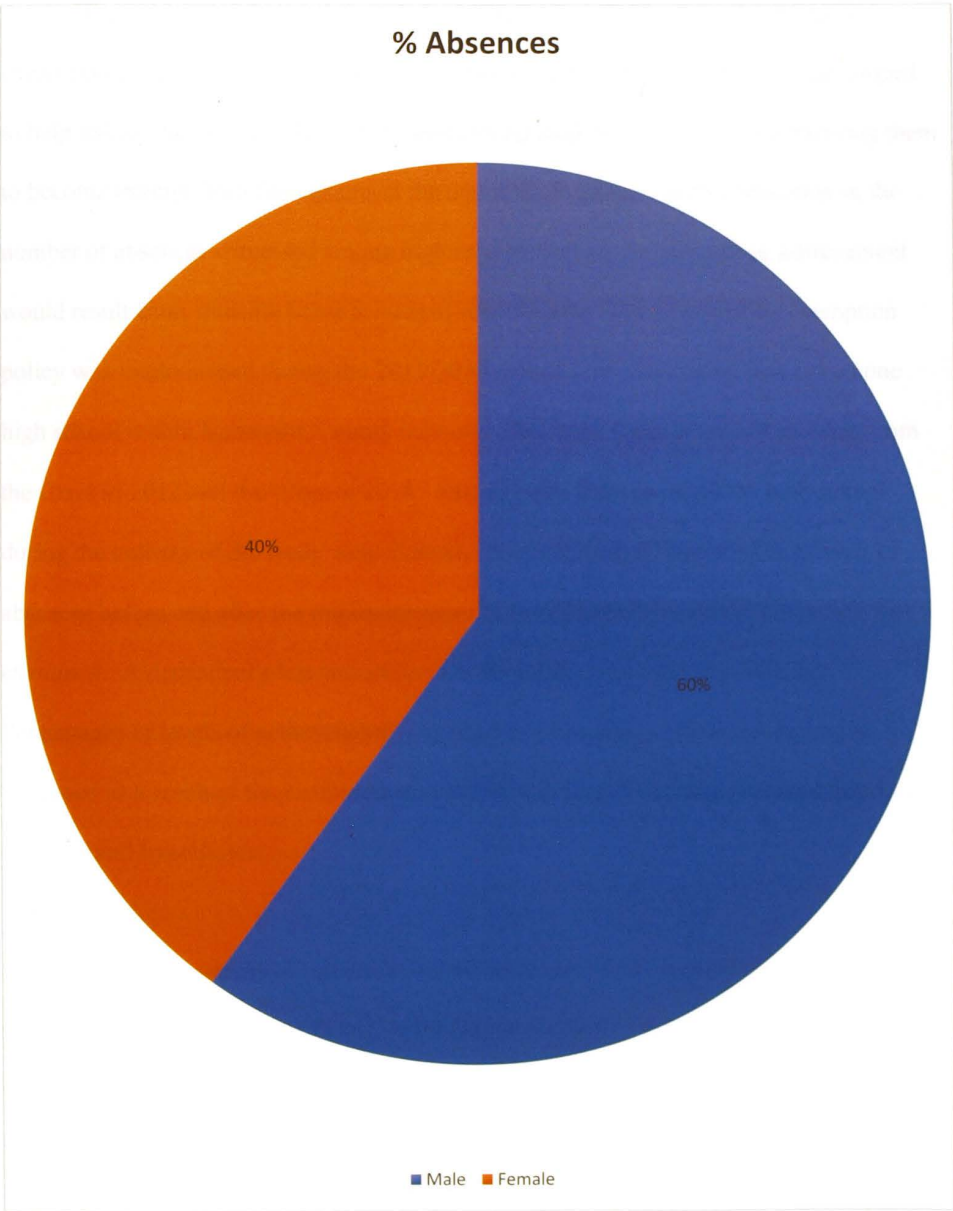
Gender	Number of students	Number of Absences
Male	85	2237
Female	63	1486



According to the set of numbers, male students missed 751 more days of school when compared to female students. To further illustrate this point, the researcher used a percentage of days missed for each subgroup. This percentage is based off the total number of days missed for all students. According to Table 4.13, male students represent 60% of the total number of absences for the students in this study. Female students represent 40% of the total number of absences for students in this study. These numbers indicate that there is a statically significant difference in the number of absences seen between male students and female students. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 4.13

*Pie Chart Illustrating the Percentages of Absences for Male and Female Students.*



## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of an examination exemption policy on student attendance and achievement. This program was developed to help reduce the number of absences seen among high school students by allowing them to become exempt from final exams at the end of each course. With a reduction in the number of absences witnessed among high school students, an increase in achievement would result from students being present at school more. The examination exemption policy was implemented during the 2015-2016 school year. The study focused on one high school within Robertson County Schools. The study focused on 148 students from the Class of 2017 and the Class of 2018. Students that did not attend the high school during the entirety of the study were exempt. The relationship between the number of absences before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy was examined. A dependent *t*-test was utilized to determine statistical significance. Percentages of levels of achievement were used to determine if achievement levels increased as a result of the examination exemption policy. The study was conducted to test four null hypotheses.

#### **Findings**

The main purpose of this study was to determine if an examination exemption policy had a statistically significant impact on the number of absences seen among high school students as well if there is an impact on achievement with regards to English EOC scores.

### **Null Hypothesis One**

There will be no statistically significant differences in the number of absences for Students prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the number of absences for students after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.

This hypothesis compared the number of student absences before the implementation of an examination exemption policy to the number of absences after the implementation of an examination exemption policy. This hypothesis was tested using number of absences from 148 students from the Class of 2017 and the Class of 2018. Students that did not attend the school during the entirety of the study were excluded. A dependent *t*-test was utilized to measure the statistical significance with an Alpha of .05. The analysis indicated there was a statistically significant difference ( $p = <.005$ ) in student attendance before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. Upon further examination of the sums and means before and after the examination exemption policy indicate whether the policy was effective or not. The sum of absences before the policy was put into place was 1192 with a mean of 8.05. The sum of absences after the policy 2540 with a mean of 17.16. This led the researcher to determine that the statistical difference existed after the implementation of the policy.

The rejection of the null hypothesis indicated that attendance after the examination exemption policy was different than before the examination exemption policy. Upon further investigation, it was determined that more students were absent during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years after the implementation of the



examination exemption policy than during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years (before the implementation of the examination exemption policy).

### **Null Hypothesis Two**

There will be no statistically significant differences between student EOC scores prior to the implementation of an examination exemption policy and student EOC scores after the implementation of an examination exemption policy.

The hypothesis was tested to determine if there was a difference in achievement levels of students before the implementation of the examination exemption policy and achievement levels after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. This hypothesis was tested by entering information into a chart and converting to percentages based on the number of times each achievement level emerged. The analysis indicated that there was a difference in achievement levels before and after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. Data showed that students scoring Proficient or higher decreased during the 2015-2016 school year. During the 2016-2017 school year, a decrease also emerged in those scoring Proficient or higher, however, this decrease was slightly less than the 2015-2016 school year. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in EOC scores before and after the implementation of an examination exemption policy is rejected.

### **Null Hypothesis Three**

There will be no statistically significant difference between the number of absences among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students from high socioeconomic backgrounds.

The hypothesis was tested to determine if there was a difference in absences between students that are economically disadvantaged and those that are not economically disadvantaged. This hypothesis was tested by entering information into a chart and converting to percentages based on the number of absences that emerged in each subgroup. The analysis indicated that there was a difference in absences seen for students that are economically disadvantaged and students that are not economically disadvantaged. Data showed that economically disadvantaged students were responsible for 829 of the reported days, or 22 % of total absences, that students were absent during the study. Non-economically disadvantaged students were responsible for 2894, or 78% of total absences, that students were absent during the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in absences seen among economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students is rejected. The school that is being studied is a small rural school that serves grades 6-12. The number of students that return forms to deem them low-income is lower than the actual number.

#### **Null Hypothesis Four**

There will be no statistically significant differences between the number of absences seen in male and female students.

The hypothesis was tested to determine if there was a difference in the number absences between male students and female students. This hypothesis was tested by entering information into a chart and converting to percentages based on the number of absences that emerged in each subgroup. The analysis indicated that there was a difference in absences seen for male students and female students. Data showed that

male students were responsible for 2237 of the reported days, or 60 % of total absences, that students were absent during the study. Female students were responsible for 1486, or 40% of total absences, that students were absent during the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in absences seen among male students and female students is rejected.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the number of absences seen before the implementation of an examination exemption policy and the number of absences seen after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. The study also examined the effects that the examination exemption policy had on achievement with regards to English EOC scores. The study followed 148 high school students in a rural Middle Tennessee school during the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 school years. Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were presented:

There was a statistically significant difference in the number of absences for students before the implementation of the examination exemption policy and the number of absences for students after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. The findings show that an increase in the number of absences was found after the implementation of the examination exemption policy.

There was a statistically significant difference in EOC scores before the implementation of the examination exemption and EOC scores after the implementation of the examination exemption policy. The findings show that a decrease in the number of students scoring Proficient or higher decreased in the years after the examination

exemption policy was implemented. The researcher would like to note that during this time, the State of Tennessee changed the EOC test for English and adjusted scores that qualify students for each achievement level.

There was a statistically significant difference in the number of absences among students of low socioeconomic status and the number of absences seen among students of high socioeconomic status. The findings show that students of high socioeconomic status are absent more than students of low socioeconomic status. The researcher would like to note that the school has a small population of low socioeconomic students.

There was a statistically significant difference in the number of absences among male students and the number of absences among female students. The findings show that more male students are absent when compared to female students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Further research should be conducted in a larger school that has a more diverse population.
2. Further research should be conducted on a larger population.
3. Further research should be conducted on examination exemption policies.
4. Robertson County Schools should examine the policy for maximum effect.
5. Develop greater incentives to promote students attendance.



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## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
School Board Approval for Study

Mr. Shelby,

The Board approved your request for research proposal with East Robertson High School at the November 13, 2017 Board meeting.



Beverly Corbin  
Administrative Assistant and Board Secretary  
Robertson County Schools  
800 M.S. Courts Blvd.  
Springfield, TN 37172  
Phone: 615-384-5588 Fax: 615-384-9749  
Email: [beverly.corbin@rcstn.net](mailto:beverly.corbin@rcstn.net)

Appendix B  
IRB Approval



**AP Austin Peay**  
**State University**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: 11/28/2017

RE: 17-072: The Effects of an Examination Exemption Policy on Absenteeism and Student Achievement

Dear Mr. Shelby and Dr. Stewart,

We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. This letter is to inform you that study 17-072 has been reviewed on an expedited level. It is my pleasure to inform you that your study has been approved.

This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research. The IRB reserves the right to withdraw approval if unresolved issues are raised during the review period. Any changes or deviations from the approved protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB for further review and approval before continuing.

This approval is for one calendar year and a closed study report or request for continuing review is required on or before the expiration date, 11/28/2018. If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me by phone (931-221-7506) or email [butterfieldj@apsu.edu](mailto:butterfieldj@apsu.edu).

Sincerely,



Jonniann Butterfield, Ph. D. Chair, APIRB

## Appendix C

### Raw Attendance Data

*Number of Days Absent Per Student for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 School Years, Student Number, and Sex*

<b>Student Number</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>2013-2014 Attendance</b>	<b>2014-2015 Attendance</b>	<b>2015-2016 Attendance</b>	<b>2016-2017 Attendance</b>
2	M	4	20	13	75
5	F	1	15	20	24
6	M	1	5	2	0
9	M	0	6	6	7
10	M	2	8	6	1
11	F	0	1	2	3
12	M	0	2	4	3
13	F	3	24	22	22
14	M	3	23	21	16
16	M	5	15	22	30
17	M	1	13	16	33
19	F	1	18	4	17
20	F	1	5	3	12
21	F	2	14	9	15
23	M	1	1	3	2
25	M	1	8	5	11
27	F	2	3	0	7
28	F	0	4	3	3
29	F	1	14	14	15

30	F	0	0	2	7
31	M	0	7	6	14
32	M	2	11	11	17
33	F	3	2	5	3
34	F	2	15	15	26
36	M	1	16	18	25
37	F	0	5	2	5
38	M	3	9	11	4
39	M	0	7	5	19
40	F	2	8	3	3
41	F	4	4	7	18
42	M	0	7	2	8
44	M	2	5	2	7
45	M	1	5	5	3
46	M	0	4	2	1
48	F	3	18	24	1
49	M	3	9	7	9
50	M	0	4	11	8
51	F	0	6	5	11
52	M	0	1	7	21
53	F	0	1	0	0
54	M	0	2	10	14
55	F	2	6	5	4



57	M	1	15	32	23
58	M	1	13	23	11
59	M	0	2	9	5
60	M	0	7	7	7
61	M	3	7	9	33
62	M	1	7	2	18
63	M	0	3	4	4
64	F	0	3	3	3
65	F	1	6	7	6
66	F	0	4	4	15
67	F	1	3	6	8
68	M	0	0	2	2
69	F	5	15	10	48
70	F	0	2	0	1
71	M	1	10	12	2
73	M	1	5	12	21
74	M	3	11	3	7
75	M	0	4	1	6
77	M	1	5	7	10
78	F	2	3	1	9
79	M	0	1	1	6
81	M	0	1	2	3
82	M	1	14	5	17

83	F	0	3	6	10
84	M	2	4	11	3
85	M	1	5	6	6
86	M	3	3	3	14
87	M	1	4	7	9
89	F	2	6	3	10
90	M	3	10	6	9
91	F	1	5	1	3
92	M	1	7	4	1
93	M	1	1	3	2
95	M	0	2	1	4
97	M	5	12	4	3
98	F	1	2	4	2
99	M	6	22	9	17
101	F		18	22	17
103	M		3	3	5
104	F		8	6	10
105	M		7	4	5
107	F		19	17	28
108	F		1	16	0
109	M		4	6	5
110	F		0	3	4
113	F		8	3	9

114	F	14	4	20
115	M	3	4	2
116	M	4	9	6
117	M	4	0	19
118	F	8	7	7
119	M	2	2	4
120	F	3	4	1
122	M	11	8	17
123	F	0	3	4
124	F	2	1	4
125	F	14	11	16
126	F	2	0	3
127	F	5	2	22
128	M	2	0	2
129	F	4	4	2
130	F	9	3	15
131	F	15	5	5
132	M	6	6	0
133	M	3	7	2
135	F	11	8	4
136	M	4	3	2
137	M	11	3	4
138	F	4	5	3

139	M	7	8	5
140	F	1	3	1
143	F	5	15	16
144	M	5	9	11
145	F	7	6	7
146	M	0	1	2
147	M	20	14	19
148	M	4	8	4
149	F	3	12	22
151	M	19	21	16
153	M	19	9	13
155	F	2	4	6
156	M	5	5	15
157	M	29	29	37
158	M	1	2	6
161	M	15	25	29
162	M	18	15	14
164	M	10	10	23
165	F	5	4	3
166	M	10	10	9
167	F	9	0	1
168	F	11	21	19
169	M	11	9	11

170	F	9	14	16
171	M	3	14	12
172	F	3	5	8
173	M	1	3	15
175	F	6	2	4
176	M	6	9	18
178	F	1	1	0
180	M	6	2	4
182	M	9	10	9
183	M	5	6	5
184	M	2	1	5
186	M	10	1	6
187	F	1	0	2
188	F	11	6	13

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Appendix D  
Raw Achievement Data

*Achievement Levels Per Student for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 School Years, and Student Number.*

<b>Student Number</b>	<b>2013-2014 EOC Score</b>	<b>2014-2015 EOC Score</b>	<b>2015-2016 EOC Score</b>	<b>2016-2017 EOC Score</b>
2	Below	Below	Below	
5	Basic	Below	Below	
6	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
9	Below	Basic	Below	
10	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
11	Advanced	Proficient	Advanced	
12	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
13	Below	Below	Below	
14	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
16	Basic	Below	Below	
17	Proficient	Proficient	Basic	
19	Proficient	Proficient	Basic	
20	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
21	Advanced	Proficient	Proficient	
23	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
25	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
27	Proficient	Proficient	Below	
28	Advanced	Proficient	Proficient	
29	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
30	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	

31	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
32	Proficient	Basic	Below
33	Basic	Basic	Below
34	Proficient	Proficient	Below
36	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
37	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
38	Advanced	Proficient	Basic
39	Basic	Below	Below
40	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
41	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
42	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
44	Basic	Basic	Below
45	Advanced	Advanced	Proficient
46	Basic	Proficient	Basic
48	Proficient	Basic	Basic
49	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
50	Basic	Proficient	Basic
51	Proficient	Proficient	Advanced
52	Basic	Basic	Basic
53	Advanced	Advanced	Proficient
54	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
55	Advanced	Proficient	Advanced
57	Proficient	Proficient	Basic

58	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
59	Proficient	Proficient	Below
60	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
61	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
62	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
63	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
64	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
65	Basic	Basic	Below
66	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
67	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
68	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
69	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
70	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
71	Below	Below	Below
73	Basic	Below	Below
74	Basic	Below	Below
75	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
77	Proficient	Advanced	Advanced
78	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
79	Proficient	Proficient	Below
81	Basic	Below	Below
82	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
83	Proficient	Proficient	Basic

84	Proficient	Basic	Below	
85	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
86	Proficient	Proficient	Below	
87	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
89	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient	
90	Basic	Basic	Basic	
91	Advanced	Advanced	Proficient	
92	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
93	Proficient	Proficient	Basic	
95	Proficient	Basic	Basic	
97	Proficient	Proficient	Basic	
98	Proficient	Proficient	Advanced	
99	Basic	Basic	Below	
101		Proficient	Below	Proficient
103		Proficient	Basic	Basic
104		Proficient	Basic	Basic
105		Proficient	Below	Below
107		Proficient	Basic	Below
108		Proficient	Basic	Proficient
109		Proficient	Proficient	Basic
110		Proficient	Below	Basic
113		Advanced	Proficient	Proficient
114		Proficient	Basic	Basic



115	Proficient	Basic	Basic
116	Advanced	Proficient	Proficient
117	Basic	Below	Below
118	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
119	Proficient	Basic	Basic
120	Proficient	Basic	Basic
122	Proficient	Basic	Basic
123	Advanced	Proficient	Proficient
124	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
125	Proficient	Basic	Basic
126	Advanced	Basic	Basic
127	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
128	Basic	Below	Below
129	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
130	Proficient	Basic	Basic
131	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
132	Basic	Basic	Basic
133	Proficient	Below	Basic
135	Basic	Below	Below
136	Proficient	Basic	Basic
137	Basic	Below	Below
138	Proficient	Basic	Basic
139	Proficient	Basic	Below

140	Proficient	Basic	Advanced
143	Advanced	Below	Proficient
144	Proficient	Below	Basic
145	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
146	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
147	Basic	Below	Below
148	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
149	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
151	Proficient	Basic	Basic
153	Proficient	Basic	Basic
155	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
156	Proficient	Basic	Below
157	Basic	Below	Below
158	Proficient	Basic	Basic
161	Proficient	Below	Basic
162	Proficient	Proficient	Proficient
164	Advanced	Proficient	Proficient
165	Proficient	Basic	Basic
166	Proficient	Proficient	Basic
167	Proficient	Basic	Basic
168	Proficient	Below	Basic
169	Proficient	Basic	Basic
170	Proficient	Basic	Basic

171	Basic	Below	Basic
172	Proficient	Basic	Below
173	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
175	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
176	Proficient	Below	Below
178	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
180	Proficient	Basic	Advanced
182	Proficient	Below	Below
183	Proficient	Basic	Proficient
184	Proficient	Basic	Basic
186	Proficient	Basic	Basic
187	Basic	Basic	Basic
188	Proficient	Proficient	Basic

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