AN EXPLORATION ON THE IMPACT OF TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY ON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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AN EXPLORATION ON THE IMPACT OF TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY ON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AN EXPLORATION ON THE IMPACT OF TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY ON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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Regular student attendance is one of the most important factors in determining a student's academic success. In this qualitative action research study, the researcher sought to identify the reasons behind an increase in chronic absenteeism at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School. Additionally, the question of what impact teacher self-efficacy had on attendance was the focus of the study. Results determined that teachers can and do affect students' attendance rates with use of various strategies of engagement and motivation and by employing their own locus of control. Findings from this study provide key strategies and interventions that can used to mitigate chronic absenteeism in elementary school.

Dedicated to…Tyler and Alexis

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, staff have noticed an uptick in the rate of absenteeism at Mid-Atlantic School and it has become a pervasive problem. Cases of a significant portion of students not attending school on a regular basis have been observed by teachers and administrators within numerous conversations (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2021, 2022). Despite all the newest innovations in curriculum programs, integrative technology, implementation of professional development workshops, and Title I funding, the rate of chronic absenteeism with a significant number of students continues to rise at the elementary school level (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2021, 2022). Schools that receive Title I funding are local educational agencies, such as the school under study, which are subsidized with resources to provide economically disadvantaged students with a fair and equitable education to help narrow academic achievement gaps (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2019). According to the New Jersey Department of Education, during the 2018-2019 academic school year, the school under study averaged 13.1% absenteeism rate in comparison to the state's average of 8.9% (New Jersey Department of Education, 2019). However, it should be noted that at the time of the study, the state, as well as the country, is in the middle of an international pandemic and regular attendance of students has been affected as a result. Despite the pandemic having affected schools in a variety of ways, chronic absenteeism continues to be recurring. Hence, the purpose of this study is to research chronic absenteeism in an attempt to resolve the current absenteeism trend that exists at a Mid-Atlantic elementary school.

After investigating and analyzing the attendance data of this elementary school under study, I am led to question the rising rate of absenteeism at this school. The most current attendance records (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022) show there appears to be a trend in a number of students missing school on a regular basis. Noting the trend of chronic absenteeism at the school, this study seeks to determine reasons explaining why students are chronically absent. Consequently, the research question guiding this study is: *What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism?* A rigorous search of chronic absenteeism, through multiple sources in educational journals, finds this problem to be a recurring issue in numerous districts nationwide as well (*Attendance Works*, 2014; Balfanz, 2016; Kim & Gentle-Genitty, 2019; Lim et al., 2019; London et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2018; Simon et al., 2020). From analyzing attendance records at the school under study and consulting with staff members (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022), it has been suggested by teachers at faculty meetings and during school culture improvement meetings, that some type of strategy needs to be implemented in order to raise the rate of attendance and help foster a more conducive learning environment for students. Students fall further behind in their academic skills the more school they miss (Balfanz, 2016; London et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2018). Additionally, the literature appears scant when considering the impact of teachers on student attendance. If teacher self-efficacy has proven to affect an increase in student achievement, then teacher self-efficacy will have a positive effect on student attendance. Consequently, guiding this study is the aforementioned research question: *What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism?*

With the desire to improve the opportunity gap for all students by increasing their attendance rates, the goal of this study is to determine the causes of chronic absenteeism through the perspectives of educators at the school. An opportunity gap is any life factor people may find themselves born into such as socioeconomic status, race, and language that may impede their educational or future success (Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2001). Bandura stated, "A major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime" (1993, p. 136). Teachers who believe in themselves tend to motivate their students with a positive classroom climate, which can improve academic achievement (Bandura, 1993). Upon discovering the causes of chronic absenteeism, understanding its increasing rates, and exploring the impact on teacher self-efficacy and student absenteeism, I intend to create an action plan to intentionally address the factors impacting chronic absenteeism. Central to this plan are the creation of novel procedures, strategies, and interventions that can be implemented by the administrators and staff at this school to help monitor attendance, intervene early, and provide more support to families. Procedures such as increasing home-school communication with frequent texts and recorded voice mail messages to parents can strengthen family-teacher relationships. Interventions such as creating a teacher student mentor program will support both teacher self-efficacy and student involvement. Strategies such as rewards and incentives for attendance can increase awareness and desire to attend school more often. Consequently, families can benefit from knowing they have a supportive school environment that shares in the concerns and welfare of their children. Additionally, teachers can see how their

beliefs and effectiveness motivate students to become active participants in their own education and desire to attend school.

Most importantly, this study seeks to explore the impact on teacher self-efficacy and chronic absenteeism. Its findings may then lead to the development of a support system for teachers that ultimately results in well-developed initiatives and opportunities for students who are chronically absent. Examples of the support system include (1) staffing schools with highly efficacious teachers because students who are taught by highly efficacious teachers are found to have higher academic achievement (Covey et al., 2014; Gershon 2015; Henson, 2001); (2) possible creation of professional development aimed at increasing the self-efficacy of teachers, if needed (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007); and (3) providing initiatives and programs for families that promote an understanding of the benefits and effects of daily school attendance for children (Childs & Grooms, 2018).

Justification of the Problem

By researching the causes of absenteeism, administrators, along with teachers and parents, can identify why low attendance rates occur. These aforementioned stakeholders in this school system can reap the benefits of the findings of this action research study. Various policies, procedures, strategies, and interventions can be implemented to help monitor attendance and provide support to parents. Planned executions of these tools will allow children to have an improved opportunity to meet with academic success.

Additionally, there is scant amount of literature that speaks to the impact of teacher self-efficacy and student attendance. Consequently, this research study aims to investigate that problem in an effort to improve the attendance rates at Mid-Atlantic

School. According to Hattie, excellent teachers "can attend to affective attributes and can influence student outcomes" (2003, p.5). Being taught by a highly self-efficacious teacher leads one to believe a student will engage more attentively with their studies, therefore promoting a desire to attend school. In addition, teachers who outwardly show support to their students, promote positive behavior, and provide assistance on a regular basis tend to form a connection with their students (Allen, et al., 2016).

Data show when students do not attend school they fall behind; falling behind increases the odds of dropping out of school, especially in the upper grades (United States Department of Education, 2022). It is more difficult to keep up with peers and catch up on missed skills when students miss multiple days of instruction (Balfanz, 2016; Robinson et al., 2018). Children understand that they are not on grade level with their classmates and increase their absences as a result (London et al., 2016). If a student is not present in the classroom, they cannot learn the skills taught by the teacher (Childs & Groom, 2018). Children who are chronically absent tend to drop out of school in later school years. As a result, dropping out of school potentially leads to trouble with the law in the future. According to the United States Department of Education (2022), those students who dropout of high school most likely exhibit poor health conditions and involvement with the criminal justice system.

By improving attendance and mitigating chronic absenteeism, along with improving their own self-efficacy, teachers can connect classroom practices, student growth, and activities for the school community by cultivating both their own and their students' strengths and talents. Empowering teachers to feel influential motivates

students by improving their desire to be a part of a positive school climate and want to come to school.

The vision of this school district is "Student Centered, Teacher Led" (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2017). This vision creates an environment where students are encouraged to share their ideas by embracing their cultures and encouraging diversity among students. Students look to their teachers as leaders who share the same vision. Teachers need to believe in themselves and the mission to best educate their students. By promoting the vision and goals of the school, the educational process will develop and promote student growth with the community benefiting as well. Research shows the efficacy of instruction for each child is incumbent on a vision that develops the social and individual differences of each child (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010).

The goal of increasing attendance rates will assist in organizational improvement not only for the leadership of the school, but for all stakeholders involved. Families will develop a stronger connection with the teachers in the school. Teachers can employ motivational strategies to encourage and inspire their students to become responsible and active learners in their own education and form a desire to attend school. Most importantly, the formulation of this study will benefit students who miss school most frequently by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and highly efficacious teachers needed to attend school and learn.

Deficiencies in the Organizational Knowledge Record

Currently, there has not been any documented effort to increase student attendance at the school, nor has there been professional development provided for the teachers and support staff to enhance their own self-worth, grit, emotional well-being, or

self-efficacy. These resources and support structures are lacking for faculty. However, there have been professional development classes and resources that are dedicated to promoting social-emotional growth for the students of the district. Initiatives such as The Morning Meeting and Character Education were strategies implemented five years ago (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2017) to promote student affective self-knowledge and self-awareness. Since the implementation of those initiatives, during the first two days of teacher in-service days at the beginning of the school year, teachers and support staff are taught strategies of implementing social emotional awareness lessons within the daily curriculum (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022). A district-wide committee meets several times a year to create new ideas and creates slide presentations to disseminate to staff via email or through a shared drive every month in which they can incorporate into their classroom learning (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022).

The District's Policy Manual explains the definitions of attendance, absences, and excuses. The current manual was adopted in August of 2006 and revised in June of 2020. In the manual it notes that the district "shall endeavor to achieve ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)" (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022). The policy manual details the procedures taken for persistent absences beginning with five to nine absences with a notification to parents. Ten or more unexcused absences will result in development of an action plan which can include a consultation with the Intervention and Referral Team, seeking assistance from community and a referral to health care resources or the family court system as a last resort (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2022). In 2018, the New Jersey Department of Education created a three-tiered system of supports to improve

daily attendance as it began to recognize that many school districts in the state had high absenteeism rates, as defined as 10 percent or more of the student population identified as absent (New Jersey Department of Education, 2022). It is to be noted that as of present time, during the commencement of this study, the state, as well as the country, is in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. Therefore, attendance protocols are not strictly enforced during this time.

Audience

Several groups of stakeholders can be positively impacted by this research study. Administrators can formulate plans based on research findings and data analysis. They can better serve the community and reevaluate their organizational structure to support the programs or policies they adopt. Additionally, administrators can use the data to develop innovative strategies and interventions to support parents so their child has an improved opportunity to meet with academic success. Additional professional development time can be planned by administrators to assist teachers in mitigating the problem of absenteeism and improve their own teacher self-efficacy as educators. As a result of the study and its findings, teachers can work in conjunction with parents and administrators by intervening in the early stages of chronic absenteeism. Parents will benefit from having a supportive and nurturing school environment for their children.

The study can also benefit the other schools within the district. The action plan could be adopted by the other campuses that share the same demographics and experience similar absenteeism rates to improve attendance at their respective schools, therefore improving attendance rates districtwide. Ultimately, findings of the study can lead to the development of an action plan that involves further development of teachers'

self-efficacy, invigorating a faculty who believes it can affect the outcomes of their students' behaviors in positive and transformative ways, including increasing attendance rates.

Organizational Context

The organization under study is an elementary school located in a central Mid-Atlantic state. I am currently a teacher at this school. The school serves kindergarten through fifth grades with a total of 585 students currently enrolled in school this year. There are between three and five sections for each grade in the building with approximately 22-30 students in each general education classroom, and four special education classes serving students with autism. The student demographics of the school compromise: 67.8% white, 11.3% Black, 18% Latino and 2.9% Asian. The faculty and staff of the school include 57 teachers, one principal, one nurse, one social worker, two secretaries and seven paraprofessionals, with 99% of staff identifying as white. The school under study is a Title I school. As a result, students are eligible to receive after school extended support for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics and attend high interest enrichment clubs. According to the state's school performance report, the demographics for the school enrollment entail: 33.7% low-income households, 27.9% disabled, and 8.8% English Language Learners (NJ School Performance Report, 2021).

The mission statement of the district is: "Student centered, teacher led, committed to supporting student growth by cultivating strengths and talents" (Anonymous Mid-Atlantic School, 2022). The district mission statement was adopted in August of 2017 with the notion that the schools are student centered and teacher led. The mission statement reinforces the focus of supporting student growth through cultivating the

unique strengths of each child. The mission statement and its purpose are important for staff and students so they can together foster a learning community that recognizes the need for student growth and achievement, uniquely to each individual.

Overview of Theoretical Framework/Methods/Research Question

In researching the question, "*What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy on student attendance,*" Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory was employed as the theoretical framework for this study (Bandura, 1977; 1991; 1993; 1994; 1997; 2001; 2006). Bandura believed that within an individual's own personal goal setting, the stronger sense of self-efficacy one had, the higher commitment he or she would extend to their goal (Bandura, 1993). Those who have a firmer belief in their own self-efficacy believed they would exhibit more positive outcomes. Those who have low self-efficacy would experience more self-doubt and less likely experience successful outcomes (Bandura, 1993). People can affect the outcomes of their choices based upon their self-efficacy beliefs and evaluate their actions based on their perceptions of handling challenging decisions and activities (Bandura, 1994). Considering Bandura's (1977, 2006) theory, an exploration of the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism is at the core of this study. Self-efficacy determines the choices teachers make in the classroom as demonstrated through varied teaching strategies, classroom management and positive or negative reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Strong teacher efficacy leads to risk taking and mastering challenges. Conversely, low teacher self-efficacy leads to less effort and lack of motivation (Bandura, 1977). Thus, efficacious teachers use creative strategies to inspire children to learn and help create a desire to attend school despite any outside factors that may prevent them from attending. The persistence to want to attend school and the will to

continue to do so, leads children to attend school on a regular basis, fostering their own self-efficacy.

This study adopts Creswell and Gutterman's (2019) definition of grounded theory which entails involvement of the study by explaining interactions between people and their connections that might exist between them. Creswell and Gutterman (2019) suggested using grounded theory when studying a process and explaining interactions among people, connecting categories, and generating a theory that explains the process of what you are studying. This study is grounded on self-efficacy in conjunction with the foundations of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. According to Tschannen-Moran, et al. (1998), the interaction of analyzing teaching strategies and one's own assessment of teaching competencies affects self-efficacy. The four sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and affective states) are each dependent upon how a person perceives an experience (Lazarides & Warner, 2020). Along this vein, the social interactions that occur between students and teachers may yield results that may affect student attendance. For example, when teachers observe other teachers performing in activities that result in positive outcomes, they are more inclined to raise their own level of accomplishments through these vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1977). In addition, verbal persuasion and coaching of mastery experience has shown to increase a teacher's belief that she can take risks and experience success (Bandura, 1997). Cognized goals help determine the selection of choices and perceptions of our environments, thus self-efficacy beliefs produce our beliefs in our own ability to affect change (Bandura, 1993). This study is further inspired by the dearth of literature that exists between the impact of teacher self-efficacy and student attendance.

Aiming to explore the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism, data collection will include semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers from the building and hosting and mediating a focus group of eight teachers, in an attempt to gain an understanding from educators' perspectives as to why the phenomenon of chronic absenteeism is occurring at Mid-Atlantic School and their ideas on how we can mitigate the problem. According to Hattie (2003), excellent teachers can tap into the affective domain of students and use that ability to influence student behaviors and outcomes. Being taught by a highly self-efficacious teacher leads one to believe a student will engage more attentively with their studies, therefore promoting a desire to attend school. In addition, teachers who outwardly show support to their students, promote positive behavior, and provide assistance on a regular basis tend to form a connection with their students (Allen, et al., 2016). Therefore, the research question this study seeks to address is: *What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism?*

Limitations

This study, being qualitative in nature, is limited in its sample population. Purposive sampling will be used as a method of data collection. It only reflects the viewpoint and perspective of teachers at this school. An area of future study would be to investigate administrators' viewpoints and perspectives from students as well as parents. A larger sample population could be surveyed employing quantitative methods, thus creating a mixed methods study on the subject of absenteeism. Additionally, researching similarities of trends in other elementary schools in the district could garner additional supportive data for future Action Plans. Again, it is to be noted that as of present time during the commencement of this study, the state, as well as the country, is in the midst

of a worldwide pandemic. Attendance protocols are not being enforced at this time. As a result, the collection of data for this study is limited.

Review of the Literature and Framework Informing the Study

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Social Cognitive Theory

People who believe in themselves and their abilities to be successful will put forth the effort to do so and persevere through adversity (Bandura, 1977). This concept is the leading premise behind Bandura's social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory purports that individuals are managers of their own thoughts and actions and they learn how to act for themselves based on the observations of others' actions (Bandura, 1991; 2001). Similarly, teacher self-efficacy, Bandura (2006) posited, has to do with perceived capability. Perceived capability determines much of a person's behaviors and choices such as emotions they feel, opportunities or risks they take, commitments they enter, and their ability to persevere in times of adversity (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is based on perception of one's ability to complete tasks, rather than actual completion (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). The choices people make and actions they take are influenced by how much they believe in their own self-efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). Bandura believed "the task of creating environments conducive to learning rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers" (1997, p. 140). According to Turkoglu and colleagues, "teachers, who perceive themselves as successful beings thinking they are talented, will succeed in the future" (2018, pg. 172).

Believing you can influence an outcome leads to greater self-efficacy, which in turn equips you with the will-power to take on the demands of life and ability to assist others. If teachers believe in their ability to successfully tackle challenges, they will most

likely persevere in the face of other obstacles (Goddard et al., 2004). Teachers who are effective in their teaching and believe that they are good teachers have good classroom management practices, provide a positive learning environment, and tend to gain more parental support (Bandura, 1997). By communicating the importance of increasing attendance at the school to teachers and relating it to teacher self-efficacy as an underlying cause for student attendance (or absenteeism), all staff members have a vested interest in increasing their own self-efficacy and desire to affect change in their students' attendance rates. Since, teachers who are highly self-efficacious believe their actions lead to positive outcomes and can inspire and motivate students to be responsible for their own actions (Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007), similarly, teachers who believe they can assist students perform at higher academic levels have the capacity to inspire regular attendance as well.

Three elements that have been linked to teacher self-efficacy are: school climate and structure, leadership of the principal, and collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). If a teacher believes that she is an effective teacher, she will expect future performances to be successful. If a teacher has lower self-efficacy beliefs, her perception of future endeavors will be poor (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Teachers who feel they cannot be successful in the classroom will not teach with much passion or exert effort in helping students perform, even when they know particular strategies exist that could help their students' academic achievement.

Teacher self-efficacy has been found to be a determining factor of students' beliefs, achievement and teacher action (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Teachers with high self-efficacy set goals to encourage students to be active participants,

use various teaching strategies to engage learners and remain patient with challenging students (Ozben & Kilicolu, 2021). Teachers who believe they have the ability, support, and resources necessary to implement curriculum changes implemented by their schools will take on the challenge with a positive attitude. Those who exhibit low self-efficacy will feel threatened and stressed (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Students who have efficacious teachers have higher grades (Henson, 2001), are motivated to learn, and are praised more often (Bandura, 1993). Teachers who exhibit low self-efficacy are judgmental, use negative discourse, and spend less time teaching (Bandura, 1993). Burnout occurs when teachers with low self-efficacy are not capable of performing the tasks needed to be effective teachers. They begin to distance themselves from students and colleagues, avoid problematic situations, and become depressed (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs are what the teacher believes them to be: "self-fulfilling prophecies validating beliefs either of capability or of incapacity" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007, p. 945). Self-efficacy affects motivation and the desire to learn. This study explores the impact of teacher self-efficacy and its impact on student attendance by building on the foundation of Social Cognitive Theory and the social construct of teacher self-efficacy. Since teachers who believe they are highly self-efficacious can affect academic achievement and motivation, highly self-efficacious teachers should be a motivational factor in students' attendance.

Related Research

Chronic absenteeism is pervasive in numerous states of this country (US Department of Education, 2022). A student who misses more than 15 days of school a year can be considered chronically absent (US Department of Education, 2022). Fifteen

days equates to millions of children missing three weeks or more of school a year. According to the United States Department of Education website, during the 2015-2016 school year nearly 800 school districts reported that over 30 percent of students at their schools missed at least three weeks of school (2022). Contributing to those absentee days are both excused and unexcused absences, as well as suspensions. Missing numerous days can have detrimental effects on learners' success. Students miss out on educational opportunities that form a basis for further development and knowledge when they miss numerous days.

Several themes were found within the studies that have been conducted and published. This literature review will first define the students who experience chronic absenteeism, followed by a brief overview of the root causes of chronic absenteeism. The implications on learning will be noted as well as an introduction to teacher self-efficacy. The literature review will conclude with possible improvement strategies for raising student attendance rates.

Students Who are Chronically Absent

In the majority of readings, the consensus seems to be that absenteeism is most pronounced in the very early stages of schooling. The highest rate of chronic absenteeism appears to be in kindergarten with first grade coming in as the second highest grade (Balfanz, 2016). There is a wide range of children who find themselves in this category of chronic absenteeism. The largest population of students not attending school on a regular basis are those who come from homes with low socioeconomic status (Blad, 2017; Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Lim, et al., 2019; Nauer, 2016). Students from low socio-economic households may avoid school due to the following reasons: caring for sick

family members, having to travel to school through dangerous neighborhoods, or due to parents' false beliefs like missing school sporadically will not affect their children's academics (Balfanz, 2016). In addition, children who have disabilities or health conditions, children who are Black, and children who come from single or divorced family households can find themselves chronically absent as well (Simon et al., 2020). Some studies have found these variables contribute to high absenteeism because low socio-economic families have less access to resources of healthcare, transportation, or steady income (Balfanz et al 2016; Chang, et al., 2018; London et. al, 2016; Simon et. al, 2020).

Factors Contributing to Absenteeism

There appears to be several reasons leading to the rise of chronic absenteeism in America's school system. One overarching construct is a negative school experience. A negative school climate can include unfair discipline policies (Blad, 2017), bullying on school property (Balfanz, 2016), or particular safety concerns (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). These contributors of inadequate school climate are major impediments to regular attendance (Balfanz, 2017). Chang and Romero (2008) noted negative classroom environments contributed to reasons children did not want to go to school. Lack of school engagement on the part of the student or even the parent is another reason why children may be absent so often (Gottfried & Gee, 2017). Parents who are young, who have had negative experiences with school themselves, or do not fully understand the importance of education may contribute to reasons their children miss so many days of school (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Some parents may even distrust the school's authority and motives based on their own past experiences and may not value the institution of

learning (Robinson et al., 2018). Smythe-Leistico and Page (2018) found that poor health and hardships in transportation were additional contributing factors that led to children's lack of school attendance on a regular basis. When families experience poor health or have a difficult time securing reliable transportation, they tend to stay at home more often. Lim and colleagues, (2019) noted that students who come from impoverished families usually are the ones that have the most health problems such as asthma, poor dental hygiene, and learning disabilities. As a result, these impediments become significant reasons behind why children of these families regularly miss school. Additionally, students who are neglected by their families often miss school. These children may include those that are brain damaged due to drug use by the mother in vitro, transient families, and children whose parents were truants or delinquents when they were students themselves (Beyer et al., 1988).

Implications on Learning

Chronic absenteeism is a paramount predictor in a child's future as a student and in some cases later in life as a young adult (Kostyo et al., 2018). In recent years the government has implemented new policies recognizing the need for states to be more proactive in its attendance guidelines and reporting of data. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 became policy after The No Child Left Behind was repealed. This act mandates that all schools nationwide include chronic absenteeism data in their school report cards. This is important because it holds schools accountable as one of several indicators of measured success (Chang et al., 2018). Early signs of absenteeism predict student outcomes and successes. The more school children miss, the more difficult it is for them to catch up and meet with academic success (Balfanz, 2016; Robinson et al.,

2018). The more school students miss in the early years, the less enthusiastic they are to keep attending later on, leading to more absences in the future (London et al., 2016). When children lose too many days, they start to feel they are not on grade level with their classmates and tend to miss even more schooling as a result (London et al., 2016). If a student is not present in the classroom, they cannot learn the skills taught by the teacher (Childs & Groom, 2018). Children who are neglected tend to not advance their academic skills past the fourth grade. Some schools do not have the resources to provide remedial skills to students who are not special education qualified but are still far enough behind that it is detrimental to their learning (Beyer et al., 1988).

How to Improve Attendance

Chronic absenteeism can be improved when all stakeholders of the community come together to emphasize the importance of attending school and work toward the common goal of improving attendance (*Attendance Works*, 2014). Punitive consequences for absenteeism have proven ineffective in increasing attendance (Childs & Grooms, 2018). More recently, using a school-community collaborative approach showed promising gains in decreasing the likelihood of chronic absenteeism (Childs, & Grooms, 2018; Kim & Gentle-Genitty, 2019). Along with Childs and Groom, Smythe and Page (2018) determined a key factor in implementing strategic interventions includes involving community-based members and organizations. Positive communication through community-based outreach programs, public awareness campaigns, personal phone calls and texts from teachers or principals, home visits, and mentor programs are various ways to increase home to school communication in an engaging, caring, and welcoming manner (Childs & Grooms, 20181; Gottried et al., 2020; Kostyo et al., 2018; London et

al., 2016; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Simon, et. al (2020) believed that if absenteeism is identified early and interventions are put in place, the negative effects of losing so many days' worth of education can be turned around by the time students enter third grade. Childs and Grooms (2018) strongly suggested that an effective method of improving school attendance centers around more involvement and communication coming from school administrators, especially principals. They argued that school administration programs need to provide training in this area so school leaders are prepared to effectively and actively engage families with the ultimate goal of reinforcing the importance of daily attendance.

Reduction of truancy was a national goal for the 2003 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2022). Gottfried defined truancy as, "missing school for unexcused reasons, that is, reasons that do not pertain to health, emergencies, or other commitments" (2017, pg. 130). In a study conducted by Kim and Barthelemy (2011), a tool for screening, assessing, and intervention methods was created to determine at-risk levels of continued truancy for children in grades kindergarten through fifth. Based on the level of risk assessed, students and their families were assigned case managers, provided family service plan agreements, parent education programs, counseling programs, and/or court jurisdictions (Kim & Barthelemy, 2011). As a result of a gap in literature, Sugrue et al., (2016) conducted a qualitative study that included a community caseworker intervention plan that was supported by a multistage platform to analyze and improve chronic absenteeism in a large-urban suburban school system involving K-5 schools. The findings determined that mitigation of chronic absenteeism is not easily resolved in a short amount

of time. Rather, long-term commitment to intervention programs is most beneficial (Sugrue, et al., 2016).

More in depth professional development can invigorate teachers and help improve their teaching methods. Hanno's (2020) research study showed that teachers who participated in professional development showed gains in reducing the rate of student absenteeism. Gershon (2015) also determined that high quality teachers who provide a strong classroom culture that embraces a love of learning, and teaches both students and parents the importance of education, had lower absentee rates in their classrooms. Hanno (2020) suggested professional development should focus on improving educators' interactions with students which could impact attendance. Kini and Podolksy claimed, "Teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career" (2016, p.1). Teachers who do not actively engage or support students with varying needs contribute to increased levels of absenteeism (Teasley, 2004). Although Henson (2001) noted it was difficult to change the perception of veteran teachers since self-efficacy, or lack thereof, forms over many years' experience; these teachers may show improvement through professional development classes if they are willing and receptive to change.

Numerous schools are now incorporating social and emotional learning programs into the curriculum which concentrates on teaching life skills, coping strategies, character education and incorporating self-concept building (Kearny & Graczyk, 2013). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) found that interventions that connect students and encourage them to feel more welcomed and increase self-awareness have a positive effect on attendance and academic achievement

(CASEL Brief, 2011). According to Covey and collaborators, (2014), when students feel connected to school and feel they have an adult with whom they trust, they attend school more often and do better academically.

Other novel recommendations for improving attendance call for less complicated and more manageable interventions. Teachers and support staff can be very motivating in the fostering of a positive and welcoming school culture. Reward and incentive programs for both students and families have shown to have successful outcomes. Examples of these types of rewards include shout-outs over loud speakers, e-books, and gas cards for families (Balfanz, 2016; Blad, 2017). Summarily, a collaborative school-community model with all stakeholders involved, incorporating many or all the above strategies and interventions, promotes a positive school climate and encourages increased attendance from students (Childs & Groom, 2018).

Action Research Design and Methods

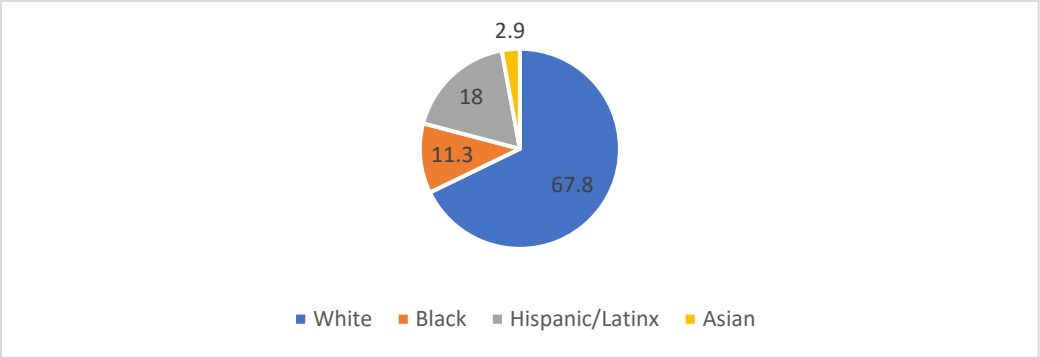
Site or Population Selection

The setting for this case is an elementary school located in a Mid-Atlantic state. It serves kindergarten through fifth grades with a total of 585 students currently enrolled in school this year. There are between three and five sections for each grade in the building with approximately 22-30 students in each general education classroom, and to special education classes serving students with autism. The student demographic breakdown can be found below in Figure 1. The total population of the town is 75,475. Children between the ages of 5 and 17 comprise 14.5% of the total population. 6.8% of residents live below the poverty level with a total of 33.1% considered economically disadvantaged (Neighborhoodscout, 2018). The faculty and staff of the school is comprised of 57

teachers, one principal, one nurse, three social workers, two secretaries and seven paraprofessionals, with 99% of staff identifying as white.

Figure 1

Population of Mid-Atlantic School



Researcher Role and Positionality

In formulating my study on chronic absenteeism at this institution under study, I have to reach deep within to critically and honestly ask myself what my passion in life is. I love my job as an elementary school teacher and I value every light bulb that has ever shone atop a student's head when they have finally connected to a particular idea or skill they were struggling to understand. My heart is filled with love, appreciation, and admiration for the children who tell me on the first day of school that they "hate" school and then just a couple of weeks into the school year they no longer feel that way. They eagerly share that school is fun and never want to miss a day of school ever again! There is an immense sense of pride I feel when I am doing my job to engage all students, especially reluctant learners, to use the tools they've been given to learn and grow.

The qualitative research I am conducting materialized from a personal and moral philosophy which drives the rationale for discovering the reasons behind chronic

absenteeism at my school. If students do not attend school on a daily basis, they will not be able to use the knowledge and skills taught to learn and succeed. If I can inspire my own students to come to school, there must be some type of plan or intervention that can be implemented so more teachers can experience a classroom full of eager learners with no empty desks as well.

As a constructivist, I can appreciate how the participants I interview have their own knowledge base and preconceived notions of various topics in the realm of elementary education, myself included. Denzin and Lincoln noted that constructivists believe that "collection and interpretation of qualitative data on humans are inherently subjective" (Willis, 2007, p. 160). I am cognizant that my ontology is that of constructivism, for I believe humans co-construct their reality by the interactions they create with other humans and objects on a daily basis. My epistemology is that of a subjectivist because I am interested in knowing how people experience their own world, which is different from how I view the same experiences; we are all knowledge builders in our own right. I will conduct my data with the methodological approach of a constructivist, through interviews and analysis of documents. As a result, the data I collect will create the story I am seeking and thereby birthing a possible theory behind the phenomenon of interest I am studying.

Walliman determined that constructivists see the world as a creation of the mind and more importantly, there can be "more than one perspective and interpretation of a phenomenon" (2011, p.22). Walliman (2011) additionally noted that we can only experience the world through our own belief systems and values that are intrinsic to our own person. He posited there can be multiple perceptions of a particular phenomenon and

the research's job is to seek meaningful and connected relationships as part of the process of making sense of our world (2011). I believe we all see things differently based on our own prior life experiences. Researchers and participants view problems of practice through their own experiences. Through this action research I will seek to understand the meaningful relationships between teachers and their view on education practices and policies and try to connect that relationship of teacher self-efficacy to the phenomenon of chronic absenteeism. Based on teachers' perceptions of this phenomenon and seeking reasons behind why students are chronically absent, I will try to extrapolate their ideas on what is affecting these regular occurrences. Additionally, discovering how teachers perceive their own abilities to affect student behaviors, with emphasis on attendance, these educators can see how their beliefs and effectiveness motivate students to become active participants in their own education and desire to attend school.

Ethical and Political Considerations

In creating this research action plan, I am aware that some biases need to be addressed. I am passionate about the topic of chronic absenteeism but I need to understand and reflect that some others may not share that passion; some educators may be apathetic to the topic. Not everyone will share the same willingness to solve the problem, if indeed they perceive absenteeism in our school as a problem. I will have to reflect and put aside any feelings of disbelief, conflicting ideas, apathy, or defensiveness I may encounter from the participants and remain objective and neutral throughout the entire process. Admitting my biases and bracketing those preconceived notions will strengthen the trustworthiness of my data findings.

One issue that may pose ethical implications is that the faculty of the school identifies as 100% white. Students come from various races and ethnic backgrounds. Some preconceived racial biases among the teachers may exist and permeate their reflections of the interview questions that are asked. Some teachers believe that the Spanish speaking and Black families at our school do not want to be involved with their children's education. Most of the ELL (English Language Learners) families do not speak English and cannot assist their children at home. As a result of the language barrier, many families do not attend school functions and teachers perceive this nonparticipation as a lack of interest on the part of the family. Many of the Brown and Black children are often suspended and some teachers think that those children should just be pushed through the system or eventually removed. This being said, some racial biases may underlie contributing answers from participants during the interview process.

One limitation related to social justice is the lack of racial and cultural diversity among staff. The sample population would consist of all white staff members, which is the racial demographic make-up of our school for faculty. In order to have a thorough understanding of needs and feelings, a preferable sample population would be ethnically diverse and consist of a percentage of the same student demographic populations. Keeping the lack of diversity among the staff in mind, building on the improvement of attendance is paramount in providing an equitable education for all students, especially the ones who struggle to attend school on a regular basis due to uncontrolled home conditions.

Another potential issue is the relationship I have with the participants. I have personal relationships with some teachers and they may tell me answers they assume I

want to hear. Conversely, they may not want to tell me their ideas if they think I may not be in agreement. To combat any hesitance they may feel, I will speak with the teachers I interview beforehand and explain that their answers will be held in full confidentiality. I will review the Informed Consent they receive at this time, remind them of their "rights" during the study, and reiterate the privacy that will remain thereafter and assure them that their names or identifying details will never be disclosed. I will stress that the interviews and data I collect will be for the research I am conducting in order to form an action plan of improving the situation at our school. I will additionally explain that whatever input, ideas, and opinions they can offer will be used in the formulation of that plan and that I appreciate their honest answers. I will inform the participants that I will have them "member check" the transcript, thereby asking for their agreement that their words and thoughts written in the transcript are presented as they originally relayed them to me. I will remind them that all data I receive is for the benefit of my research with the ultimate goal of improving student attendance. No political considerations can be foreseen at this point in time. The only consideration is the continuance or reemergence of the pandemic. With schools easing restrictions and returning back to schedule with in person classes, data may be collected and lawfully recorded once again.

Data Collection Methods

My research study will include semi-structured interviews and a focus group. I will review school attendance records as well as state-wide data sets to note any particular upward trends in absenteeism to use as discussion points during my interviews. The study will employ a purposive sampling frame of educators who have been in the district five years or more. Teachers having five years or more experience in the district

are more likely to notice trends in the attendance rate over time. Participants will be teachers who teach within the K-5 elementary school. I will solicit potential interviewees and focus group members through email. I will clearly state my objective of seeking to find if there is any impact of teacher self-efficacy on student attendance. As a result of my findings, I will solicit suggestions in trying to find ways to increase the rate of attendance at the school under study.

Upon receipt of the Invitation to Participate Form (see Appendix A), 10 interviews will be scheduled and an invitation link for a Zoom conference will subsequently be emailed to the participants. At that time, the interview questions will also be emailed to the participants. Semi-structured 60-minute interviews will be conducted via Zoom and recorded, in which 12 questions will be posed during that time (see Appendix B). The interviews will begin with me asking the participants if they have received the Consent to Participate Form and Interview Questions. Upon their acknowledgement of these items, I will ask the interviewees if they have any questions and remind that they have received and agreed to the informed consent, and reiterate that they can opt out of the interview at any time and thank them for their assistance in their honest answers in helping me conduct my research study. I will begin with questions that are specifically related to the topic of absenteeism and teacher self-efficacy and encourage the participants to speak freely using personal experiences from which to draw upon as suggested by Moser and Korstjens (2018). Upon the completion of the interviews, I will tell the participants if they have any questions or additional information they would like to share in the near future, they should feel free to contact me. I will code the transcribed data.

Focus Group

A group of four to six teachers will be solicited via school email and asked to participate in a focus group. Researchers (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Hesse-Biber, 2017) suggest recruiting a small number of participants to elicit similar responses to participants who are familiar with one another. This focus group will consist of a small group of teachers who have a shared understanding of chronic absenteeism at the school (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The focus group will consist of myself, the moderator, taking notes throughout the discussion. Questions will be prewritten based on the responses from the prior interviews; however, the researcher will lead the conversation based on answers and discourse that occurs among the discussion of the group. About 40% of questions (see Appendix C) will be predetermined for the focus group because the remaining 60% will result from the findings of the initial interviews. The highly structured focus group will consist of questions that are linked specifically to my topic and research question as suggested by Hesse-Biber (2017).

Data Analysis

Grounded theory will be the method I employ to understand the findings, and generate a theory (Charmaz, 2006). Using the ideas from grounded theory, I can extract important information from qualitative data I analyze (Hesse-Bieber, 2017). According to Merriam and Grenier, "a grounded theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that state relationships among categories and properties" (2019, p. 9). As I code the data, questions will emerge regarding certain themes I find as I am analyzing the interviewee's responses. I will employ open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to analyze the qualitative data.

Interviews

Upon completion of the interviews, I will print out the transcripts Zoom transcribes and I will carefully read over each transcript, checking for clarity and understandability. I will subsequently delete the video recordings to ensure confidentiality. I will ask participants to member check their individual transcripts to confirm that the words on the paper are the words in which they did indeed speak and meant to convey during the recorded interview. Upon completing and publication of my DIP, I will store the printed transcripts in a locked filing cabinet in my house for three years.

In my initial stages of coding, I will employ open coding where I will take the transcribed data and break it up into parts. I will highlight words that indicate importance and write emerging themes in the margins, and then I will enter them into a spreadsheet using Google Sheets. I will create and label codes for these sections. Next, using axial coding, I will look for connections between the codes I created during the open coding process. I will then take those codes and group them into categories. Finally, in selective coding, I will connect all the categories from the axial coding to one or more strands or central categories, thus developing a theme at the central core of my research. As I continue the cyclical process, a theory is likely to emerge from the iterative coding process.

As I start to compare all interview and focus group transcripts, I will also analyze the data to determine if there are any commonalities or deviant themes from the participants' coded transcripts and make a chart of similarities and differences. The use of

this comparative method explained by Charmaz (2006) helps to see if there are underlying themes or categories between multiple participants.

Focus Group

The focus group will consist of four to six teachers. The participants will be those who previously volunteered to be individually interviewed. Five of the questions (see Appendix C) will be preestablished, however the other 60% of questions will stem from the responses garnered from the interview sessions (see Appendix D). The discussion will be recorded and transcribed using Zoom. I will then then check the transcription for clarity and understandability. After transcription I will member check individually with the participants, confirming their answers for clarity and correctness. Upon completion of the focus group that I conduct, I will review the observation notes that I have taken as well. I will conduct the coding process for the focus group notes as I did for the interviews. I will search each word in the notes for recurring words. I will highlight words I feel have importance, write emerging themes in the margins, and enter them into a spreadsheet using Google Sheets. I will then move on to line-by-line coding whereby I begin looking for summarizing themes. I will complete the coding as I explained in the previous section using open, axial, and selective coding. I will secure the transcript of the focus group discussion in a locked filing cabinet along with the interview transcripts.

Trustworthiness/Validity/Credibility/Transferability

Upon completion of data collection, I will "immerse" myself in the data as suggested by Moser and Korstjens (2018, p. 16). I will read and reread my journal entries and memos and analyze the transcripts from the interviews to determine common themes within and among the transcribed interviews. As grounded theorists use the "constant

comparison method," I too will employ this framework to document and memo any emerging ideas (Charmaz, 2006, p.54).

Dependability

The 60-minute semi-structured interviews will be recorded using the Zoom platform using my University of Dayton account and email. Transcriptions will be created and analyzed shortly after the live sessions. Following each interview, I will listen to the audio and compare the audio transcript with the video recorded version for accuracy with the words that are transcribed on Zoom. Although I will take several notes during the real time interviews, I plan to write numerous memos after each interview, as to remember details or inflections or noted body language of the participant to compare against the transcriptions and to refer to while coding later (Charmaz, 2006). To ensure validity of the interview questions, before the questions are finalized for use and submitted to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), two work colleagues who are veteran teachers with expert knowledge in their content areas will read, answer, and comment on those questions. This review will occur before the questions are submitted to the IRB and utilized in the recorded Zoom interviews. For an additional means to determine validity of interview questions, three veteran teachers from Mid-Atlantic School will complete a mini-Likert scale to rate four elements of the interview questions. The following elements would be rated from 1 to 5 to determine validity of the questions: the content, sentence structure, sequential flow, and correlation of the research question of the study. Written drafts of this study's findings will be reviewed by peers in the cohort for scrutinization and analysis with suggestions of edits under all topics and headings to strengthen dependability of my action research study (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

During the interviews and focus group, the nature of the dialogue itself will hopefully transition from professional to a more relaxed and conversational tone in both cases. As the process becomes more comfortable, the participants may speak more freely and less guarded which is a crucial element in establishing good rapport with participants (Patnaik, 2013). As a result of possessing my own personal experiences and feelings towards chronic absenteeism, I need to explore, identify, and bracket my own passions, predispositions, and biases during the study and especially during the interview and focus group processes (Shenton, 2004). Continuing to reflect and journal on these feelings will contribute to confirmability.

Credibility

Being an elementary school teacher for more than 15 years, I have seen many changes in the public school system, especially in the area of attendance. My numerous years in the field of education lend itself to first-hand knowledge of the background information and setting of the study. I am able to understand content, acronyms, implied statements and body language as an insider with "shared experiences" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). The participants I choose to assist in the collection of data for this study will all be educators with five or more years of experience as well. Teachers with five or more years' experience are more likely to have witnessed trends in absenteeism in their classes and throughout their school over the course of several years. All participants will be informed that they will be given pseudonyms. They will be reminded they can choose to stop answering questions at any time. Memos will be written after the interviews to evaluate the answers given and determine if there are any common themes between the

participants, thus establishing an audit trail (Charmaz, 2006). Participants will be asked to member check their transcripts to confirm the themes and certain quotations they spoke about during the interview and focus group. They will be asked to confirm that they were indeed the themes and words they meant to say during the conversations. Throughout the developmental stages, as well as the data collection and analysis process, I will continue to journal my conversations, observations, and ideas to reflect on the research question of the study. The memos, findings, and document analysis will be given to a peer to review and analyze as additional means to establish credibility. Through the named forms of data collection strategies above, triangulation will be achieved (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

I will conduct my study in an elementary school housing grades kindergarten through fifth with a little over 580 students. Interviews will be conducted via recorded Zoom sessions. Interviews will include veteran teachers in the school's district who have been teaching for five or more years as an elementary school teacher. Interviews will be scheduled to last a little over 60 minutes in time. The focus group will be scheduled for an hour's time. It will be audio recorded, transcribed, and member checked. Data for attendance records for the school from the past two years have been printed by the school secretary and analyzed for statistical data (Shenton, 2004).

CHAPTER TWO

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

"We must always seek,

always endeavor."

~A.G. Sertillanges

Reporting of Qualitative Results

In seeking to better understand whether teacher self-efficacy has any impact on chronic student absenteeism at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School, qualitative data were collected using recorded interviews and one focus group of teachers at the school. Full time teachers with five or more years of experience were invited to be participants in this action research study. Thirteen were selected for the recorded semi-structured interviews. As suggested by Stringer and Ortiz Aragon (2021), focus groups play a critical role in the data process consisting of an optimal number of four to six participants. Consequently, using those numbers as a basis for a focus group, this study recruited five out of the 13 participants to be part of the focus group. The focus group was conducted, recorded, and transcribed using Zoom audio-video software. The interviews took place over a three-week time period. The focus group was conducted during one session lasting one hour's time in length, approximately three months following the completion of all the interviews. Data coded from the interviews revealed recurring themes which resulted in generation of several targeted and specific new questions for the focus group (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Charmaz, 2006). Upon completion of coding of the data from both the interviews and focus group, I determined three themes from the results of this study: engagement, locus of control, and policy.

This study sought to capture the voice of teachers' perceptions regarding the effect chronic absenteeism has on students and their behaviors and academic achievement, as well as

the effect of teaching practices and motivational factors. The results of this study support my research question, "does teacher self-efficacy impact student attendance?"

To establish credibility and trustworthiness of the study I conducted triangulation of data with the focus group, interviews, and the artifacts I obtained, as well as conducted member checking. The 13 participants who were interviewed individually in this study consisted of all female teachers ranging from five to 30 years of elementary school teaching experience. During this qualitative study 12 questions (see Appendix B) were posed during the interviews and seven questions (see Appendix C and Appendix D) were presented to the focus group. The first five questions (see Appendix C) for the focus group were the same as those presented during the interviews to allow participants to share their answers among the other staff members present, if they chose to do so. The final seven questions (see Appendix D) were created as emerging themes that surfaced during the data coding process (Charmaz, 2006).

Findings of the Study

In seeking to explore the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic student absenteeism at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School qualitative data were collected. Thirteen interviews were conducted and data were analyzed and coded until themes became apparent. A focus group of five individuals who were also interview participants was also conducted three months following the completed interview process. Through this approach, I was able to reflect on the responses from the participants during the

interviews which then led me to a set of new questions that were more probing in nature. These extension questions (Stringer & Ortiz Aragon, 2021) encouraged participants to reveal more information, thus leading to a point of data saturation (Hesse-Biber, 2017) where no new themes were apparent (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019). Upon completion of the coding process stemming from responses from the interviews and the focus group three recurrent themes from the results of this study were identified: engagement, locus of control, and policy. Each theme is summarized and presented alongside a table of corresponding quotes (see Tables 1-3). Through an open coding process, and reflective memoing, participant quotes were taken directly from recordings of interviews or from the focus group. The researcher's assertations can be found alongside those relevant quotes based upon these quotes and their related themes.

One of the strengths of my positionality is that I am well acquainted with the workplace and staff members. Because of the familiarity, when the participants responded I knew who they were talking about and understood the sentiment behind their responses so much, so I was able to probe and ask deeper questions, thus expanding the depth of the questions.

In general, my open coding (Charmaz, 2006) revealed responses that implied the areas of teacher engagement, relationship building, class culture and climate, and lack of guidelines and consequences for absenteeism. Subsequently, I started axial coding (Charmaz, 2006) and drew connections among the participant responses, especially data saturated points: fun, relevant, and engaging teachers' lessons and relationships, teachers either believe they have control of attendance of their students or they do not, and there are no district wide consequences provided for chronic offenders of absenteeism. During

the final step of the coding process, selective coding (Charmaz, 2006), I determined that the three themes were most prevalent among participants' responses: teacher engagement, locus of control, and school policy. These three themes imply that most teachers believe that they can motivate students to attend school regularly.

Engagement – Relationship Building is Very Important

The first of the three themes was engagement. Engagement aligns with the literature presented by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) who stated teachers who employ engaging methods and strategies tend to motivate those students to perform well academically. Accordingly, 10 out of 13 participants felt that classroom culture made a huge impact of relationship building among peers and between students and teachers, as was also determined by Gershon (2015). During her interview, Diana stated "relationship building is very important." Correspondingly, all five participants in the focus group supported the sentiment that relationship building is a way to affect attendance in their own classrooms. Similarly, this study found that rewards and incentives were mentioned by 75% (eight) of participants which agrees with what other researchers have reported (Balfanz, 2016; Blad, 2017). Praise and positivity were mentioned 78% of the time as strategies to engage students and build up their self-esteem. Greta shared that the words you speak to a child make a difference and she stated, "as an educator, by using powerful words that inspire them to want to be here, you know it creates a different climate." Chantal expressed this same sentiment with great emotion as her eyes opened wide and her hands gesticulated:

> I've seen it in my own classroom over the years; a student who has had very poor attendance, and then once they feel capable, contributing, and connected to my

classroom, all of a sudden, their attendance improves and they are happier. And academically, they are doing well. They are more adjusted. They're interacting with their classmates.

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Chronic Absenteeism and Engagement

Personal Quotes	*Themes*	*Assertations*
"The students who are in school all the time feel connected; they have a common experience." "Monday's coming! I can't wait. I can't wait to see what the day and the week is going to bring..." "You need to have fun and engaging lessons that want students to want to be in school." "I absolutely feel that the teacher is the number one component where we're motivating, we're encouraging friendships with peers."	*Engagement*	*Teachers who form personal relationships and take an interest in each student feel that their students are more connected to one another; therefore, they share a sense of belonging and want to come to school.* *Some teachers believe they can affect a student's motivation to want to attend school through their words and actions.*

Teacher's Locus of Control and Attendance

A second theme that was not found in my review of the literature, but did emerge during the data analysis process, is locus of control. This term was interpreted to describe teachers' thoughts on their ability to have control over situations in their educator roles. For example, a question that was asked during the interviews was whether teachers believe

they can determine or control certain aspects of their job, for example attendance, or are actions and consequences due to external factors or forces outside of their control. Several teachers believe that only reasons outside their control affect absenteeism, thus placing the locus of control, or responsibility, on others (Grimes et al., 2004). Externally oriented teachers believe their actions are not related or influential to outcomes (Grimes et al., 2004). Consequently, they believe they cannot do anything to motivate a child to come to school. Two teachers during interviews stated that teachers have no impact on children's attendance. Carly said, "teachers cannot impact attendance at the elementary level. You can do nothing without a supportive parent." Rotter (1966), who coined the term locus of control, contended that those who exhibit an internal locus of control believe motivators and outcomes are contingent upon a person's own characteristics, actions, and abilities. Interestingly, internal school attendance records (Anonymous Mid-Atlantic School, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021) determined that these teachers who believed they cannot control attendance rates in their classroom have the highest absenteeism rates out of the 13 teacher participants in this study.

Interactions and Learning Environments

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development centered around the relationship and social interactions between a student and his or her teacher and their physical and linguistic interactions. He posited that people learn best while working in a collaborative fashion. As a result, individuals will learn more as they internalize the new ideas and concepts on which they are focused (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, one participant, Anne, felt that the interactions and learning environment teachers and

students share is important to create a comfortable learning space. During her interview Anne offered:

> When school's fun, and they feel like it's a safe place, they are going to want to come to school. But if they don't like it, if the environment is not positive, if they are constantly feeling defeated, then no, they're not going to want to come to school.

She was conveying the message that the teacher sets the tone of the class. The climate and culture are important in getting students to want to attend school. Chantal similarly stated:

> I've seen it in my own classroom over the years; a student who has had very poor attendance, and then once they feel capable, contributing, and connected to my classroom, all of a sudden, their attendance improves and they are happier. And academically, they're doing well. They are more adjusted. They're interacting with their classmates.

Hence, this response aligns with Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2007) conception that if a teacher can motivate a child to come to school, she will try. If a teacher believes attendance is outside of her control, she will not try and attribute it as the parents' role.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Chronic Absenteeism and Locus of Control

Personal Quotes	*Themes*	*Assertations*
"What's the key? You know, it's making the parents believe that school is important." “I do think little kids can love you with all of their hearts, but if nobody is waking them up, they're just sleeping and not coming to school." “No, a teacher cannot change attendance at elementary level.” "I believe teachers have a big impact on their students' lives." “I just think maybe sometimes teachers need to be reminded of the power they have on affecting a child's life ... half your battle is if they want to come.” "As an educator by using powerful words that inspire them to want to be here, you know it creates a different climate."	*Locus of Control*	*A teacher either believes she can motivate a child to come to school or she believes there are external factors that she has no control over.*

No Consequence and No Accountability

The final theme that emerged during the coding process was lack of school policy. Teachers have become frustrated that there are no consequences for students who miss numerous many days. Teachers vented that a letter is supposed to be sent home after five to nine days of accumulated unexcused days (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2006, 2017) but they do not know if that is being done. One topic that was discussed during the

focus group was the role of truant officer. Four out of five teachers said they do not even know how to reach the truant officer and what would happen to the student or parent as a result of contact with that officer. There was consensus among participants in the focus group that administration needs to become more active in reaching out to students who are often absent. All five agreed during the discussion that summer school or retention should be reinstated as a consequence of numerous missed days. Teachers expressed annoyance that there are no written guidelines or consequences for students who are chronically absent. Eight out of 13 participants used the verbiage "no consequence" or "no accountability." Six participants during their interviews specifically mentioned the principal taking on a more active role in reaching out to parents. All participants strongly agreed with one another during the focus group that principals and counselors needed to play a more active and direct role in reaching out to families with children who have high attendance rates. This response corroborates with researchers Childs and Grooms (2018), who strongly suggested improving school attendance with more home school communication originating from school administrators, especially principals.

One notable finding was the topic of barriers or challenges that prevent teachers at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School from doing their job. All five members of the focus group mentioned large class size and numerous meetings they were required to attend. They felt that because the number of children in their class was a large amount, they could not devote individual time to checking up on children who were chronically absent. Additionally, these same teachers felt that their time was being used in other ways, (i.e., meetings during their preps which prevented them from making needed phone calls to parents). This unexpected finding underscores teachers' beliefs that a large classroom

population and numerous meetings impede their ability to communicate more often with parents, thus leading to frustration in improving school attendance for their own students.

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Chronic Absenteeism and Policy

Personal Quotes	*Themes*	*Assertations*
"There are no consequences, no mandated summer school for make-up, no time throughout day to help students catch up." "There needs to be more phone calls made by administration. Teachers already have too many jobs to do." "We really do need stringent guidelines and clear consequences."	*Policy*	*Teachers believe the lack of enforcement and nonexistent guidelines and consequences is a reason attendance rates are high.* *Teachers feel that clear and definitive consequences for students and/or parents would help mitigate the problem.*

Implications of the Study

This qualitative research study has provided findings that show based on teachers' perceptions of their on teaching self-efficacy, as educators of children, teachers have an impact on affecting student attendance. By believing they can motivate students to attend school more consistently and considering their own internal locus of control, the rate of chronic absenteeism has the potential to decrease. Furthermore, after learning and studying about teacher's locus of control (Vygotsky, 1978) this finding implied that teachers have significantly innate confidence to encourage students and parents to make a concerted effort to attend school.

As a result of this study's findings, there needs to be more focused professional development that is concentrated on improving teacher self-efficacy. This study shows that when teachers embody high levels of self-efficacy and believe in their own power to cultivate relationships and motivate students, they believe they can encourage better attendance. Additionally, administrators human resource staff, and the hiring search committee can employ more deliberate vetting and hiring practices. These practices should center around prospective teachers who, during their interview questioning and teacher demonstrations, clearly exhibit high levels of self-efficacy. Finally, stemming from the data retrieved from the study, another strong recommendation based off of teachers' responses is that stricter guidelines and stronger district policies need to be enacted to support improved student attendance. The action research that was conducted at Mid-Atlantic Elementary school raised additional research questions for future study.

Recommendations for Future Study

The limited sample size of participants only gathered thoughts from a small group of teachers. For future study, it is recommended to interview more participants and provide a survey to additional qualifying teachers. Because of the lack of teacher diversity at this particular site, a variance in participants was not available. As a result, this paucity caused a limitation on the scope of experience and perspective from diverse teacher groups. Due to all white veteran females, the findings were narrow-one sided perspective from one set population of teacher group, yet these teachers serve a diverse set of students. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct a related study at a more ethnically diverse school setting in a neighboring town.

An additional recommendation for future study would be to replicate the study above using data from school year 2021 and the three consecutive years following. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred during the beginning of this study, it is also recommended that future research focus on the impact of COVID-19, as absenteeism rates have been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic (Childs, et al., 2022). For example, schools did not retain students during the times of virtual or off-site instruction (Wright, 2021). As a result, an increase number of students were recorded as absent without facing punitive consequences (Blad, 2022). A specific research question to ask would be to understand why attendance declined significantly during this time. Therefore, determining reasons behind the decline could explain the trend more clearly. Reasons could stem from a fear of contracting COVID-19, so truancy was more prevalent. An additional reason perpetuating the increase may be due to lack of policy enforcement and automatic promotion at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents may have believed that students would move to the next grade despite chronic absenteeism.

Discussion

Through a process that occurred over several months, through 13 semi-structured interviews and one focus group, this qualitative research study, which explored the impact of teacher self-efficacy and its impact on student attendance, provided credence to the assertion that teachers can and do effect student outcomes. Although the literature is sparce on the impact of teacher self-efficacy on attendance, this study shows that teachers' own beliefs and motivations (Bandura, 1993; 1994; 1997) can motivate students to want to attend school regularly. Data from the study show teachers who believe they

cannot control external situations (Vygotsky, 1978) such as attendance factors and who perceive attendance as a parental role, have lower attendance rates in their own classrooms. Subsequently, teachers who promote engaging lessons and cultivating relationships have higher attendance rates within their classrooms. One unexpected finding was that teachers believe a large classroom population and numerous meetings impede their ability to communicate more often with parents, thus leading to frustration in improving school attendance for their own students.

Limitations

As a result of beginning this action research study partially during a national pandemic, attendance data, both state and in house records, were not available as schools were either virtual, hybrid, or at the onset of returning to school full time. These unavailable statistics are a considerable limitation to the findings of this study as they would inform the study of other factors that may be impacting student attendance.

A second limitation in this study, entailed lack of time and scheduling conflicts. A minimal amount of time was made available in my schedule to observe participants in their own classrooms and take notes while observing their outward behavior of self-efficacy in the classroom. Due to unavailability of substitutes in the district or regularly scheduled specials and lunch times, a mutually convenient time between the participants and my schedule was not feasible; therefore, time did not allow for observations of teachers in action.

A third limitation in this study is sample size. Due to the nature of qualitative research, the sample size selected was small; 13 participants were interview and each

interview conducted was an hour in duration. As a result of the time constraints and minimal number of participants, the research findings cannot be generalizable.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School. Grounded in Bandura's (1993; 1994; 1997) social cognitive theory, the study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of chronic absenteeism and the impact of teacher self-efficacy on attendance. Conducted through interviews and a focus group, the coding process revealed three recurring themes: engagement, locus of control, and policy. Based on the literature and this study's findings, teachers' actions, beliefs, and self-perceptions have an impactful effect on motivating children to come to school. Consequently, as a result of data analysis, locus of control (Vygotsky, 1978) was an unexpected theme, as it was not identified in the literature regarding elementary school attendance but was a prevalent factor in this study. As a result of the comprehensive literature review, along with the data collection and analysis from this study, a comprehensive action plan is recommended for increasing attendance rates at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School. The action plan, including its conception, development, implementation, and evaluation, is detailed in Chapter 3 of this Dissertation in Practice.

Action Plan Summary

As a result of several months of conducting 13 interviews and one focus group and analyzation of the data, an Action Plan Committee was created, consisting of key stakeholders, including teachers who were interviewed for this study. Varying perspectives and viewpoints of the group's members will lead to a more comprehensive

implementation of the committee's recommendations. Thus, the action plan begins with the recommendations of the committee. Furthermore, the first part of the plan consists of creating more meaningful and teacher chosen professional development. The second step of this plan consists of creating a teacher student mentor group, whereby teachers who rate themselves as having low self-efficacy will partner up with a child who is chronically absent. The third part of the plan details activities and incentives for school-wide participation to motivate students to attend school more often. The goal of these three steps is to improve school attendance and increase teacher self-efficacy.

Information Share

Based on the findings described above, stakeholders will be presented with the results of this study before the beginning of the next school year. The superintendent, principal, and other administrators in the district will be presented with a formal written report as well as an in-person power point presentation. During Professional Development Day at the beginning of the year, the teachers will receive the same visual presentation but with an accompanying infographic that can be found in Appendix F in Chapter 3. Parents will watch an abbreviated version of the presentation at Back to School Night, as well as receive a handout of the same infographic briefly depicting the results of the study.

Assemblage of Action Plan Committee

In creating an Action Plan Committee, it is imperative that those teachers who volunteered to be study participants for the interviews and focus group will be given priority to become members of the team. If they are amenable to joining the committee, they will be asked if they can recommend a fellow colleague to join the committee. The

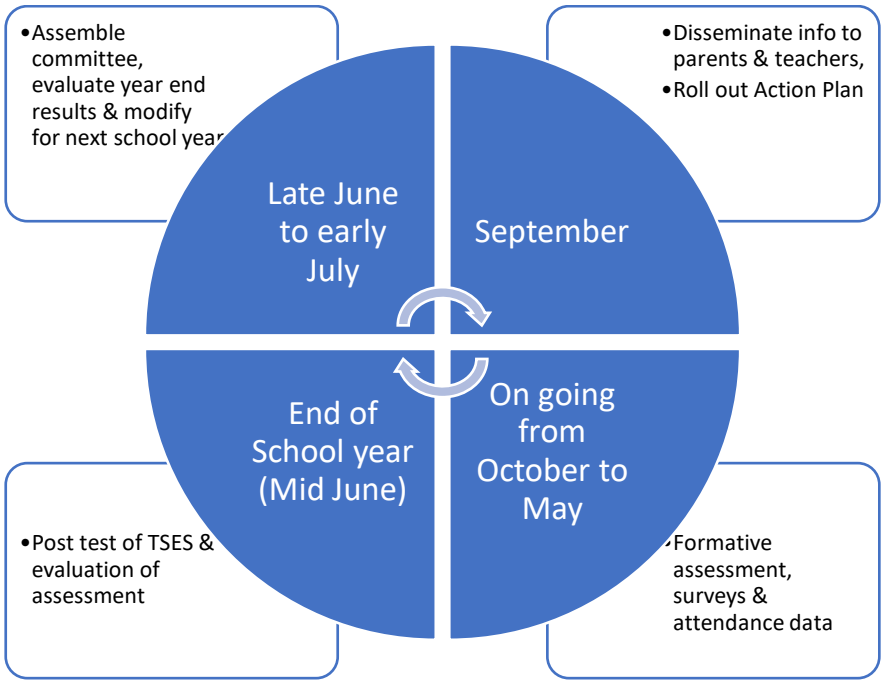
principal and social worker will be asked to join as well. As a team of colleagues who work together on a daily basis, the common goal of collaboration towards positive transformation should manifest as a result of this committee's ideas and implementation.

Preliminary Timeline

It would be conducive to assemble the committee before the start of the next school year. Optimally, to have the team assembled by mid-June to discuss the goals, steps, and timeline would help facilitate the roll-out of the first steps of the Action Plan in September. The presentation to administration would occur late summer, the teachers would be notified the week prior to school opening, and parents would learn about the findings and initiatives during Back-to-School Night in the middle of September. As discussed in Chapter 3, formative assessment will be conducted such as collecting attendance records of students and from families attending "communication gatherings." Additionally, teachers will complete a pre and post Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale to determine if their levels increased. A final evaluation will be conducted at the end of the school year to assess the validity and fidelity of the programs put in place. In turn, the cycle would begin again, convening in the summer to evaluate and adjust the program's signature programs, presentations of the findings to stakeholders, and continuance of the initiatives for five consecutive years. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 2:

Timetable of Committee Assemblage and Meetings along with Implementation and Assessment



CHAPTER THREE

DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/INTERVENTION/CHANGE PROCESS

The Goal to Empower Students and Teachers to Believe

Throughout this research project, I leaned on my professional code of ethics to navigate conversations with teachers to bring educators together to assemble an action plan. My professional code of ethics is grounded in Freire's critical awareness of people's individual situations whose ideas on education were shaped by God and the dignity of life (Torres, 2019). Freire encouraged critical thinking, questioning of society, and challenging the current system of education (Shor, 1993). I resonate with Freire's educational philosophy of practicing theory and reflexivity and putting them into practice, so much so that my own praxis can be mirrored by his teachings. Just as Freire (Torres, 2019) regarded the teacher as having an important role in the education process, I, too, try to motivate others to think critically and thoughtfully to empower them to form connections to real world examples (Torres, 2019). In conducting this action research study, as a researcher, I bracketed my biases and preconceived notions of the answers I was seeking to find and embodied Freire's concept of respect for the dignity of all people as ethically essential (Freire, 1998).

Leadership Approach to Development of Action Plan

The goal of *adaptive leadership* is for leaders to assist their followers in learning to adjust to change (Northouse, 2022). Fostering a growth mindset is beneficial to producing quality and effective outcomes. Adaptive leaders are those who help followers face and solve their own challenges. For this project, I considered myself a resource and guide, because ultimately, it is the group members' responsibility to adjust and change. In

order to provide a fair and inclusive environment that values the voices of all members, I strived to incorporate a culture that fosters and promotes diversity and equity, as well as inclusion. Using guidance from the adaptive leadership style (Northouse, 2022), as the leader of this action plan I need to encourage change, yet assist followers in helping themselves navigate through challenges they may face. Empowering followers to feel part of a safe environment to produce work outcomes encourages and guides them, provides support, and lends an ear to those quiet or stifled voices.

Just as teacher's self-efficacy is related to student achievement and attendance, a principal's leadership style and ability can have an effect on a teacher's perception of her own self-efficacy. The principal is a key stakeholder in this organizational transformation. Ozdemir and colleagues (2020) investigated whether or not a principal's instructional leadership behaviors affect a teacher's self-efficacy. They describe instructional leadership as behaviors that focus on improving teaching strategies and learning activities (Ozdemir et al., 2020). Over the course of the study, it was determined that positive contributions from principals led to teachers taking more risks and extending more effort to attain their personal and professional goals. Suggestions such as more leader to teacher communication can be a useful strategy to incorporate into this action plan, as well as creating an open and welcoming communicative relationship by providing support in areas for more substantive professional development.

Commitment to Inclusive, Equitable, and Diversity-focused Practices

The use of collaboration and fostering of relationships are the central tenets of the ethic of care. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) wrote that scholars and ethical leaders alike would both benefit from using the ethic of care to evaluate and solve moral dilemmas.

Educational institutions should employ collaborative methods and support making connections among staff and students. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) further emphasized that through the ethic of care perspective, those in the business of education can use empathy and compassion to help students grow, learn, and contemplate good ethical decision-making practices. The guiding principles of Cultural Proficiency are a tool to lead professionals to become more mindful of their own practices, policy implementation, and beliefs so they can assist others in their own transformation, as well as within the shared organization (Lindsey et al., 2019). Lindsey and collaborators (2019) described a culturally proficient leader as someone who "continues to challenge, encourage, and shepherd staff members forward while managing transition" (Lindsey, et al., 2019, p. 111). If the school incorporates cultural knowledge into practice and policymaking, it strengthens itself by embracing the voices of the families we serve. By taking initiative and reaching out to community members, we can more readily accommodate and share all learned knowledge to better educate our children. If cultural knowledge sharing is part of school policy, more people can be involved, as they are all stakeholders in the school. The biggest challenge Mid-Atlantic Elementary School faces is that there is minimal parent involvement at the school, as family attendance at after school events is sparce. Analyzation of sign in sheets show that many families do not attend school sanctioned activities, especially those families who are from minority backgrounds.

Alignment of Action Plan to the Research Study

In recent years, administration and staff have noticed an increase in the rate of chronic absenteeism at our school, Mid-Atlantic Elementary School, and it has become a

pervasive problem. The percentage of students who were chronically absent in our district totaled 16.4% in the past several years, according to the United States Census Bureau (2021). In considering and assessing the problem of chronic absenteeism, it is my goal to understand why the rate of absenteeism is rising at our school and determine how to increase student attendance. In addition to seeking the reason absences are on the rise, the research question this study sought to determine was *"What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy on chronic absenteeism?"* The current vision of the school district is: "Student centered, teacher led, committed to supporting student growth by cultivating strengths and talents" (Anonymous, Mid-Atlantic School, 2021). The mission statement and its purpose are important for staff and students so they can together foster a learning community that recognizes the need for student growth and achievement, uniquely to each individual. Therefore, by improving teachers' self-efficacy, teachers will more likely believe they can affect their students' attendance by cultivating strengths and talents as noted in the mission.

Consequently, the goals for an action plan that will help improve the elementary school in which I work, are to:

1. Improve teachers' perception of their self-efficacy to improve students' attendance rate; and
2. Increase the student attendance rate by 10% per year for five years.

The learning objectives defined above are aligned with the district's mission and vision. By improving attendance and mitigating chronic absenteeism, along with improving their own self-efficacy, teachers can connect classroom practices, student growth, and activities for the school community by cultivating both their own and their

students' strengths and talents. The vision of this school district is "Student Centered, Teacher Led." This vision creates an environment where students are encouraged to share their ideas by embracing their cultures and encouraging diversity among students. Students look to their teachers as leaders who share the same vision. Teachers need to believe in themselves and the mission to best educate their students. By promoting the vision and goals of the school, and strengthening teachers' perceptions of locus of control, the educational process will develop and promote student growth with the community benefitting as well. Research shows the efficacy of instruction for each child is incumbent on a vision that develops the social and individual differences of each child (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010).

As of present time, there has not been any documented effort to increase student attendance at our school, nor has there been professional development provided for the teachers and support staff to enhance their own self-worth, grit, or emotional well-being. However, the district has provided professional development classes and resources dedicated to promoting social-emotional growth for the students of the district. Initiatives such as The Morning Meeting and Character Education were strategies implemented several years ago to promote student affective self-awareness. Coming out of a national pandemic, now more than ever is the perfect time to implement a program that focuses on improving attendance. So many children lost months, if not a year or more of education during this time. Those who were especially vulnerable and affected were students in the younger grades where foundational and social skills are first introduced. Getting children back to the classroom is critical to make-up for lost time and build upon the social and

academic foundations they do currently possess which begins with strengthening the foundations of support for teachers (Lazarides & Warner, 2020).

Recruiting and Assembling an Action Plan Committee

First and foremost, the teachers who agreed to be study participants for the interviews and focus group will be asked to become members of the Action Plan Committee. These teachers revealed their perceptions of attendance and how it was handled in the school. Upon their acceptance or rejection of becoming a member of the committee, they will be asked for referrals of any other staff members they think would be interested in joining, thereby employing a snowball sample (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Members will meet, along with the principal, at mutually convenient times.

There are several challenges to this community engagement process. According to Brandel (2018), an individual or organization who develops an action plan for community engagement must ask several questions during the preparation and planning period. Considering what you can reciprocate to participants in exchange for their cooperation is key. Amplification of voice and reverence to contributions and acknowledgements of the staff's expertise and knowledge matters to the goals (Brandel, 2018). What I can offer my participants is challenging as I need to solicit funds and approval from upper administration. Nevertheless, by incorporating an iterative process of collaborative planning, implementation, assessing, reflecting and then returning back to the initial stage of outreach to reflect and adjust, buy-in from high-ranking school officials can be attainable.

Description of the Action Plan and Framework

The Improving Attendance through Teacher Self-Efficacy Program (IAtTSE) will be a novel and innovative program implemented at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School. It has been developed from a compilation of strategies from various incentive and professional development programs used in other schools. Most importantly, the strategies incorporated in this action plan are a result of suggestions and ideas garnered from participants during semi-structured interviews and a focus group and members of the Action Plan Committee. Using data analyzed from the 13 interviews and one focus group that was conducted, an Attendance Committee will be created to oversee and monitor the three signature strategies that will be involved in this school initiative as the components of my Action Plan:

1. Provide motivating and meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers,
2. Create mini-groups comprising of both novice and experienced teachers and grouping them into mentor groups with students who are chronically absent, and
3. Provide school wide incentive programs for parents and students to promote better attendance rates.

Meaningful Professional Development

The first strategy of the IAtTSE Program is providing motivating and meaningful professional development for teachers and support staff. Allowing teachers to advocate for their own self-efficacy by choosing professional learning classes that are of interest and relevance to each teacher helps foster a more positive school culture (Lazarides &

Warner, 2020). Teachers expressed that one major barrier to improving attendance was too many PLCs (professional learning communities) and professional development sessions during their prep time. Upon questioning teachers during the focus group, they argued for less meetings during the day so they could focus more attention on students such as time to make phone calls to the parents of students who are absent. Teachers also expressed that the preferred topics of professional development (PD) they would like to see offered are in the areas of: discipline, hands-on learning, student engagement activities, novel strategies in specific disciplines, coaching models, observations of exemplary teachers and follow-up discussions on how to emulate, strategies to improve teaching methodologies, and student self-reflection strategies. Additionally, teachers expressed the desire to have easy access and availability to the principal for the purposes of asking questions or getting feedback. With the IAtTSE Program, teachers can choose to be a part of three ways of strengthening teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Lazarides & Warner, 2020):

1. *Mastery experience*: Examples of this type of PD would be observing and participating in simulations and/or role playing (whether in person or virtually) and learning strategies for providing immediate feedback to students (Bandura, 1977, 1997).
2. *Vicarious experience*: Examples of this type of PD would be observing other teachers, (whether peers or teachers from outside districts) either in person, virtually, or prerecorded (showing both mastery and unsuccessful methodologies and strategies) (Bandura, 1977, 1997), such as how to cultivate meaningful relationships, especially with those who are of minority status.

3. *Verbal persuasion*: Examples of this type of PD would be collaborative planning and team meetings (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

The fourth source of self-efficacy detailed by Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, e*motional state* (Bandura, 1977, 1997), would be incorporated into all of the above professional development, located in a safe and non-threatening learning environment for teachers and support staff. Providing support for teachers and allowing them to reevaluate their own teaching strategies in a comfortable and nurturing environment helps teachers increase their self-efficacy (Li et al., 2019). Following up on those professional development learning environments, teachers will be able to reflectively incorporate what they learned by deciding on their preferential method of trial and practice by joining either a mentorship or coaching cohort.

Several participants of the interviews offered suggestions such as forming an attendance committee and improving and expanding the teacher/student mentor model that currently exits. In addition, many teachers asked for times to meet with the principal or supervisor on a regularly scheduled basis for informal check-ins to relay any needs or support mechanisms they feel they may need. Bray-Clark (2003), determined that strong lines of communication and feedback from respected individuals can promote self-efficacy.

Data show when students do not attend school they fall behind, usually leading to dropping out of school, especially in the upper grades (United States Department of Education, 2022). The goal of increasing teacher self-efficacy, along with student attendance rates, will assist in organizational improvement not only for the leadership of the school, but for many stakeholders involved. Teachers can see how their beliefs and

effectiveness motivate students to become active participants in their own education and desire to attend school. Growing a teacher's self-efficacy through the above strategies will help teachers feel supported and empowered, thus motivating students by improving their desire to be a part of a positive school climate and want to come to school.

Teacher – Student Mentor Groups

Building upon increasing teacher self-efficacy, a second signature strategy of the IAtTSE Program is creating groups of teachers to partner with students who are chronically absent. Using their newly acquired knowledge attained from the professional development, teachers with lower self-efficacy can serve as cheerleaders, advocates, and mentors for students who are identified as chronically absent or those identified as at-risk of being chronically absent. Meeting on a weekly basis to begin, then bi-weekly, and consequently moving to an as needed basis, mentors can strengthen their communication with the students and their parents, fostering a strong home-school relationship, thus building a communicative bond with the student and promote a sense of belonging and caring. The newly created attendance committee can also act as a liaison between the mentoring teachers and the students as well as organize the rewards mentioned below.

Incentivize Attendance

A third strategy of the IAtTSE Program is to incorporate school-wide incentives to excite children to attend school and incentivize high attendance rates. About 75% of participants of the study noted that school wide incentives and praise for regular or improved attendance would boost morale and be beneficial to the school climate. For example, monthly shout outs by the principal will be announced over the loudspeaker naming students who had perfect attendance that month with the names of those students

going into a raffle to win prizes. Additionally, teachers will be asked to record voice messages for "robo-calls" either praising a student's attendance or encouraging students who were absent to come to school the following day because they were missed. The teachers who were questioned during the interviews and focus group agreed to fully support and participate in these activities since they believed these were strategies that could easily be implemented. Finally, evening "communication gatherings" will be held promoting the importance of attendance with family fun engagement opportunities to help strengthen the home-school connection. At these "communication gatherings" teachers, guidance counselors, and health advocates will be present to show support for families and student needs. If possible, buses will be provided at certain bus stops to provide transportation for those who may not otherwise attend due to lack of personal transportation. Some Title I and Title III funding allow for activities to occur now that bring together teachers, families, and students. However, several teachers in the focus group agreed it should be expanded and most were willing to collaborate and organize additional evening activities.

Affected Stakeholders

Teachers and support staff will be the ones participating in the professional development services the district offers. It will be of utmost importance to have the principal, the director of curriculum, superintendent, and both elementary supervisors on board for this school-wide transformative initiative. Having numerous and varied administrative and faculty members involved should promote a more cohesive culture. All teachers of the school will be involved in the professional development process, as well included in the assignment of mentor/coaching follow-up cohort and represented in

the teacher/student mentor groups. Resources other than staff will include budgetary funds for professional development which is an essential component of this program. Including the administrators from the program's developmental inception is also crucial for both fiscal and emotional support of the success of this program. If budgetary means allow, the program would reevaluate after the first year of implementation for continuance into a second school year. Upon the end of the second school year, budgetary allowance will most likely be reconfigured based on a needs assessment as a result of the program evaluation.

Students of the school are the primary affected population, as increasing attendance rates of the students is the goal of the program. With regular attendance, they will more likely achieve academic success in school and in the future (Covey, 2014). Parents will be included in this transformative endeavor, as they are the ones who are responsible for getting their children to school. Working with school staff and increasing positive school/home relations is crucial for successful reduction of chronic absenteeism.

Logic Model

To visually portray the process of the IAtTSE Program, a graphic depiction is located in Appendix A. According to Giancola (2021), a logic model helps to pictorially explain a program's theory and show how the steps along the way lead to specific strategies with short- and long-term goals. The components of the logic model contain inputs, outputs, and outcomes (see Appendix A).

Inputs

The inputs for this program include time needed from school staff for coordination, planning and implementation and funding for professional development,

evening family activities, and possible transportation. Additionally, space including the gym and the back outdoor field is needed for family fun engagement nights.

Outputs

The outputs are the actions and participation needed to put the interventions into practice. Voice mails and texts from teachers, attendance awards, and other incentives will be put in place to increase the home to school connection. In addition, choice of relevant and meaningful professional development for teachers and establishment of cohorts for mentor modeling or coaching strategies will lead to ongoing professional development within the school and among peers.

Short-term goals

The short-term goals for the IAtTSE Program are to incorporate Family Fun Engagement Opportunities to strengthen home/school connections and utilization of acknowledgements and rewards for increased student attendance, including opportunities for parents to win gift cards for gas stations, local pizza shops, and other prizes when they attend evening programs. Another important short-term goal is to provide ongoing professional development throughout the year to strengthen collaboration among colleagues and to create teacher mentor/coaching professional learning communities.

Long-term goals

Long-term goals for the program are as follows: the reduction of the absenteeism rate by two days per month, successful teacher/student mentoring programs, and additional activities to promote better attendance along with monthly celebration days for teachers to promote their own self-efficacy growth. The ultimate goal of the IAtTSE Program is to increase the rate of attendance at our school. All the components of the

inputs, channeled through outputs, thus funneling out towards outcomes reflect the program's intended purpose (Giancola, 2021), which is to increase the attendance rate by improving teacher self-efficacy.

Stakeholder Engagement

There are many stakeholders that will be a part of the evaluation process. Engaging all the internal stakeholders will be imperative throughout the tenure of the program's implementation as well as throughout the evaluation process. Inviting all internal stakeholders in the process from logic model development, to program implementation, to formative evaluation and finally summative evaluation is necessary to elicit buy-in for the success of the program from the inception to the outcomes. Key to the program's success is the teachers and staff. Without their support and implementation, the program's goals and intended outcomes will not come to fruition. Teachers may be somewhat hesitant about becoming participants in a new program, as they might feel that yet another initiative at school is an added pressure to their lives. However, once they understand they have choice and voice in their own growth, the impact they create on their students will be both apparent and immense. Having a positive influence on a child's life and knowing you are the reason they come to school is heartfelt and inspiring. An unintended impact of this program may actually turn out that the teacher attendance rate improves as well. What an influential and positive implication for all stakeholders that could be!

In addition, the principal, guidance counselor, and nurse need to be involved in both processes of implementation and evaluation as their roles are integral in improving the attendance rates at the school. These actors drive the program design. The

supervisors, superintendent, and curriculum director are important as well, as they are the leaders who need to secure funding for the professional development sessions, assemblies, and material awards and incentives. The external stakeholders are the parents who are the ones responsible for getting their children to school. One component of the IAtTSE Program is to encourage families to come to Family Fun Engagement Opportunities for increased school to home communication.

The faculty, principal, and upper administration will participate in the ongoing evaluation process, as they are the most important asset for continuance of the program upon disclosure of evaluation findings.

Evaluation Design

The IAtTSE Program that was described above will include all teachers and all students in the school. Self-efficacy training and professional development classes will be offered to all staff and no teacher will be excluded from training. Additionally, since the ultimate goal is to reduce chronic absenteeism, all students will be a part of the IAtTSE Program as well. As a result of including all teachers and students, specifically for this program evaluation, a control group is not feasible; therefore, a single-group evaluation design will be utilized.

Strategies that will be implemented at the onset of the program are emails, texts, and voicemail messages to parents when their children are absent. They will either be crafted as a concern for numerous absences or the calls/emails will express praise for outstanding attendance, depending on the student's individual situation. Monthly assemblies will be held to promote the importance of regular attendance and to congratulate students who consistently attend school with the goal of increasing

attendance (for repeat offenders) by one per month. In addition to assemblies, families will have the opportunity to engage in Family Fun Engagement Nights to strengthen home/school communication. By observing interactions at the functions and analyzing attendance and sign-in sheet records, the goal is to witness an increase in family participation from September to June by 10%.

To strengthen the attribution of the single-group evaluation design, interviews, internal attendance data collection, surveys from teachers, sign-in sheets, observations and logs from professional development and mentor groups will be employed and collected throughout the program's process. Teachers will have more choice and voice in choosing which professional development topics they would like to participate in. Pairing of teachers with students who are chronically absent into mentor groups will meet weekly, with the goal of reducing absenteeism by one day a month for those children in the group. Teachers' perceptions and feelings towards the program's implementation will be sought through interviews. Utilization of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) will be administered pre and post program evaluation to measure any increase in teacher self-efficacy as a result of the program's implementation. In order to determine if rates of teacher self-efficacy increased, the same scale will be completed by teachers before commencement of the program and upon completion (or end of the school year). The long-term goal of the IAtTSE Program is to increase attendance rates by 10% within five years.

Evidence and Data Sources

Goal #1

One of the goals for my organization is to improve the student attendance rate by 10% per year for five years. This metric will be assessed using internal recorded attendance data and interviews conducted with teachers in the school building.

Collection of school attendance records will be analyzed three times a year to see if there is an improvement in the rate of attendance. Basic descriptive statistics in SPSS will be used to analyze attendance records to compare the beginning of the year to end of the year attendance rates. SPSS will help to determine the mean and frequencies of calls/texts to parents using histograms to pictorially represent the data findings. Sign-in sheets will also be analyzed for percentage of parent participation at the Family Fun Engagement Nights to see if there was an increase in participation as the year progressed. Additionally, sign-in sheets will be collected on a monthly basis after the teacher/student mentor groups meet to determine frequency of meetings.

To determine the teachers' perceptions of reasons for chronic absenteeism, semi-structured 45-minute interviews will be conducted with six teachers from my school via the technology platform of Zoom and recorded in which 15 questions will be posed during that time. I will begin with questions that are related to both the topic of absenteeism and questions geared toward teacher self-efficacy. I will encourage the participants to speak freely using personal experiences from which to draw upon, as suggested by Moser and Korstjens (2018). An interview with each teacher will be conducted in September, at the start of program implementation. Upon completion at the end of the year, the same teachers will be interviewed again but within a 15–30-minute

time frame to determine teachers' perceptions of the program's effectiveness. Via the interview process, I will seek to determine if the teachers believed that the Family Fun Engagement Nights, the monthly award assemblies, the teacher/student mentor groupings, and the choice of professional development classes had any effect on student attendance and their own belief that they, as a teacher, could encourage children to want to come to school more often. The main focus of the second round of interviews will help to see if teachers felt that they had adequate support and preparation to contribute to their role in implementation of the program. Knowing if everyone contributed and to what extent is crucial to assessing the validity of evaluation results.

The second round of interviews will be conducted and recorded through Zoom as they were in the beginning of the year with the same teachers. The transcripts from the interviews printed from Zoom will be inductively coded for themes using descriptive coding. A comparative analysis of themes will be conducted by analyzing transcripts from prior interviews with the interviews that were conducted at the end of the school year.

In qualitative data collection, reliability is better known as trustworthiness (Charmaz, 2006; Shenton, 2004). I would ensure trustworthiness by member checking after interviews, having peer reviews of interview questions before they are administered, and including memo writing after interviews to determine common themes among participants. As part of memo writing, I would record nuances of the interviewee such as verbal inflections, or noticeable body language, thus establishing an audit trail (Charmaz, 2006). Having the participants member check to be sure my summary are ideas and themes they did intend to relay, fortifies the trustworthiness my data analysis. By

creating this audit trail, dependability is established during this research study. As a veteran teacher I have first-hand knowledge of the background information and setting of the study. I am able to understand content, acronyms, implied statements and body language as an insider with "shared experiences" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). By infusing knowledge of my own experience in formulating the interview questions and conducting the interviews, I lend credibility to the study.

A limitation in this evaluation would be honesty on the participant's part during an interview or focus group. I would remind participants that they are assisting with a research study which will benefit both their own workplace and their students' learning environments. By collectively working towards encouraging children to attend school more often, they are contributing to social justice in their school. By reiterating to participants that their identities will be kept anonymous, I can address this limitation of inaccurate self-assessment by assuring them of complete confidentiality in my reporting of the findings.

Goal #2

A second goal for my school is to improve teachers' perception of their self-efficacy at improving students' attendance rates. To begin, after each professional development session I will collect attendance sheets to determine how many teachers attended and what topics they chose to attend. To assess levels of teacher's self-efficacy, I will administer the Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Anita Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This measurement of teacher efficacy is a Likert-type survey scale which is comprised of 24 items (See Appendix D). The TSES asks educators to rate their capability based on their own instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom

management. To measure self-efficacy, teachers are asked to indicate their level of agreement on items that assess their ability to impact on students' learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

This survey will be administered to teachers in September at the commencement of the school year and subsequently at the end of the school year for comparison to determine if teachers' levels of self-efficacy improved due to professional development and the teacher-student mentor groups. It was determined by the creators of the scale in several studies that the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale demonstrates predictive validity as determined by positive correlations (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, p. 803, 2001). It was also reported that the instrument showed high reliability overall using Cronbach's alpha (.90). It was additionally reported that reliability was confirmed as a measure of internal consistency through a series of pilot tests and in a study conducted in an Albanian version of TSES, Bilali (2015), confirmed that the TSES had a high coefficient of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .94.

In using the Teacher Self Efficacy Scale for my own organizational assessment, I intend to check the reliability and validity of the assessment upon collection and analysis of the data. The fidelity of the assessment will be measured by the Likert Scale responses. Using SPSS, I will also use Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency, or reliability, of the instrument. By employing this method, I can determine the internal consistency between items and the underlying factor they are measuring. In regard to a good measure of internal consistency, I would strive for an alpha between 0.6 and 0.7. In searching for a pattern in the item responses, I will again use the software SPSS to measure the variance an item (or several items) explains among survey item responses.

Additionally, a Pearson correlation test, along with ANOVA test, will be run for analysis of inferential statistics to determine if there is indeed a correlation between teacher's increased self-efficacy and student attendance.

One limitation to this quantitative method of collecting data is that when administering a survey to colleagues, there is a chance that some measure of unreliability may occur. Sometimes people do not assess themselves in an accurate manner when it comes to evaluating their skills and abilities. This presents ethical implications in that the study does not have valid results due to inaccuracy. Sometimes participants in a study may not be forthright in their answers. They may be embarrassed to answer certain questions, unsure of how I will use the information. As a researcher I would assure my subjects that all information on a Likert scale survey is anonymous and identifying information would be removed and remain confidential.

Communication Plan

Anticipated Findings

There are several anticipated short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes related to the implementation of the IAtTSE Program. These outcomes will be measured using the evaluation design described above. As a result of the findings from the qualitative data (interviews, observations, documents) and quantitative data (surveys, records, statistics), anticipated short-term outcomes are that assemblies, Family Fun Engagement Nights, calls, texts and emails to families, professional development choices, and mentor pairing did indeed increase teacher self-efficacy and reduce chronic absenteeism within a six-month time frame. As for the long-term goal for the IAtTSE Program, the expected outcome is that within five years, there will be a 10% increase in

attendance rates. Fullan (2014) reported that the most important reason for implementing an evaluation is to determine the value and purpose of the new program, thus magnifying the importance of its implementation to both internal and external stakeholders. With these anticipated findings, the cooperation of the staff for continuous implementation of the program is invaluable.

Communication Plan and Timeline

This Action Research Plan is an iterative cycle with a continuous flow beginning in August, continuing with monthly meetings throughout the school year and reassessing at the end of the year and with a next action step the following August (See Figure 1 below). As the process of implementation develops it will adapt to change over time (Nelson and Stroink, 2020), the process will begin with soliciting of participants and ending with assessment and evaluation of the plan and implementation, thus adjusting and modifying the procedures and activities during the next year's cycle.

This transformative endeavor would begin in the summer leading up to the implementation of the plan. As part of my Action Plan, I would form a committee of interested stakeholders to help plan and create an introductory letter highlighting the anticipated fun family engagement nights planned throughout the year and solicit early volunteers and donations for the upcoming events. With permission from administration, a survey will be administered in early August via email and paper. Many of our students to not have computers or Internet service at home. Therefore, using multiple media instruments will ensure for a larger sample size. Families whose native language is not English will receive a translated survey in their home language.

In September, at the start of the school year the first meeting will occur. Although scheduling meetings at the same time and day would work well for planning purposes, Chowdhury Turin and colleagues (2021) suggested organization of activities during days and times that work well for interested members of the community. Finding mutually convenient times for staff and parents would be conducive to growing the network of interested and engaged members. Having in person meetings in the cafeteria in an evening will work well for many people who work during the day, however, incorporating a follow-up meeting using the platform of Zoom or Google Meet will create more opportunities for parents who could not attend the in-person meeting to participate as well.

During the monthly meetings, acting as a facilitator, I would encourage families to voice their opinions and ideas on ways we can provide more resources to assist them in their child's educational support. After each family fun engagement night, a brief survey will go out to solicit attendees' feelings on the theme, relevance, and welcoming environment of each event. Events will include, but are not limited to, academic nights such as family literacy initiatives, breakout rooms that foster math support, pot luck dinners, game nights, and community opportunities such as career nights where parents bring their trade or professional skills to share with others through demonstrations or through offering their community services or resources at a free or discounted rate. These events will take place in the All Purpose Room at our school. During the warmer months, the Family Fun Engagement Nights can take place in the field behind the school.

To increase attendance and parent participation at the Family Fun Engagement Nights, parents can bring their children to events such as the community dinners and

career nights. For the evenings where teachers are providing academic support workshops for the parents, free babysitting services will be provided on site by the district's high school students of the Key Club and National Honor Society. By providing such services, parents who have younger children can attend school events without worrying about childcare.

At the end of the school year, there will be a school-wide celebration for students to showcase any academic or related arts achievement they are proud of creating during the year. All families will be asked to attend the open house in celebration of the success of the children. At this outdoor event, community-based organizations will be present to assist families who are unable or unsure of how to ask for assistance. For example, any local businesses that are hiring can set up a table with printed applications. Health organizations such as local dentists, doctors, chiropractic services, and mental health experts will be on hand to answer questions and help make recommendations to families in need.

During the beginning of August, the cycle will begin again as it did the previous year, with surveys soliciting ideas and volunteers, setting up a committee, and discussing strengths, needs, and improvements in the engagement plan for the next school year.

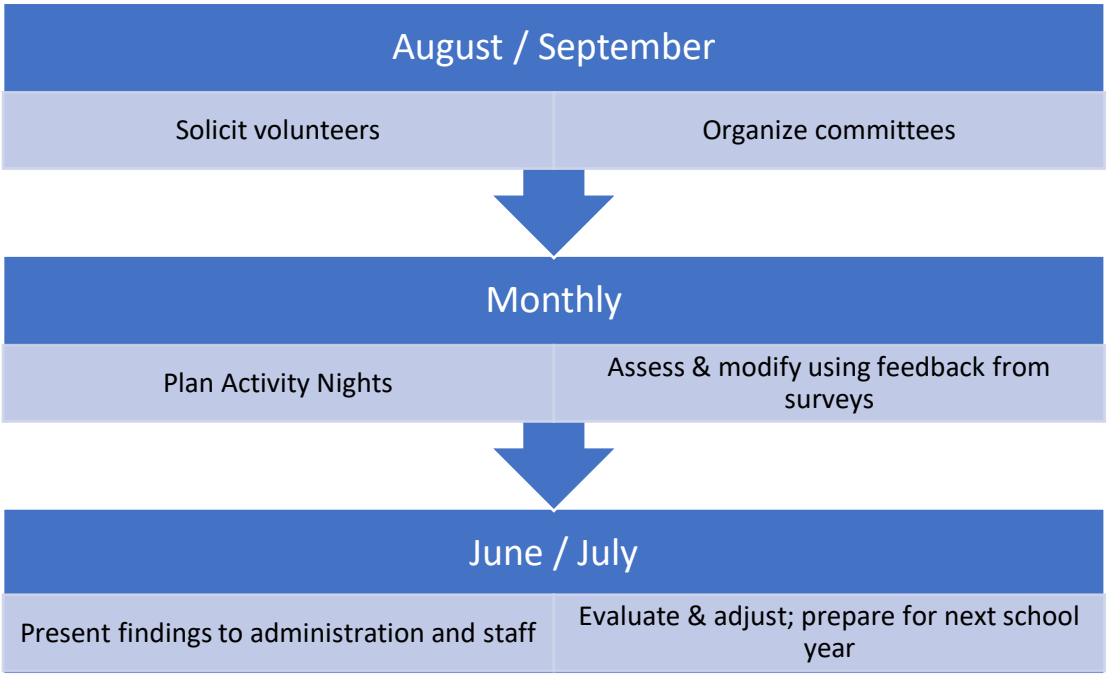
A report, presentation, brief, and infographic will all be shared with the above stakeholders. Leaders and policy makers will want to read statistics and data, whereas parents and teachers may just want a run-down and brief overview of the final evaluation. Providing various methods of data findings will communicate key details to the various stakeholders by providing a choice of receipt of analysis of the program evaluation outcomes and findings.

A formal report will be created for key stakeholders who are highly engaged in the program and its outcomes. Included in the formal report will be the program's goals and objectives, as well as the purpose and results of the evaluation design (Giancola, 2021). Administration will be invited to attend a collaborative meeting to provide an opportunity to listen and reflect on a detailed summary of the program's implementation and evaluation findings with a google slide presentation of findings. The presentation, along with a written summary, will be shared to explain the goals, along with the interview and survey findings. By creating and sharing these documents with those in leadership positions, it will assist in demonstrating my commitment to the goals, build trust within the organization, elicit support, and show transparency as to how certain initiatives and programs have benefited the students and teachers at our school. Visual representations such as graphs and charts depicting both qualitative and quantitative findings will be discussed. The limitations of sample size and any inconsistent survey data, if it should occur, will be shared with stakeholders as well for full transparency.

After meeting with those in leadership positions, the same presentation will be provided at a faculty meeting so staff can learn the outcomes of the program and its evaluation. A google form will be sent out at the conclusion to elicit feedback from staff, as they were the ones who were responsible for the success of the program and increasing attendance at our school. A condensed version of the report will be developed for those stakeholders who are interested in the evaluation's findings, yet do not want to read the full report. An infographic (see Appendix F) will also be created and distributed to staff as well as to parents during the next back to school night so they can see a snapshot of the program and its outcomes in an easy and quick manner (Giancola, 2021).

Figure 3:

Timetable of Communication Plan



Teacher Self-Efficacy Really Matters

By communicating the importance of increasing attendance at our school and relating it to teacher self-efficacy as an underlying cause for student attendance (or absenteeism), all staff members have a vested interest in increasing their own self-efficacy and desire to affect change in their students' attendance rates. As an annual review in this iterative process, I would suggest soliciting short interviews and administering the Short Form of the TSES (see Appendix E) to the same teachers every year for five years, as well as analyze the internal attendance data as a way to measure growth or success towards the identified learning goals and intended outcomes.

A benefit for leaders who have a high concentration of teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs is that the staff is more highly motivated, thus leading to greater student

successes and positive outcomes. A positive school climate is conducive for all students, as well as for teachers and principals. Therefore, administrators, along with the Action Plan Committee and Attendance Committee should coordinate meaningful and relevant professional development with supervisors and other district administration to help encourage and support teachers in a non-threatening environment. Offering choice professional development through in person or virtual options may increase teacher receptivity and improve their self-efficacy, thus improving classroom culture. As a result, these teachers may inspire more children to attend school daily by cultivating relationships, thus increasing the attendance rate at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School. Most importantly, this Action Plan can transfer to other elementary schools in the district to ultimately increase attendance at a district-wide level.

Conclusion

In closing, this study at Mid-Atlantic Elementary School sought to determine if teacher self-efficacy had any impact on student attendance, especially on chronic absenteeism. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, along with Freire's philosophy of putting theory into practice, praxis, the research conducted from the study yielded data revealing educators do have an impact on student motivation and encouragement when it comes to school attendance. Similar to teacher's efficacy having an effect on student's achievement levels (Covey et al., 2014; Gershon 2015; Henson, 2001), teachers can motivate children to enjoy school and want to be present. For instance, when teachers foster a caring culture and cultivate relationships, students are more likely to attend school because they look forward to the class atmosphere and

teacher's positivity. Additionally, when teachers present engaging lessons, students are excited about the upcoming learning activities.

Considering its findings, the study's results and Action Plan can be employed in future studies if the conditions and environment are equivalent or identical to the current site. With annual evaluations, the Action Plan, along with the committee's input, can be revised and modified depending on the increase of attendance within each concurrent year. Teacher self-efficacy can be raised with considerable professional development, therefore enhancing both their own efficacy and self-concept as well as their students, thus leading to positive change and higher attendance rates. Echoing one of Freire's most famous quotes: "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (2009, p. 72), students and teachers can learn from one another. As the confluence of self-efficacy and motivation merge together, so does the desire to educate and learn, thus strengthening the relationship between the teacher and the student.

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APPENDIX A: Invitation To Participate In Research

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Surveys and Interviews

Research Project Title: --Study on Chronic Absenteeism

You have been asked to participate in a research project conducted by Gina Sarabella from the University of Dayton, in the Department of Organizational Leadership.

The purpose of the project is: to research why the rate of absenteeism is increasing at school and to determine what is the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student attendance.

You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop participating at any time for any reason. Answering the questions will take about 60 minutes.
- You will not be compensated for your participation.
- All the information you tell us will be confidential.
- If this is a recorded interview, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the recording and it will be kept in a secure place.
- If this is a written or online survey, only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to your responses. If you are participating in an online survey: We will not collect identifying information, but we cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and our data collection point. We urge you to consider this carefully when responding to these questions.
- I understand that I am ONLY eligible to participate if I am over the age of 18.

Please contact the following investigators with any questions or concerns:

Gina Sarabella, sarabellag1@udayton.edu, 908-489-3421
Dr. Ricardo Garcia rgarcia1@udayton.edu

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please email IRB@udayton.edu or call (937) 229-3515.

APPENDIX B: Questions For Interviews

Questions for Interviews

1. In your experience, what are some reasons students do not attend school on a regular basis?
2. What are some reasons parents do not send their children to school?
3. How does chronic absenteeism affect your classroom/school?
4. What are some strategies you have used to reach out to students and parents who exhibit chronic absenteeism? What strategies have you found to be the most effective?
5. In what areas (social, behavioral, academic) have you seen the most improvement using this strategy?
6. How do you motivate interest in students who show low interest in school?
7. What strategies do you use to get students to believe they can do well in school?
8. To what extent do you believe you can assist students with attending school? What efforts, if any, have you tried to improve attendance in your class?
9. If a student does not attend school on a regular basis, to what degree do you feel a teacher can motivate a student to attend more often?
10. What kind of differences do you notice between students who attend school regularly and students who miss multiple days throughout the year?
11. What are some interventions administrators can implement to assist and increase attendance rates?
12. What are some school wide incentives or strategies that you think administration or staff can incorporate to encourage a higher level of student attendance?

APPENDIX C: Beginning Questions For Focus Group

Beginning Questions for Focus Group*

1. What strategies or incentives have you employed in your own classroom to inspire unmotivated students to contribute and participate more often?
2. How do you help your students value learning and become responsible and active learners in their own education?
3. As veteran elementary school teachers, what experiences have you noted in chronic absenteeism throughout the past several years in relation to your own class and its effects on the overall school climate?
4. As a faculty and learning community, what incentives, rewards, or motivating factors can encourage your students to attend school more often?
5. How much can you contribute as a teacher to influence parents to become involved in school activities?

* (Additional questions to be created as a result of analyzation from *interview* responses)

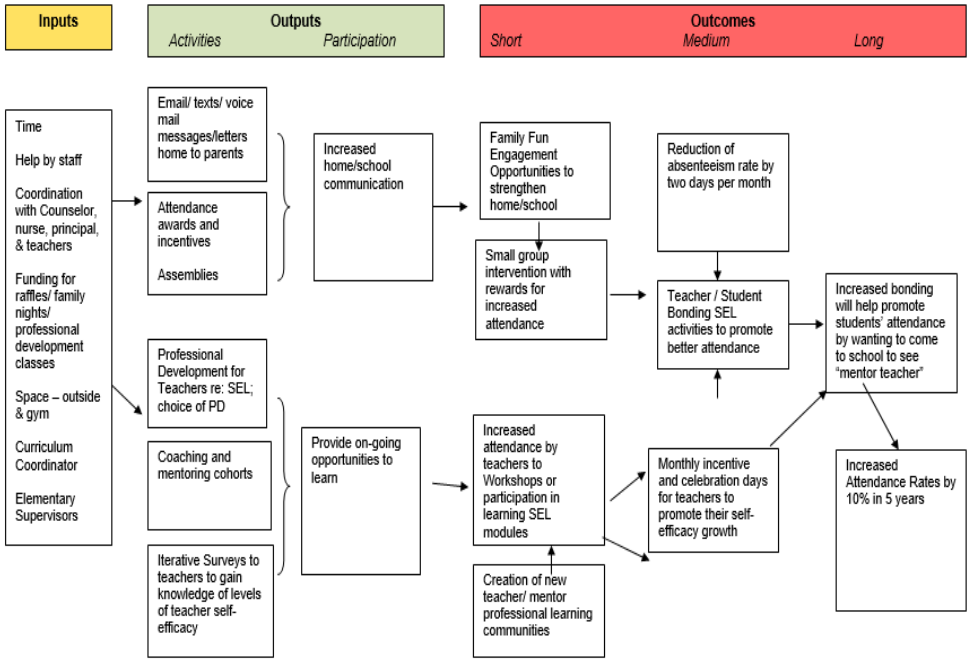
APPENDIX D: Additional Focus Group Questions

Additional Focus Group Questions Developed after Interview Coding

1. During my interviews a lot of participants spoke about the importance of social connectiveness between teachers and students and between students and their peers. Can you expand on that some more. Why do you think that relationship building is important?
2. How does the above affect attendance?
3. What are the barriers to improving attendance at our school? In your own classrooms?
4. Several teachers I interviewed discussed the frustration of having one truant officer for so many schools in the district. Do you know what role the truant officer plays in our school or district and is that role important? Is this job part of an effective system?
5. What policies do you believe should be put in place regarding absenteeism?
6. What changes are needed to make your job easier or less stressful in general?
7. What changes are needed to make you your job easier or less stressful in regards to any absenteeism matters you may face?

APPENDIX E: Logic Model

Program: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism Logic Model
Situation: Increasing Teacher Self-Efficacy



Assumptions
Daily attendance is important for academic achievement
The more days a student misses in the early grades, the more likely they are to miss later in the middle school years and high school
Teacher self-improves student engagement, so it should improve attendance rates

External Factors
Parents transportation issues
Work problems
Health conditions
Parents' distrust of school as authority

Rev. 7/09

APPENDIX E: Initial Action Plan

Objectives and Outcomes (What)	Tasks (How)	Person(s) (Who)	Time (When)	Location (Where)	Resources	Funds
Objective 1: To Increase school attendance rates Outcome: Establish a 10% increase in attendance rates within 5 years	Attendance awards & incentives Personal phone calls Family Fun Engagement Nights	Principal Teachers Guidance Counselor Nurse Parents	Start: beginning of new school year (September) Finish: Ongoing for 5 years (Assess yearly in June)	School building	School gym & classrooms for evening activities Volunteer time from staff	Funds from Title I money for evening programs Nominal funds for certificates Solicitation of PTA funds for material incentives for families
Objective 2: To improve Teacher-Self Efficacy among staff Outcome: Increase in PD choices & increase in TSES survey results from pretest	Provide more options for professional development Create Teacher/ Student mentor program	Teachers Support Staff Students Admin & Supervisors	Start: beginning of new school year (September) Finish: Ongoing for 5 years (Assess yearly in June)	School building	Printed TSE surveys Rooms for PD classes during district established PD days	Not sure of budget but it would be for any outside PD presenters - will budget $5,000

APPENDIX F: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder	Point of Contact *Name, Address, Contact Details*	Interests *Interests related to evaluation & outcomes*	Power *Type of power and ability to impact evaluation plan & implementation*	Engagement Strategy *Type and frequency of communication.*	Notes
Teachers	Teachers - School emails, in person conversations	They are attending professional development classes, they are filling out surveys, they are paired up in mentor groups	They are the ones who have the ability to positively effect attendance since they are the ones in direct line of communication with parents and students	Once a month with mentor meetings, during professional development sessions, interviews & surveys beginning of the year and at the end of the year.	Teachers are the most important implementers of the program. When they see the outcomes of the evaluation (the increase in self-efficacy & the decrease in chronic absenteeism) hopefully they will understand their abilty to transform their classrooms and the school climate.
Principal	Principal, school email, office #	He is the leader of the school, it is his face & leadership abilities all others will see as an integral part of a successful program	He has say in what assemblies can occur, how much he budgets for rewards & programs, how often he communicates with staff, parents, and students, his attendance at family fun engagement nights is key	He needs to informally check-in once a month w/ staff, especially those who are a part of teacher/student mentor group, at least 3x a year with teachers re: their feelings toward PD sessions	If teachers have a prinicpal who leads with cofidence, positivity, high morale, and engagement, they will see he is invested in the program and wants to see successful implementation & outomes.
Counselors	Office phone #, email	Helps those who need assistnace the most w/ open line of communication	Can engage those reluctant or off-the grid parents, can be an extra role model or cheerleader for those who are chronically absent	Check in 3x year, beginning, middle, & end of year, & after fun family engangement nights	Sometimes the counselors are privy to the most confidential child cases & can reach out to challenging families more easily than teachers or administration can.
Superintenedent	Office phone #, email	It's his district, his success or failure to show, can be political & help secure votes for future budgets & referendums	He has the power to cease funding, not provide PD, and say No to program implementation.	Give courtsey feedback & update 3x a year: beginning, middle & end	Doesn't affect attendance rates for school, he's more of a figure head, holds policy making, funding power
Parents	Phone #s, personal address, emails.	Parents are the ones who send children to school, need their buy-in; their children come to school - they do better academically	Power is whether or not they want to send their child to school, be a part of the school community, & take advantage of possible programs & incentives	Once a month family fun engagement nights, beginning, middle & end of year surveys, texts & voice mails when students are absent, occasional calls praising those students with commendable attendance.	If parents do not think attending school is important,then they hold extreme power over sending their children to school. That is why it is so important for home/school communication to be open & frequent.

APPENDIX G: Teachers' Sense Of Efficacy Scale (Long Form)

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (long form)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students ?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students form ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

APPENDIX G: Teacher's Sense Of Efficacy Scale (Short Form)

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (short form)

Teacher Beliefs Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	How much can you do? Nothing	Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal	
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

APPENDIX H: Chronic Absenteeism Infogram