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A descriptive study of truancy and contributing factors: child, home, school and community

Jo Ann F. Simpson
Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT
SOCIAL WORK

SIMPSON, JO ANN F.  B.A. LAGRANGE COLLEGE, 1980
M.A. COLUMBUS COLLEGE, 1993

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TRUANCY AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:
CHILD, HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Advisor: Dr. Gale Horton

Thesis dated May 1997

This is a study of truancy, related to the contributing factors of the child, home, school, and the community. The Troup County School System Truancy Protocol was identified as an effective instrument in examining the relationship of the variables to truancy. The study utilized data which was collected from case records and three questionnaires, student characteristics, staff satisfaction survey and truancy protocol. Analysis of data was conducted using frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that parents must be involved in school programs in order to reduce or prevent truancy.
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TRUANCY AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:
CHILD, HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

A ThESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
JO ANN F. SIMPSON

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 1997
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The school is a social institution which most people have had some association. It is authoritative and compulsory, requiring not only reasonable and academic achievement, but also regular attendance. School standards and controls are utilized for the best interest of the students. The requirement of regular attendance at school of all students between age seven and sixteen is one of the requirements set by the Georgia Department of Education, and society.

Compulsory attendance laws were passed in Georgia in 1916, 1919, and January, 1945. The law of 1919 required that an attendance officer be employed. The salary was less than $3.00 per day. By 1944-45, the State Department of Education reported fifty-seven truant officers - 52 white and 5 black - on non-professional employee listings. The 1945 law set the school term at 175 days (now 180) and the compulsory school ages seven to sixteen.\(^1\) However, if a child under the age of seven has been enrolled in school, he comes under the law. Exemptions to this law included physical and mental handicaps, sickness, labor, and other emergencies. Due to the passage of Public Law 94-142, the exemptions for physical and mental handicaps no longer exists.\(^2\) In 1944-45, Georgia was eighth from the bottom in educational

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\(^2\)Riley, "Historic and Legal Basis for School Social Work, 9."
achievement; 30.5% of those over twenty-five years of age had completed less than five years of school or none at all; and 67.5% of Georgia's adult population had never attended high school or college. The state average daily attendance showed only those children enrolled in school and did not account for those not enrolled at all.³ The United States Chamber of Commerce statistics show that in 1940, 78% of Georgian draftees ranked among the highest in army rejection of draftees because of their education and health.⁴ The concern over inadequate education for Georgia's children led to the 1945 California Law.

The intent of the law and the state board policies made the visiting teacher position a necessity to enable students to remain in school. The social and economic ills of the state affected children and became concerns of the visiting teachers. Examples are farmwork, poverty, negative attitudes toward education, and conditions in the schools.⁵

Georgia's present Compulsory Attendance Law has been in existence since 1945. The law requires that all children between the ages of 7 and 16 attend either public or private school during the regular school term. It provides that children who fail to attend school be reported as delinquent to the appropriate court. It also provides for trained school social workers (visiting teachers) to enforce attendance and perform such duties as are performed by

⁴ibid.
⁵ibid, p. 10.
visiting teachers in other states, including cooperation with state agencies such as the Department of Public Welfare, Labor, and Health.\(^6\)

The law grew out of the concerns of educational leaders. Their first concern was with the widespread illiteracy and generally poor quality of education in Georgia. In 1945, Georgia ranked eighth from the bottom among all states in educational achievement. Poor attendance was a contributing factor: In 1940, an average of 43% of the children in Georgia were not in school on a given day; 22% were not even enrolled.\(^7\)

The concern with improving the level of education in Georgia was accompanied by a concern with the exploitation of child labor. It is no coincidence that Georgia’s Child Labor Law was passed the year after its compulsory education act. Thus the Compulsory School Attendance Law grew out of an educational need and a protective/custodial need.

The concern of the law with the rights of children is implicit in its authorization of a statewide system of visiting teachers. Attendance problems were seen by those who drafted the bill as a symptom of other problems, such as poverty and family disorganization. Like visiting teachers in other states, the Georgia visiting teachers were meant to be trained to protect the rights of children and deal with the causes of maladaptive school behaviors such as poor attendance.


\(^7\)Teel, "The Compulsory School Attendance Law", 23.
The Georgia law is fairly broad and flexible. For instance, it leaves decisions regarding exemptions largely to the State Department of Education. It leaves decisions regarding penalties and remedial measures for non-attendance to the discretion of the courts. It leaves decisions regarding the qualifications and the full range of duties of the visiting teacher to the State Department of Education, the school boards, and the visiting teachers themselves.8

The enactment of compulsory school attendance laws over the past century provided a mandate to fulfill a promise for an improved quality of life for all the children of this nation. The experience of school social workers in administering the mandate for school attendance has documented that parental involvement is a crucial factor in achieving compliance. Whether children are school-phobic, members of alienated minority groups, have families who need extra income, or have any of a host of other problems, change in attendance is possible only when parents perceive the school as important for their children. The school system can serve as both a tool for assessment and a documentation of the efforts the school and school social worker have made to assist the student to benefit from the opportunity for education. The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" summarizes the current philosophy to forestall the damaging effects of student truancy and

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8Teel, "The Compulsory School Attendance Law", 23.
dropping out of school. Educators, school social workers, and parents all are involved in looking for preventive intervention to address truancy and drop outs. This study concerns one intervention program, the Troup County Truancy Protocol, that was developed to provide services to students and their families when truancy occurs. The researcher will attempt to reveal some of the contributing factors of truancy.

**Background/History**

During the early 1900's, visiting teacher programs (the older term for school social worker) were developed in many cities, stimulated primarily by compulsory attendance laws. Since non-attendance was seen as interwoven with the social ills of poverty, ill health, and illiteracy, the need for effective enforcement led to the demand for attendance officers who would also be social workers. As the success of these early efforts illustrated the value of cooperative work between home and school, the personnel were added to the regular school staff to continue programs of this nature.

By the 1930's, the economic problems in families were so great that schools used visiting teachers to supply them with basic physical necessities. As federal programs were gradually introduced to supply these necessities, the

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emphasis in school social work shifted away from law enforcement and community problems to casework with individual children.\textsuperscript{10}

During the 1960's, the focus was on urging practitioners to develop new methods for reaching large numbers of children, approaches to practice emphasized interventions at the system level, both within the school itself and between the school and the community. The 1970’s saw a slight transition from the predominantly casework approach to that of home-school-community liaison and educational counseling. Today, workers continue to place heavy emphasis on direct services to problematic students and their parents. They commonly work with students who are truant, potential dropouts, underachievers, poor, intellectually or physically disabled; and many other problems that today’s students are experiencing.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1945, Georgia enacted a Compulsory School Attendance Law which established the visiting teacher (school social worker) as the professional school person responsible for the promotion of pupil attendance. The law was a result of a well-recognized need for better educational opportunities for children. The purpose of the law was to protect the educational rights of children, not to punish them. It was intended to help children attend and succeed in school. School social work services focused largely on attendance. However, 

\textsuperscript{10}Georgia Department of Education, 1993, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
nonattendance was not viewed as the problem but rather a symptom of underlying problems in the home, child and school. The Child Labor Act of 1946 was a companion bill to the Compulsory School Attendance Bill. It protected children from exploitation.\textsuperscript{12}

**Statement of the Problem**

In spite of general increases in truancy among elementary students in recent years, truancy during middle and high school remains a serious problem. The consequences of truancy on both a personal and a societal level is negative as a whole. For the developing young adult, truancy undermines their motivation, as well as self-esteem. There is no bright future for the students who follows the path of truancy. For the society at large, truancy extracts a high cost on public assistant, health care, and other social service agencies.\textsuperscript{13}

The problem is whether there is a significant difference among students experiencing truancy based on the child, the home, the school, and the community. This study will explore contributing factors of truancy such as the child, the home, the school, and the community. The four classifications will serve as a tool to guide this study for other school social workers in assessing through early intervention.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid, p.5.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
This project involved making a system for classifying the factors related to truancy for the prevention of truancy. The study was developed on the basis of a review of the Troup County policy on truancy. The researcher will be borrowing from the vocabulary of geography, this system will be called "topology" in the sense that it is a survey of the "landscape" of truancy. The topology enumerates factors that need remediation within the child, the home, the school, and the community.

**Objective Statement**

To determine if the Troup County School System Truancy Protocol is effective in achieving its desired goals and evaluate a program’s effectiveness depends on the following three features:

1) They must be able to diagnose the problems of many students;
2) Appropriate treatment options must be available and provided, such as humanistic counseling; and
3) There must be sufficient resources to treat each student adequately, which should include follow-ups.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concepts and empirical information from the literature that relate to this study are reviewed in this chapter. An overview of four assessment tools for early intervention in the prevention of truancy are given. Brief summaries of some of the major reasons why students stated that they were truant are explained, and also the factors that influence the early onset of truancy. This is followed by the Troup County Truancy Protocol.

The enactment of campus school attendance laws by all the states in the period between 1852 and 1918 was a response to three types of pressures: (1) growing commitment to universal education for all the children of the nation, (2) concern for the need to socialize the population of immigrant children, and (3) the objections raised by organized labor and child advocates to the presence or exploitation of children in the workplace. The school responded by becoming the agency in the community to teach children gauge, customs, and skills required to work in an industrial society. The school also became the local institution responsible for enforcing the child labor laws. Education was seen as means by which the state would:

(1) support the family in preparing its children to become self-supporting, contributing members of the community and (2) help children from poor families improve their standard of living.

Despite this commitment, the 1990 census reported "nearly four million school-age children 7 to 17 were not enrolled in any school three consecutive months prior to enumeration April 1990." Also, 10.8 percent of children whose parents earned under $10,000 a year were not enrolled, compared to the 5.9 percent of children whose parents were earning more than 25,000 annually. The children from the lower income families were more than twice as likely to be out of school. Most of the parents that were earning under $10,000 were on public assistance. In view of these statistics the statement of commitment in the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated:

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.

It is also the duty for support personnel to ensure that schools do in fact support the family in providing the education their students require in an increasingly technological society.


The obstacles to learning are not limited to those created by inappropriate irrelevant, or uncaring inadequate teachers. Absenteeism has been identified as a major barrier to learning. It has been found to be a symptom of physical and mental problems that may reside in the child, the home, the school, or the community. The absences may be excused or unexcused. The latter type of nonattendance, commonly referred to as truancy, raises most concern in schools and community agencies. In the majority of school districts, the pattern has been to develop programs to combat truancy at the high school level. Studies have found that the problems leading to truancy existed early in the student’s school experience and that the earlier one can intervene to arrest or redirect a problem, the greater are the chances for success (Robins and Wish, 1980).

This thesis presents a system for classifying the factor related to early intervention for the prevention of truancy. This system was developed on truancy, and out of experience in evaluating an alternative program for high school truants. The types of measures or evaluation criteria sought are the effects on the students reported for truancy. There are many contributing factors related to truancy, but the mere fact that a student is referred to social services indicates that there are other underlying problems. The mere referral

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does not mean that the problem will result into productive or worse results (or whether it will be counter productive).

In spite of general decreases in truancy of most of the students referred, truancy in middle school and high school remains a serious problem. The consequences of truancy are acute on both a personal and a societal level. For teenagers, truancy undermines motivation, self-esteem, contributes to teen pregnancies and other juvenile crimes. For society at large, truancy extracts a high cost in public assistance, educational failure, and lack of employment.

Given the serious consequences of truancy, considerable effort has been directed toward identifying effective solutions. Until recently, the Troup County School System had no united policy on truancy, each school had their own policy. The goal has been to identify ways to increase the effectiveness of attendance and to prevent repeated truancy of students.

Although the development of the classification system is ongoing, it can serve as an assessment tool to guide school social workers in exploring the etiology of the factors contributing to truancy. It leads to factual documentation of what the school and the school social worker have done to eliminate barriers from the education of truant children.

Truancy has been found to be a signal of problems that may differ from child to child. In some instances, truancy may result from factors residing within the child. In other instances, the factors may be associated with the home, the school, or the community. Experience has shown that factors in one
sector may have a ripple effect on factors in another sector. The following information will be used as an assessment tool to help the school social worker identify contributing factors of truancy.

The Child

School social workers are aware that regardless of the merits of an individual educational program there will always be some children who will learn and others who will not. Experience in enforcing the school attendance laws has shown that the problems resulting in truancy may reflect unresolved tensions from psychosocial stress or organic disabilities, and that these problems surface when attempts are made to understand why children are absent. Truancy is a signal for attention. The school social worker's liaison role among the home, the school, and the community allows for the collection of data needed to assess the range of factors contributing to the problems of particular children, such as the factors listed below.

School Phobia - The early work in identifying and understanding the causes of truancy led to the designation of school phobia as a separate and distinct phenomenon. School-phobic children and their mothers have fears of being separated from each other. The support of the parent is needed if the child is to attend and participate in classes.5

**Interpersonal Skills** - Truant children often have problems with their social and emotional functioning. They have difficulty in establishing caring relationships with peers as well as with teachers, and they often experience low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence. Involvement in constructive group experiences with peers and teachers may develop these children’s self-confidence, and increase their interest in learning and attendance.⁶

**Ethnic or Racial Dissonance** - The current wave of new immigrant groups, such as Asians and Hispanics, reminds us that school social work began as an effort to create a link between the school and the new families in the community. A child’s ethnic or racial differences contribute to inner stress in the school setting, yet teachers are often unaware of the conflicts that classroom expectations create with the customs in the home of an immigrant or minority family. In these situations, efforts to get the truant child to return to school require the identification of the source of tension, and a plan to reduce it.⁷

**Failure to Learn** - Not all children who become truant have problems in learning. But those children who do have difficulty meeting the expectations for school achievement not only are often disruptive when they attend, but subsequently become truant. These children require support programs to

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overcome their deficits, and such programs have been found to be effective in returning children to the classroom.\textsuperscript{8}

**Learning Style** - Some truant children have learning styles that are out of pace with classroom expectations. These styles vary, with some children learning slowly, and others (those who are average or above-average in intelligence) exceeding the pace set in class. In other instances, children who have been found to be "work-motivated rather than academic-minded", complain that school is boring and confining. Some do not remain compliant and conforming. Students turned off by unsympathetic teachers, excessive school demands, and curricula unrelated to their talents will drop out.\textsuperscript{9} To succeed in encouraging attendance, school social workers must be sensitive to what the child feels about earlier school experiences.

**Learning Disabilities** - Truancy has been found to be an indicator of children who have learning disabilities. A study evaluating a program for truants reported that 82 percent of the participants were found to have active and significant learning disabilities, and 44 percent failed the auditory or visual portions of the sensory screening tests. For most of these youngsters, the problem had not been identified prior to their alternative high school truancy program. It seems obvious that screening for learning disabilities and sensory


\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
ability should be automatic procedures, especially for children with learning problems in the elementary and junior high schools. This may prove to be support for locating children qualified for help under P.L. 94-12. At Troup County School System, students are automatically tested for auditory and vision every other year beginning with first grade. If a student fails the test, the school social worker will assist the parents in getting the problem corrected.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Health Problems} - Absence because of health problems can also be a symptom of underlying unresolved social and emotional problems. Many doctors treating children with severe asthma and allergic reactions perceive them as psychosomatic symptoms of an unhealthy family. Early intervention in attendance problems created by psychosomatic illness may offer the child and the family an opportunity for relief before the situation becomes resistant to treatment. Another benefit of early intervention in these problems is the opportunity to prevent institutional placement. Early intervention can provide the supports needed to facilitate the resolution of problems before additional, more severe forms emerge.\textsuperscript{11}


The Home

Although it is true that different factors within the child may result in obstacles to learning and school attendance, all factors contributing to these difficulties do not necessarily result within the child. Some are rooted in problems in the home.

Parental Knowledge - Some administrators and judicial officers have found that parents are not always aware that the children are not in school. Many working parents leave home before their children. In 98 percent of the cases, reporting truancy to the home is sufficient to control the problem.\(^{12}\) There has been considerable documentation confirming that unless the parent is involved and reinforces the expectations for school attendance, the school’s efforts with the child will be seriously blocked. Miles and Ury reported that multi-problem families do what they can to support the expectation for school attendance when they are included in attempts to solve the problem.\(^{13}\) Clearly, the parental knowledge of the child’s absence is a first step in developing regular school attendance.

Family Attitude - The family’s attitude toward school attendance has been found to be a significant factor in the behavior of children. Nielsen and


\(^{13}\)Ibid.
Gerber reported that a significant number of truants come from families in which there is a history of truancy.14

**Family Socioeconomic Status** - Hogan's study of the relationship between a family's economic status, and its perception of the relative importance of work and education in the life of its children, demonstrated that when children's earnings were vital to the family's economy, they did not attend school. Katz and Davy reported the same pattern in a Canadian city. The Children's Defense Fund acknowledged that families needing the extra income of their children have a painful dilemma, but the organization found only one group of parents who encouraged and sometimes forced their children to drop out of school so that they could help support their families.15 A liaison with the home is a necessary step in determining the supports particular children may need if they are to comply with the expectation for school attendance.

Families living in poverty are often unable to provide children with the clothes needed in different seasons and climates. The children are humiliated by even well-intended comments from schoolmates and teachers concerning their inappropriate clothes and are sometimes ridiculed by insensitive children.


These experiences serve as a disincentive to attendance. The development of services to provide decent clothing is seen as a remedy to this problem.\textsuperscript{16}

**Family Situation** - Children who live in a one-parent family as a result of the death or desertion of one parent, or whose family is experiencing divorce, serious illness, unemployment, or disruptions because of a move may also become truant. Withdrawal is seen as an attempt to cope with the stress of multiple conflicts. A parent who is helped to become sensitive to the problems that surface in these situations will be better able to sustain the child in the school program.\textsuperscript{17}

**Child Abuse or Neglect** - In some situations, truancy has been attributed to abuse or neglect by parents who may keep children home to hide telltale bruises. Also, such parents may not provide the supervision necessary to allow their children to develop regular sleeping and eating habits. Thus, demands in school are not consistent with the children’s life patterns. Early intervention can help to remove obstacles the family places in the way of school attendance.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{17}Miles and Ury, "A Study of Families in Need of Restoration". Journal of the International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers.

Parenting Skills - The experience of working with children who have been abused or neglected has sensitized many concerned school social workers to the degree to which parenting skills would help offset otherwise irrational behavior. Many parents need to develop skills in helping their children to accept the authority of adults, and the discipline to pursue a task until it is completed. Programs to help parents connect with the resources to support their attainment of these necessary skills can result in a reduction in truancy.19

The School

Problems children have in the schools are not limited to factors within the child or the home. They can be a function of the school experience. Studies cited in the following discussion have identified factors in school policies and practices that create barriers to school attendance. The findings of these studies indicate that institutional changes in the school program, curriculum, and staffing patterns are often more effective in reducing truancy than placing pressure on an individual child.20


20Daniel Acker and Barbara J. Stembridge, "Pupil Personnel Workers as Change Agents in the Reduction of Truancy Among Inner City Students", Journal of the International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers, 80. and 278-279.
Adequate Reporting, Recording, and Follow-Up - A key obstacle to reducing truancy has been the pattern of reporting school attendance. Studies by Kotin and Aikman, and Children’s Defense Fund found that most schools do not keep accurate, updated records of children who are truant. A poll of superintendents of urban school systems by the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research at Howard University found that sometimes all absences were totaled together, with no attempt to identify or separate excused from unexcused nonattendance. An analysis of the data has confirmed that truancy is grossly underreported and that schools measure the children who attend, not those who are absent. Many school systems do not have records to indicate the extent of truancy. The Troup County School System record attendance on a daily basis.

Advocates of children’s welfare have pointed out that the children out of school in America are those children of which school personnel are not eager to have in the classroom. The inadequate maintenance of records of children who do not attend becomes an impediment to the development of alternative support systems for these children. In an evaluation of an alternative program

21 Ibid, p. 81.

only one-third of the names and addresses supplied by the Attendance Office were accurate. At the Troup County School System, only 60 percent of students addresses and telephone numbers are accurate. The lack of adequate records of any sort prolonged the period of assessment and placement of the children accepted for the program. The establishment and maintenance of accurate updated records of attendance and absence would result in early parental knowledge and the development of alternative support programs. This is an example of a factor within the school system which affects the time it takes before the school social worker can visit the home.

Inconsistent Enforcement - Another important impediment to the enforcement of the compulsory school attendance laws has been the relationship of the state to its citizens. In a study done of state compulsory school attendance laws, Kotin and Aikman found that almost all states have personnel who nominally deal with the problem of truancy but who in fact hold the parents responsible for seeing that the child attends school. This expectation is not enforced consistently, and parents are not always held responsible when the child does not attend school. In addition, the vagueness in the laws and the degree of discretion allowed school administrators to make for uneven compliance when enforcing the attendance law.

Birdsong cites an instance in which the state of Washington has waived parental responsibility for children who have reached age 15. In a report concerning research on truancy, Carl, Pawlak, and Dorn note that most states include provisions for statutory exemptions from compulsory attendance laws. These exemptions vary markedly, but usually include such condition as mental, physical, or emotional disabilities, completion of minimum educational requirements, employment, suspension, incarceration, distance from school, and others. In addition to state-to-state variation in these provisions, substantial vagueness characterizes most exemption provisions. For example, in 29 states, physical, mental, and emotional exemptions are loosely construed as the child's ability to profit from attendance. In other 21 states, exemptions are stated solely in terms of the child's ability to attend. In these cases it is unclear whether children are exempted because of safety and health reasons, or because of supposed inability to benefit. Interestingly, 13 state statutes include no requirement for documentation of the condition.

Consistent practices in the schools to enforce compliance with the attendance laws will do much to reduce the problem. This is an illustration of how a factor in the school affects a factor such as family attitude in the home category.

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24Birdsong, "Truancy: A Review of the Literature".

25Ibid.
Relevance of Curriculum - The school has the primary responsibility for assessing a child’s learning needs and prescribing an appropriate curriculum. Acker and Stembridge in 1985, found that the school curriculum is not always relevant to the child’s learning level, and Wright in 1991, found that when curriculum alternatives had relevance for particular student groups their attendance improved. Determining the relevance of curricula to the learning needs or style of individual students may be a key factor in reducing truancy.

Appropriate School Placement - Appropriate assessment and placement of a child are often instrumental in achieving improved school attendance. These would take into account the child’s learning style and learning disabilities or capacities. The enactment of P.L. 94-142 has made the school responsible for identifying and providing the special supports children need to benefit from the opportunity for education. Implementation of the mandates of the act would help change the attendance patterns of these children. This is an example of how the law, as a factor within the school, can ameliorate a best interest of the child in the school environment.

Retention and Promotion - Analysis of the data describing the math and reading-level scores of elementary truants in a traditional classroom supports


\[27\] Ibid, pp. 67-69.
the recommendation that early intervention be instituted to help children succeed in learning. Implementation of the promise of education for minority students requires that students with skills at the elementary level of learning not be promoted to high school. Retention at the time the problem is identified is more likely to lead to remediation.28

**School Transitions** - The promotion from one school level to the next may precipitate truancy in children having problems with learning or in their interpersonal relations with peers or adults. The school social worker can help initiate and coordinate programs designed to introduce students to the new school site and the new teachers and children prior to promotion.

**Suspension and Expulsion** - The rationale for suspending or expelling students for truancy is difficult to understand. These practices seem to encourage the very problem they process to correct--keeping the child out of school. School social workers must continue to work on developing effective means of discipline within the schools. Exclusion from school does not contribute to a child's welfare in school.

**Competent, Concerned Teachers** - As mentioned earlier, a seeming proliferation of incompetent, inadequate, and unconcerned teachers has been identified as another source of alienation for some students. They are tired of having teachers who demean them in front of other students, or who refuse to

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review lessons that need clarification. Children are more likely to attend classes if teachers respect and support them, and control the classroom. St. John reported that black students had improved attendance when they were assigned to a pupil-oriented teacher. School personnel should become familiar with ways to enhance student attendance.

**Teacher Absenteeism** - Nonattendance among teachers has also been identified as a problem in maintaining student interest in the classroom. This practice is seen to reflect teacher abuse of entitlements won in collective bargaining agreements, and it occurs despite increased pay, smaller classes, and more appropriate assignments.

**School Environment** - Patterns in truancy surface when one analyzes the factors existing at the time of absence. Karweit found that absences are greater on Mondays, Fridays, and rainy days. Conscious attention to the scheduling of programs, the provision of transportation, the availability of necessary clothing for different weather conditions, and the pattern of teacher absenteeism can all contribute to mitigating the influence of these factors on school attendance.


The Community

In addition to factors focused on the child, the home, and the school, there are also factors in the community that may deter students from attending school.

Peer Influence - Seltzer has described the extent to which an adolescent peer culture influences individual behavior.32 Nielsen and Gerber found that 84 percent of truants in their study had friends who were truants and 71 percent engaged in delinquent activities such as fighting, stealing, and the use of drugs.33 The development of age-appropriate supervised community recreational activities is needed to prevent antisocial activities. The school social worker can do much to interpret this need and encourage the creation of such programs.

Street Gangs - The personal reference groups of students are not the only factors influencing their attendance.34 The existence of neighborhood gangs can also be a deterrent to school attendance. In this author’s experience, the development of a protective escort service to accompany children through certain neighborhoods was effective in increasing attendance.


34Ibid, p. 315.
The practice of carrying schoolbooks in brown paper bags was another mechanism used to reduce harassment of pupils in some areas. This factor has increased significance when children are promoted to a school in a new neighborhood\textsuperscript{35}.

**Interracial Tensions** - Among the schools that may have a high rate of truancy are those in which pupils of one racial group are fed into schools having a majority of students from other racial groups. Efforts to combat this problem must include community education and transition programs for children prior to entering such schools. This is an example of a factor in the community affecting a factor within the school.

**Troup County Truancy Protocol**

A committee was formed to establish a system-wide protocol for dealing with absences and truancy in our schools. This committee consists of school personnel and community agency representatives. After meeting for approximately 200 man hours over a five month period, the following recommendations were developed. There is a unanimous agreement within the committee that this action plan is proactive and an effective means of addressing these issues. However, the committee recognize that the full

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid}, p. 317.
benefit of these recommendations will not be realized without additional resources. The following needs were identified:

Additional human resources

a) Additional clerical personnel to work specifically with attendance procedures
b) Additional school social workers, and
c) Additional school counselors

In addition, the committee recommends that the existing policies and programs be examined for ways to encourage regular school attendance. Some policies and programs include:

1) Promotion/retention policies
2) Programs that address other at-risk behaviors
   a) Jump Start
   b) Communities in Schools
   c) School-Based Risk Reduction Panel (SBRRP)
   d) The Alternative School

Definitions

Absence

1) Anytime a student is not present at least 50% of the school day.
2) As it relates to the truancy protocol, any combination of three tardies and/or early dismissal will constitute one "truancy absence". This does not pertain to early dismissal which constitutes one "truancy absence". This does not pertain to Full-time Equivalency reporting or a student’s permanent attendance record.
3) For high school classes - Anytime a student misses more than 15 unauthorized minutes.

Truancy - two types of unexcused absences; they are (1) where the child "willfully absents himself from school" which is the legal definition of truancy,
and (2) the instances where the parent keeps the child home or permits him to be absent without an excuse as defined by the School Board. Truancy was used to mean a student with thirty or more absences.

**Non-Truants** will refer to those students who were absent less than ten days during the school term.

**Tardy**

1) Anytime a student arrives after the instructional day begins but can still complete at least 50% of the school day.
2) For high school classes - Anytime a student arrives, without authorization, between one and 15 minutes after class has begun.

**Early Dismissal** - Anytime a student, with school and parental permission leaves school early but still completes at least 50% of the school day.

**Elementary School Protocol**

**Step One:** After a maximum of three absences within an academic year, the parent/guardian will be contacted by a letter or a phone call from the child's teacher or designated school personnel.

**Step Two:** After six absences within an academic year, the designated school personnel mails a letter of concern to the parent/guardian.
**Step Three:** Between six and 10 absences, the designated school personnel can use professional judgment in using any or none of the following interventions:

a) Parent/guardian conference  
b) Home visit  
c) Notification of the Department of Family and Children's Services (i.e., a family's caseworker)  
d) Notification of Juvenile Court (i.e., a child's Probation Officer)

**Step Four:** After 10 absences, a conference may be set up between school personnel and parent/guardian.

**Step Five:** If absences continue, a referral is made to the school social worker. However, prior to the referral, steps one through four must have been completed at the school level. If previous operational procedures were not followed, the referral can be rejected.

**Step Six:** The social worker uses professional judgment when intervening with the family. If social worker's intervention fails, the student and/or parents will be referred to the court system through any of the following options:
a) Complaint filed in Juvenile Court requesting and informal adjustment/diversion contract.
b) Petition filed in Juvenile Court alleging truancy.
c) Petition filed in Juvenile Court alleging educational deprivation.
d) Petition filed in Magistrates Court alleging parental non-compliance with the compulsory attendance law.

Middle School Protocol

**Step One:** After a maximum of three unexcused absences within an academic year, the parent/guardian will be contacted by a letter or a phone call from the child’s teacher or designated school personnel.

**Step Two:** After six absences within an academic year, the designated school personnel may choose to mail a letter of concern to the parent/guardian or simply continue to monitor the student’s attendance.

**Step Three:** Between six and ten absences, the designated school personnel can use professional judgment in using any or none of the following interventions:

a) Parent/guardian conference
b) Home visit
c) Notification of the Department of Family and Children's Services (i.e., a family's caseworker)
d) Notification of Juvenile Court (i.e., a child's Probation Officer)

**Step Four:** After 10 absences, a conference may be set up between school personnel and parent/guardian.

**Step Five:** If absences continue, a referral is made to the school social worker. However, prior to the referral, steps one through four must have been completed at the school level. If previous operational procedures were not followed, the referral can be rejected.

**Step Six:** The social worker uses professional judgment when intervening with the family. If social worker's intervention fails, the student and/or parents will be referred to the court system through any of the following options:

a) Complaint filed in Juvenile Court requesting an informal adjustment/diversion contract.
b) Petition filed in Juvenile Court alleging truancy.
c) Petition filed in Juvenile Court alleging educational deprivation.
d) Petition filed in Magistrate Court alleging parental non-compliance with the compulsory attendance law.36

High School Protocol

(Each step must be documented)

The high school and middle school protocols are the same beginning with step one through step six. The changes effect steps seven and eight as follows:

Seven: When a student has more than 13 absences, excused or unexcused, in a specific class within a semester, the student will not receive credit for that class.

Eight: A student who loses credit in a specific class due to having more than 13 absences in a semester may request a review of the loss of credit. The review will be conducted by a credit review committee composed of the principal or designee, a counselor and a teacher. For a student to regain lost credit the student must

show that the absences leading to the loss of credit were legally excused, unfinished schoolwork has been completed, all course requirements have been satisfied and the student has received a passing grade. A parent/guardian or student must submit a request in writing to the principal within seven calendar days following the last day of the semester. Also a written explanation for all absences must accompany the request.

Suggested School Interventions

1) Daily calling of absentees.
2) Individual counseling with the student.
3) Consistent school/home communication to encourage parent involvement in applying strategies that improve student attendance.
4) Group counseling with students who are exhibiting truant behaviors.
5) Incentive program to promote consistent attendance.
6) After-school detention.
7) Development and implementation of in-house SBRRP plan.
8) Teachers initiate and maintain contact with the family.37

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37Troup County School System Truancy Protocol Committee, (1994), LaGrange, Georgia.
Successive Intervention Designs

The type of intervention used at TCSS for truancy is the successive intervention designs. The successive intervention designs consist of a series of designs that employ different intervention methods, each applied one after the other in separate phases. Some of these are among the most commonly used of all designs, because in actual practice, it is often very difficult to apply just one intervention method or program and achieve effectiveness. The reason why successive intervention designs are frequently used is that feedback from the data may indicate that a given intervention program is not working satisfactorily. Successive intervention designs can be planned in advance for more systematic comparisons between phases, and to test the effects of a maintenance program.38

Conclusion

The enactment of the compulsory school attendance laws over the past century provided a mandate to fulfill a promise for an improved quality of life for all the children of this nation. The report of the National Commission on

Excellence in Education has been unequivocal in its criticism of the failure of our schools to achieve their mission, but has limited its recommendations to the reform of curriculum and teacher requirements.\textsuperscript{39}

The experience of school social workers in administering the mandate for school attendance has documented that parental involvement is a crucial factor in achieving compliance. Whether children are school-phobic, members of alienated minority groups, have families who need extra income, or have any of a host of other problems, change in attendance is possible only when parents perceive the school as important for their children. This project has presented a system of classification for assessing early intervention for prevention of truancy for particular children. It is still being developed. Further study will identify factors to be added, and the extent to which the system can serve as both a tool for assessment, and a documentation of the efforts the school and school social worker have made to assist the child to benefit from the opportunity for education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Methods used in this evaluation were to determine the effectiveness of intervention concerning truancy. Five major areas to be explored are: The child, the home, the school, the community, and the satisfaction of social service to the staff. Included in this chapter is a description of the population, the survey instrument, the collection of data, and the statistical treatment of data.

Scope of the Study

The participants of the study were counselors, teachers and students from Troup County School System, located in LaGrange, Georgia. The student population which receives services from the school social worker are boys and girls whose ages range between 7 and 16 years old.

Data gathered will be limited because client confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. The school social worker will administer the questionnaire to help ensure confidentiality. This study will be limited to the responses of the student surveyed at the prescribed time. The data was self-reported, therefore, had potential for bias.

Other boundaries that is a significant limitation of the data concerns generalizability. First, in order for a study to claim generalizability, it must include a large and broad enough subject sample to represent the large number of subject variables found in the general population.
Some assumptions and limitations noted for this study are:

1. Students referred to social service for truancy should have the understanding that it is the school’s expectation that they decrease absences and behaviors that promote absences.
2. Students referred for truancy, it is the teacher goal for the students to become absences free.
3. The truancy protocol is capable of meeting the student’s stated needs in reference to truancy.
4. Imitation of the behavior of peers accounts for much of the student truancy.
5. Generalization is limited to the grade levels studied.
6. Generalization is further complicated by the voluntary participation of students in the survey.

Subjects

The subject populations who participated in the present study were some of the Troup County School System (TCSS) staff and students. The students in the second through fifth grades were clients. The students were from the inner city of the TCSS. The data collected from the surveys will pertain to elementary students in the TCSS. Students were referred to the school social worker by principals, assistant principals, school counselors, teachers, neighbors, and family members.
Data Collection Instruments

The most important survey used were the school social worker's referral form. The school social worker's referral form is a tool for gathering identifying information about the students. It asks for the students name, address, date of birth, gender and data about the parent.

There is a section on the form that states the reason(s) for referral. Most often reasons for referrals are: abuse, academic, attendance, dropout, economic, emotional, family, health, pregnancy, school discipline and special education. Finally, there is a section on the form that asks if the student receiving any special education or Title I services. There is another section to state the problem(s) as seen by the referring person and intervention(s) attempted prior to making the referral. At this point, the referring person will send the form to the social worker. These forms were developed by the social worker's department. The staff members at the school system participated in this survey by filling out referral forms. Self-reported information were reported by some parents who felt that they had no control of their children.

The pre-satisfaction staff survey was administered to staff members who referred students to the school social worker during the 1994-1995 school term. The pre-satisfaction staff survey was administered to 50 staff members that taught grades second through fifth. There were 85% females and 15% males selected for the pre-satisfaction staff survey; 76% surveyed were caucasian staff members; 67% of the referrals were made by counselors. Most
of the staff members (95%) found the service to be useful; 90% felt that the TCSSSW responded in a timely manner; 95% felt TCSSSW had a positive impact on the student that were served; 98% would recommend TCSSSW to other staff and 26% used TCSSSW services bi-monthly last school term. Approximately five months later an anonymous post-satisfaction staff survey was administered to the staff members who referred students to the school social worker. The Staff Satisfaction Survey was developed by the author.

Staff Satisfaction Survey

1. What grade do you teach?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your ethnical background?
4. What is your position with the Troup County School System?
5. Has the School Social Service been useful to you?
6. Does the Troup County School System Social Worker (TCSSSW) respond in a timely manner?
7. Have you experienced a positive attitude and behavior change from the student you referred to TCSSSW?
8. Would you recommend TCSSSW to other staff members?
9. How often do you use TCSSSW Services?
Procedure

The social worker referral forms were given to counselors in the elementary schools to be used when a student was exhibiting truancy and other problems. The Troup County School System (TCSS) Staff Satisfaction Survey were administered by the author. The school social worker referral forms were administered on clients that were exhibiting 10 or more absences. The survey was administered to 125 students. When the three week deadline for the return of the surveys had expired, of the 125 referral forms 80% of 100% were returned. Approximately five months later the Staff Satisfaction Survey was placed in the 50 teacher’s mailboxes who had referred students to the program. Of the 50 surveys, 95% were returned after a two week expiration. Though they were given on different dates, the purpose of the survey was explained with an accompanying statement. Students, parents, neighbors and staff members were assured that their responses would be anonymous and confidential and that participation was voluntary.

Statistical Analysis

The method of analyses in the study include frequencies and percentages. The data analyses were performed using the computer program taken from The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The author used the Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) because it provides statistical analysis and data management system in a graphical environment. The program uses descriptive menus and simple dialog
boxes to do most of the work for the researcher. Most SPSS for Windows software packages also provide:

**Data Editor** is used like a spreadsheet system for defining, entering, editing and displaying data. **Chart Editor** is very visual, it facilitates for manipulating and customizing the many charts and graphs produced by SPSS. **High-Resolution Graphics** offer full-color pie charts, bar charts, 3-D graphics, scatterplots and histograms.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The Prevalence of Truancy

Data from a sub-set of the TCSS Social Work Referral Questionnaire items were used for this study. The responses and items used from response choices follows:

Section I.

Student and Family Information:

Ethnic Origin and Sex:

51% were Black Males 4% were Black Females
41% were White Males 1% were White Females
2% were Other Males 1% were Other Females

(see Figure 1 below)

Figure 1

ETHNIC ORIGIN AND SEX

[Graph showing ethnic origin and sex distribution]
Age

Range from 7 - 12 years old

8 % - 7 year old 11 % - 8 year old 18 % - 9 year old
15 % - 10 year old 21 % - 11 year old 27 % - 12 year old

(see Figure 2 below)

Figure 2

AGE OF TRUANCY
(Range from 7 - 12 Years Old)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see Figure 3 below)

**Figure 3**

Grades of Truant Students

![Pie chart showing grade distribution of truant students]

**LEGEND**
- Second Grade
- Third Grade
- Fourth Grade
- Fifth Grade

n=Grade of Truant Students
Parent/Guardian Living Status:

- 28% - Married
- 49% - Single
- 13% - Grandparent(s)
- 10% - Other

(see Figure 4 below)

Figure 4

PARENT/GUARDIAN LIVING STATUS

n=Parent/Guardian Living Status

LEGEND
- Married
- Single
- Grandparent(s)
- Other
Parent/Guardian Employment Status:

39 % - Parent(s) Employed  
4 % - Other Employed

51 % - Parent(s) Unemployed  
6 % - Other Unemployed

(see Figure 5 below)

Figure 5

PARENT/GUARDIAN EMPLOYMENT STATUS
Section II.

Reason(s) for Referral

- 6% - Abuse
- 12% - Academic
- 67% - Attendance
- 2% - Delinquent
- 2% - Deprivation
- 0% - Gangs/Violence
- 0% - Dropout
- 0% - Drug Abuse
- 5% - Health
- 0% - Homeless
- 0% - Economic
- 1% - Emotional
- 1% - Family
- 1% - Other

(see Figure 6 below)

Figure 6

REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL
Section III.

In Compliance with the Truancy Protocol:

One: Parent/Guardian Contacted - 91 %
   Contact Attempted - 9 %
   Type of Contact - 85 % - Home Visit

Two: Letter Mailed - 6 %

Three: Parent Conference - 79 %
   Parent Conference Attempted - 21 %

Survey of Student Characteristics:

Question 1, Do You Make Good Grades?:

10 % - Never 57 % - Seldom 17 % - Sometimes
13 % - Often 3 % - A Lot
Question 2: Do You Get into Trouble at School?

17% - Never 7% - Seldom 40% - Sometimes
23% - Often 13% - A Lot

(see Figure 7 below)

Figure 7

Do You Get in Trouble at School?
Question 6: Do Your Parent(s) Make Up Excuses For You?

35 % - Never       20 % - Seldom       15 % - Sometimes

11 % - Often       19 % - A Lot

(see Figure 8 below)

Figure 8

Do Your Parent(s) Make Up Excuses for You?
Question 4: Do You Play Hookie?

8% - Never  13% - Seldom  5% - Sometimes
23% - Often  41% - A Lot

(see Figure 9 below)

Figure 9
Do You Play Hookie?
Question 5: How Often Do Your Friends Play Hookie With You?

- 9% - Never
- 15% - Seldom
- 16% - Sometimes
- 21% - Often
- 39% - A Lot

(see Figure 10 below)

Figure 10

How Often Do Your Friends Play Hookie with You?
Question 7: Within the Past Year How Often Have You Taken a Written Excuse to the Teacher?

33 % - Never  25 % - Seldom  18 % - Sometimes
15 % - Often  8 % - A Lot

Question 8: Do You Feel That You Are Putting Yourself At Risk As A Drop Out?

39 % - Never  27 % - Seldom  16 % - Sometimes
11 % - Often  7 % - A Lot

(see Figure 11 below)

**Figure 11**

Do You Feel that you are Putting Yourself at Risk as a Dropout?

![Bar chart showing the frequency of students who feel they are at risk, with responses ranging from Never to A Lot. The chart indicates that the majority of students feel they are not at risk.](image-url)
Question 9: What Do You Think Is The Causing Factor Of Truancy?

4% - The Child  26% - The Home  51% - The School  19% - The Community

The above analysis is a breakdown of the responses from the 80% of the TCSS students who returned the TCSS Referral Survey. Of the 80%, the analysis revealed that 51% of the returned surveys were Black males, 41% White males being the two highest percentages from any of the groups. The ages range from 7-12 year olds, with the 12 year old having the highest rate of referral, 34% of the six age groups. Of the four grades used in this study, 59% of the referrals were sent from the fifth grade. The student’s parent/guardian living status indicates that 61% of the students’ parents were single. While 64% of the parents were unemployed.

Next, the reasons for referral were examined. The analysis indicated that 84% of the students were referred to the school social worker for attendance problems. In compliance with the Truancy Protocol 91% of the parent/guardians were contacted. Out of that 91%, the school social worker made 85 home visits, and 79% of the parent conferences were held with a member of the staff.

The survey of the student characteristics indicates that 71% of the students seldom make good grades. The study indicates that 50% of the students sometimes get in trouble at school. Of the 80% of responses, 95% indicated that they fake illness, 51% played hookie a lot, and 49% played hookie with their friends. Students indicated that 44% of their parents never make up excuses for them.
Within the past year, 23% of the students sometimes take a written excuse to the teacher. Of the 80% response rate, 20% felt that they were putting themselves at risk for becoming dropouts. The data also revealed that 51% of the students indicated the school to be the causative factor of truancy.

The responses from the 80% revealed that 21% were not truant within the past year. This moderately low percentage could be due to an indication that TCSS Social Work Services is working effectively.

Troup County School System Social Worker (TCSSSW)
Staff Satisfaction Survey Responses

This part of the survey asked nine questions dealing with staff satisfaction of the program. Analysis of the respondent’s reported demographics reveal: 1) they taught grades second through fifth; 2) there were more females (85%) than males (15%); 3) 76% surveyed were Caucasian staff members; 4) 67% of the referrals were made by counselors; 5) 95% found the service to be useful; 6) 90% felt that the TCSSSW responded in a timely manner; 7) 95% felt TCSSSW had a positive impact on the students life; 8) 98% would recommend TCSSSW to other staff; 9) 26% use TCSSSW services bi-monthly.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Review

Evaluating Troup County School System Truancy Protocol (TCSSTP) should incorporate an assessment of the factors that motivate particular individuals to be truant, including home, school, and cultural influences. Such an assessment will help diagnose the problems of the youngsters, and may indicate the need to broaden the focus of the Truancy Protocol program on the diversity of each individual as having a unique culture, heritage, and background.

Summary

There is a growing awareness that multiple strategies are needed to prevent a student from being truant. This study placed emphasis on the objectives of the TCSSTP. The TCSSTP was designed to primarily concentrate on at-risk students while providing services for the student, as well as the family. The objective of TCSSTP is to prevent truancy and drop outs, and to encourage students to participate and benefit from the education process. The philosophy of TCSSTP views the best interest of the student as a top priority. If truancy is left untreated, it will result in greater problems for the affected students and their families in the future.

Determining the extent to which outcome variables reflect the efficacy of a particular intervention has always been one of the most difficult challenges
to meet. The evaluation process is a way to determine whether the needed services are being provided and whether the program objectives are being met.

Survey results from the Student questionnaire and the Staff Satisfaction Survey indicated that TCSS students were receiving the needed services, confidentiality was enforced, staff members were trusted and helpful, and that majority of the clients had experienced a positive attitude and behavior change. The TCSSTP services are working as designed and envisioned.

Conclusions

When reviewing the data gathered from the surveys, this researcher cannot judge the students of TCSS harshly. After studying the review of literature and analyzing the data, the researcher felt that pieces of a puzzle had suddenly come together. From the understanding gained during this study, especially in the area of the models and theories, it is apparent that students are experiencing a developmental crisis. These students do not always fully understand what is happening in their lives because some of the students face many crisis, such as home, school, and personal problems. Our society almost condones and permits truancy through the media, and even a lack of parental support. During school hours, we see students walking on the streets and shopping at the malls. Unfortunately, this type of behavior tends to obscure the consequences associated with truancy and dropping out of school. These students are inclined to imitate their elders and peers who also dropped out of school.
In truancy prevention programs, such as TCSS, the students are taught how to identify the early signs of truancy, how to assist their truant peers and friends, and where to go for help when these problems occur. Though this study was conducted for a relatively short period of time in which to evaluate the desired outcomes of TCSS, the committee suggests that successful truancy prevention depends to some extent upon changing the whole social climate regarding truancy. Yet, the results of this study were positive. The study evaluations from the surveys indicate that TCSSTP is an effective program.

**Recommendations**

Social learning theory should be presented to our youth in elementary, junior high, and high school. Studies have shown that early childhood education has produced reductions in risk factors and social influences for youth. If the prevalence of truancy is to be reduced through prevention and treatment efforts, then interventions must target populations who are not exposed to multiple risk factors as well as the high risk populations.

Many parents and other adults need to be educated regarding what our youth are facing in today’s complex society. Most parents become overwhelmed when they feel they have lost control of their child to truancy. Family therapy should begin early, with the goal of the student and parents obtaining realistic expectations regarding limitations, guidelines, and acceptable behaviors.
Prevention programs such as TCSSTP should continue to include and educate the parents of its students. The students and their parents could visit other schools within the community to make speeches to students, hoping to have a positive impact.

The student services director should set a goal of pretesting in order to ascertain the students' pre-program level of truancy, knowledge about dropouts, and job skills. A post-program self-report survey should also be implemented in order to help assess whether the program has accomplished its desired outcomes and goals. The two surveys administered would be appropriate measures to use to determine the needs of the student and effectiveness of the program. The truancy questionnaire could be administered upon student intake. The staff satisfaction survey could be administered at four to six month intervals. Another area of concern is follow-up. The student-tracking system in use should continue to be closely monitored. This method of follow-up provides pertinent data which assist in the effective management of TCSSTP.

**Study Contribution**

The study makes a significant contribution, upholding the necessity for continued research and evaluation processes in the field of truancy prevention strategies for students. As a school social worker, I will continue to research truancy prevention, attend related workshops and share information with other school social workers.
APPENDIX A

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Student ____________________ School ____________________ Date __________
   Grade __________ Race __________ Sex __________ DOB __________ Age __________
   Address ____________________ Phone ____________________ Emerg. Phone __________
   Mother’s Name ____________________ Father’s Name ____________________
   Student Lives With: ( ) Both Parents ( ) Father ( ) Mother ( ) Other __________
   Father’s Place of Employment ____________________ Phone __________
   Mother’s Place of Employment ____________________ Phone __________

2. Reason(s) for Referral (Check only one)
   Abuse ________ Deprivation ________ Economic Aid ________ Pregnancy ________
   Academic ________ Dropout ________ Family ________ School Discipline ________
   Attendance ________ Emotional ________ Gangs ________ Special Education ________
   Delinquent ________ Health ________ Homeless ________ Other ________

3. Describe the problem as seen by referring person ____________________

4. Attempts made by school personnel to alleviate the problem:

   Date  Principal  Contacted  Phone  In Person  Other
   Student __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Parent __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Teacher __________ __________ __________ __________ __________

   Date  Teacher  Contacted  Phone  In Person  Other
   Student __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Parent __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Counselor __________ __________ __________ __________ __________

   Date  Counselor  Contacted  Phone  In Person  Other
   Student __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Parent __________ __________ __________ __________ __________
   Prin/Tchr __________ __________ __________ __________ __________

   Result or outcome from contacts ____________________

5. A) Attendance Report:
   - Total excused absences __________
   - Total unexcused absences __________
   - Total tardies __________
   - Total absences past school year __________

B) Please complete the section on the back of this page or attach a copy of the student’s attendance record to this form.

6. Place this form in the School Social Worker’s box along with a copy of doctor’s notes and copy of all written notes from home.
APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

1. Do you make good grades?
2. Do you get into trouble at school?
3. Do your parent(s) make up excuses for you?
4. Do you play hookie?
5. How often do your friends play hookie with you?
6. Within the past year, how often have you taken a written excuse to the teacher?
7. Do you feel that you are putting yourself at risk as a dropout?
8. What do you think is the causing factor of truancy?
APPENDIX C

STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. What grade do you teach?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your ethnical background?
4. What is your position with the Troup County School System?
5. Has the School Social Service been useful to you?
6. Does the Troup County School System Social Worker (TCSSSW) respond in a timely manner?
7. Have you experienced a positive attitude and behavior change from the student you referred to TCSSSW?
8. Would you recommend TCSSSW to other staff members?
9. How often do you use TCSSSW Services?


Troup County School System Truancy Protocol Committee, (1994), LaGrange, Georgia.


