EXAMINING THE SUSTAINMENT OF DISTRICT RECOMMENDED EVIDENCE-BASED

ATTENDANCE PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by

ANNIE DRAEGER

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Special Education and Clinical Sciences
and the Division of Graduate Studies of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2022

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Annie Draeger

Title: Examining the Sustainment of District Recommended Evidence-Based Attendance Practices for Students with Disabilities

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Special Education and Clinical Sciences by:

Sylvia Thompson	Chair
John Seeley	Core Member
Christopher Murray	Core Member
David Liebowitz	Institutional Representative

and

Krista Chronister	Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

Degree awarded June 2022.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Annie Draeger

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Special Education and Clinical Sciences

June 2022

Title: Examining the Sustainment of District Recommended Evidence-Based Attendance Practices for Students with Disabilities

Chronic absenteeism has been a growing concern for large urban districts over the last ten years as students with disabilities (SWD) are chronically absent at a much higher rate than their same-age non-disabled peers. This study examines the Truancy Task Force (TTF) recommendations that were developed to address absenteeism in a large school district. Using the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) framework, the study hypothesized that TTF recommendations have been maintained in schools, resulting in administrative and teacher support for excessive absences, community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance, and ongoing teacher professional development to reduce excessive absences. The research questions for this study include (1) How are the six TTF recommendations being maintained? (2) What is the educator reported knowledge of the three responsibilities of the TTF? and (3) What is the educator reported knowledge of the six recommendations of the TTF? Using a mixed methods approach, with focus group data and cross-sectional survey data to investigate evidence-based practices' (EBP) quality assurance and fidelity within the sustainment phase, and using Proctor et al.'s (2010) implementation outcomes taxonomy, this study examined if and how the TTF recommendations were maintained in schools. Additionally, this study examines whether the EBPs were implemented with enough

rigor that they continued after the final TTF report. The main findings, conclusions, and

implications for research are presented.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Annie Draeger

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

     University of Oregon, Eugene
     University of Illinois at Chicago
     Dominican University, Illinois

DEGREES AWARDED:

     Doctor of Philosophy, Special Education, 2022, University of Oregon
     Master of Education, 2008, University of Illinois at Chicago
     Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, 2006, Dominican University, Illinois

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

     Trauma-informed Practices for Students with Disabilities
     Policy Implications for Students with Disabilities
     Evidence-based Reading Practices for Students with Disabilities and English Learners

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
     Graduate teaching fellow, University of Oregon, 2017-2022
     Case manager and home/hospital special education teacher, Pasadena Unified School
          District, Pasadena, California, 2015-2017
     Education coordinator and special education teacher, Child Life Services and Child
          Psychiatry, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois 2010-2015
     Special education teacher, Komarek School District 2009-2010
     Special education teacher, Elmhurst School District 2008-2009
     Special education assistant, Komarek School District 2006-2008

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

     Doctoral Research Award, University of Oregon, 2021
     First-Year Fellowship Award, University of Oregon, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For Ryan. All these years of doing the "baby relay handoff" have finally paid off. I would not have been able to do this without you. We did it!

For Colin. This process would not have been as meaningful without you to do it for. I hope you are proud of your mom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing ten percent or more of the school year, has been a concern for large urban districts across the country in the last ten years. Chronic absenteeism and truancy can have detrimental effects on students at all levels; however, those students who are impacted by learning differences experience an even greater impact (Gottfried et al., 2019). When students are not in school receiving instruction their educational achievement suffers (Gershenson et al., 2016). Students with disabilities (SWD) are 1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent than their non-disabled peers in elementary grades and are at a greater risk of experiencing the negative consequences of chronic absenteeism as they are already academically behind their same-age non-disabled peers. This creates a greater need for attention and research in this area.

According to 2018 Civil Rights Data Collection (CDRD), students who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade are less likely to have basic reading skills by the time they reach the third grade. Nationally, about 14% of students missed fifteen or more days of school in a year, while 10,000 schools report that more than 30% of students were chronically absent (CDRD, 2018). Additionally, schools with higher numbers of at-risk students, including those with low socio-economic status (SES) report higher rates of chronic absenteeism than other schools. Students with disabilities who are also in at-risk groups including low-SES, students of color, students who are in the foster care system, migratory families, and homeless students have higher incidences of chronic absenteeism than their at-risk peers (Gottfried et al., 2019).

Irregular attendance negatively affects many aspects of school performance for students with disabilities. Those students who have chronic absences have possible exacerbation of problems with behavior and social-emotional aspects of school as well as increased participation in risky behaviors and activities outside of school (Gottfried, 2014). Students who chronically miss school in the early elementary grades create a precedent of missed days throughout their academic career, which in turn creates a cumulative effect of additional missed instructional days (Ginsberg et al., 2014). For middle and high school grade students with disabilities, higher levels of absenteeism are correlated to a higher drop-out rate when compared to their same-age peers (Gottfried et al., 2019). Further, students who are frequently absent miss out on opportunities to engage positively with adults and build relationships with their peers. This can manifest in behavioral challenges that create a vicious cycle of missed school and suspensions due to acting-out behaviors (Gottfried et al., 2014).

When addressing chronic absenteeism and outside of school behaviors and activities, those students who are chronically absent have higher rates of crime and delinquency and are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as drugs, alcohol, early sexual experiences, and gang activity (Rocque et al., 2016). Longitudinal data posits that students who are chronically absent in school have negative outcomes later in their life including poor job performance (Rocque et al., 2016).

Absenteeism Legislation

As demonstrated previously, the implications of chronic absenteeism can affect every aspect of a student's performance and development in the education system. Because of this, the Obama administration attempted to identify differences in attendance issues for students of color and those with disabilities. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; US DOE, 2015) was created

to address the myriad of disparities in the education of students, including those with disabilities. ESSA (US DOE, 2015) requires states to disaggregate all measures used in statewide attendance accountability reports by economic status, racial and ethnic groups, SWD, and English learner subgroups. By addressing attendance and truancy data at a national level, a commitment can be made at the state level to have accountability measures in place to keep students in school. Furthermore, national and state legislation impacts district decisions by providing support and guidance in decision-making to address chronic absenteeism for at-risk groups.

While legislation may come from national or state education departments, keeping students with disabilities in school can create more funding for local districts, as the state provides vital funding based on attendance rates (Jackson et al., 2012). For those students with disabilities, additional funding could mean better resources and access to equitable education that could support more individualized education. Addressing the escalation in chronic absenteeism for SWD at the district level can provide potential benefits in other areas for these students. By creating more equitable attendance policies, SWD can have targeted strategies that include student individualized education plan (IEP) recommendations for potential truancy issues. Additionally, improved academic achievement, as measured by proficiency on state assessments could be a potential benefit of addressing chronic absenteeism for SWD. As students are included more in schools and have less time out of the classroom, they more readily have their learning needs met, which allows for the learning gap between those with and without disabilities not to continue to increase (Thurlow et al., 2017). Since ESSA (US DOE, 2015) requires states to establish long-term goals for improving four-year graduation rates among at-risk subgroups, SWD could benefit from these higher graduation rates. Since the relationship between attendance and graduation is well researched and documented, it would be reasonable to

assume that if chronic absenteeism of SWD is addressed properly, it would serve to close the gap in graduation for this population (U.S. Department of Education [US DOE], 2016).

Truancy Task Force

While national level data has illustrated the need for policies to address chronic absenteeism for SWD, local district level data demonstrates an even greater need for attention in this area. District data from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) reports that one in eight elementary students missed a month or more of school in the 2010 school year. CPS Chronic absenteeism data demonstrates that over three years (2010-2013) the problem increased for students as they continue through upper grades. This district level data was part of the impetus for state-wide legislation to address these chronic issues with the creation of the Truancy Task Force. The Truancy Task Force (TTF) was created in response to a series of articles published in the Chicago Tribune that highlighted the "Empty Desk Epidemic" with district data illustrating those students with disabilities, as well as African American students, in kindergarten through 8th grade were missing more school than their non-disabled or White same-age peers in the same district. The TTF's first task was to identify the scope of truancy among marginalized groups in grades kindergarten through 8th grade in Chicago Public Schools, the third largest school system in the United States. The group had three responsibilities: (1) identify strategies to help educators and administrators address excessive absences; (2) support community and parent organizations in efforts to encourage positive social behaviors for students to be successful in school and in the community; and (3) promote professional development to equip school personnel with skills and knowledge to reduce contributing factors to excessive absences. To address these responsibilities, the task force's recommendations centered around six areas with action items therein. The first two recommendations covered (1) terminology and (2) data collection and

application. The subsequent recommendations centered around (3) prevention, (4) interventions, (5) program evaluations and monitoring, and (6) further review and analysis.

Additionally, district administration was tasked with reviewing current board policies and existing data and information to inform such policies to address factors that affect excessive absences for SWD. More specifically, the district addressed two policies: *Average Daily Attendance* (ADA) and *Truants' Alternative and Optional Education Program* (TAOEP). ADA is calculated by averaging the three best months of attendance. This metric yields a false positive indication of school attendance and is not representative of the entire year. The second policy, TAOEP, provides truancy protection for students who are at greater risk for chronic absenteeism such as SWD, and allocates monetary resources necessary to strengthen its oversight and monitoring of truancy data and supports. While the TTF attempted to address truancy and excessive absences by promoting these recommendations within the district, the effectiveness of these efforts can only be evaluated through progress monitoring and progress toward goals on a regular basis by comparing actual and anticipated attendance results. The TTF posits that by taking recommendations into consideration when addressing attendance issues, district elementary schools can address the excessive absences of SWD.

TTF Implications

The TTF made recommendations in 2014 and two years later, a press release addressing attendance rates across the district was released. According to district data, the district hit a record 93.4 percent attendance (Chicago Public Schools, 2016). This steady increase from previous years showed a 0.2 percent rise from 93.2 percent the previous school year; and while this may not seem significant, every tenth of a percentage point increase represents an additional hour of instruction time per student gained over the school year (Chicago Public Schools, 2016).

The district credited investments that supported schools based on the TTF recommendations for the improved attendance rates for students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Specifically, they targeted primary grades to establish good habits with attendance early on as well as improving data tools for school attendance reporting. The press release also posits that "increasing training to implement best practices uniformly across the district and increase collaboration between departments" also contributed to the growth in time-in-school for students (Chicago Public Schools, 2016); however, it is unclear as to how this training was implemented or what data was used to contribute growth in attendance to these factors. Additionally, a focus on early warning signs as identified in district-wide multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is attributed to helping educators keep students in school and is promoted as reducing barriers that influence chronic absences and truancy (Chicago Public Schools, 2016).

TTF Recommendations and Evidence-based Practices

The goal for the TTF was to recommend the most effective strategies and techniques to combat the empty-desk epidemic. For the purposes of this study, EBPs refer to an approach for making educational decisions that considers findings from previous research (Eddy, 2005) and the specific instructional techniques that educators use that are supported by rigorous research (Cook et al., 2012). EBPs are integral to the education of SWD because they provide instructional practices that are most likely to improve school outcomes. This is demonstrated by the TTF recommendations that are based on what has historically worked in addressing truancy of SWD, as well as additional at-risk populations. When addressing EBPs to tackle truancy across the district, the TTF identified practices that were systematic, objective, and have a logical approach embedded in scientific research (Cook et al., 2012).

The specific recommendations from the TTF center around six specific areas with actionable items: (1) *terminology*, where consistency in terms related to attendance would be streamlined across the state; (2) *data collection and application*, with the use of accurate data measures and distribution for real time access to attendance for stakeholders and training provided to teachers for this purpose; (3) *prevention*, where hiring and training of teachers and personnel to serve as attendance coordinators as well as community-based organizations partnering with the schools to prevent chronic absences, such as seeking SWD in the community to provide free and appropriate education (FAPE) and directing the positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) programing instituted in all schools; (4) *interventions*, using MTSS and targeting interventions for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students; (5) *program evaluation and progress monitoring*, where progress toward attendance goals is evaluated on a regular basis; and (6) *implication for further analysis and review*, where the Special Education Programming commission is established to address chronic absenteeism in at-risk populations and the creation of a permanent commission to monitor best practices and data for truancy solutions. These recommendations have more specific interventions, such as PBIS and MTSS, that more specifically target chronic absenteeism at the school level. A table detailing these recommendations and responsibilities can be found in Appendix A.

The TTF recommendations of PBIS and MTSS have historically been utilized in educational research and have national acceptance as EBPs in addressing schoolwide outcomes, including attendance. PBIS is an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes (PBIS.org, 2022). The three tiers (1) establish practices and systems that are proactive in support while also addressing unwanted behaviors, (2) support students who are at risk of potential problem behaviors in developing

7

skills they need to benefit from core programs at school, and (3) improve behavioral and academic outcomes using formal assessments to determine individualized support (PBIS.org, 2022). These tiers address issues at each level of student need and incorporate positive and proactive behavior supports for all students, which is aligned with the recommendations of the TTF of consistent terminology, accuracy of data, and prevention of truant behavior.

MTSS addresses additional recommendations of the TTF including intervention, program evaluation and monitoring, and review and analysis. MTSS is a comprehensive framework that incorporates core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignments of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success (CDE.CA.gov, 2021). Regarding attendance and truancy, MTSS supports the focus and alignment of the entire system of tracking and supporting attendance issues as well as integrating instructional and intervention supports to promote positive attendance outcomes for students (CDE.CA.gov, 2021).

Both PBIS and MTSS recommend and support the use of "Implementation Drivers," defined as staff members trained in complex skills of system execution, so that the implementation site can become self-sufficient with respect to staff selection, training, coaching, assessment, and administrative supports (Fixsen et al., 2019). These Implementation Drivers are integral to the fidelity of the program, as they have the task of leadership in training and coaching at subsequent sites in the district or organization. For this study, teachers will be surveyed on their ability to serve as Implementation Drivers, as well as the established Implementation Drivers at their current school site.

Frameworks

When examining practices, such as the TTF recommendations of EBPs, a process of key factors in facilitating implementation need to be identified. Having a framework for evaluating implementation of recommendations demonstrates the ability of the EBPs to be assessed for treatment effectiveness (Moullin et al., 2020). The framework chosen for this study is the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment Framework (Moullin, 2019) that is widely used in implementation science. EPIS was selected as a conceptual model for this study because it allows for examination at multiple levels while exploring longer term impact and sustainment (Becan et al., 2018). EPIS, in the context of this study, describes implementation as a process moving through four stages: (1) *Exploration*, where practices are identified to be implemented, systems are assessed, and organizational potential barriers/facilitators for change are identified; (2) *Preparation*, redesigning of the system to enhance availability and ensure consistent implementation; (3) *Implementation*, training, coaching, and active facilitation of EBPs to be adopted; and (4) *Sustainment*, maintaining the use of new practices (Becan et al., 2018). The EPIS framework in this study is used to assess the implementation and sustainability of the TTF recommendations and responsibilities to further inform outcomes for students with disabilities.

The framework chosen to evaluate the teacher focus group questions and subsequent survey questions for teachers, administrators, and staff is based on Proctor et al.'s (2010) "implementation outcomes." Proctor et al. (2010) proposes a working taxonomy of eight distinct implementation outcomes: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability. By conceptualizing and measuring implementation outcomes, we can advance the understanding of the implementation process and efficacy (Proctor et al., 2010). Using these eight implementation outcomes for the focus group

open-ended questions and subsequent survey questions provided an organized way of understanding and interpreting how the recommended EBPs from the TTF were distributed and adopted by schools, and whether teachers were provided support by way of training or professional development to implement these large-scale changes in their school sites.

Purpose and Context of Study

Chronic absenteeism and irregular attendance have negative effects on school performance for SWD (Gershenson et al., 2016; Ginsberg et al., 2014; Gottfried et al., 2014; Gottfried et al., 2019; Rocque et al., 2016). There is a large disparity in the number of students missing school who have disabilities and/or are students of color (CDRD, 2018). The TTF provided EBPs as recommendations to address the disparities in attendance for SWD and at-risk populations. Implications were reported without clear data on how or what was implemented at school sites across the district. The aim and purpose of this study is to survey teachers within the district to report confidence in and knowledge of EBPs used in their schools to combat attendance problems as identified by the TTF. The context of this study uses EPIS framework to evaluate implementation of recommendations across the district to evaluate previously reported results. Additionally, the implementation outcomes framework from Proctor et al. (2010) is utilized to better understand the implementation and sustainability of the EBPs recommended by the TTF to ensure that SWD are not continuing to lose days of instruction. Since the final report from the TTF was issued in 2014 and has not been reevaluated, fidelity to the EBPs has not yet been reported. Specifically, this study intends to explore the implementation and sustainment of the TTF recommendations based on the three responsibilities of the TTF.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The guiding hypothesis of this study is that the TTF recommendations have been maintained and sustained across the district resulting in (1) administrative and teacher support for excessive absences, (2) community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance, and (3) ongoing professional development to reduce excessive absences. To test this hypothesis, these research questions investigate whether educators' knowledge of the responsibilities and recommendations of the TTF are related to the maintenance of the TTF recommendations at school sites across the district. In this study, the following research questions were asked:

1. How are the six TTF recommendations being maintained?

2. What is the educator-reported knowledge of the three responsibilities of the TTF?

3. What is the educator-reported knowledge of the six recommendations of the TTF?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review addresses the scholarly writing on escalating absenteeism for students with disabilities (SWD) and the national and local data that illustrates the growing chronic absenteeism among those students. Nationally recognized evidence-based practices (EBPs) are explored as well as their benefit to SWD. Additionally, existing research on recommendations to address attendance challenges for SWD, including the Truancy Task Force (TTF) recommended interventions of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) are explored. Finally, the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment Framework (EPIS) and implementation outcome frameworks used to evaluate implementation of the recommended interventions are detailed with reference to their use in the education setting.

Escalating Absenteeism for SWD

The CRDC division of the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) reports on discrepancies in student outcomes, especially regarding students with disabilities and other at-risk populations. The CRDC (2016) report addresses several areas which illustrate the glaring rates at which students with disabilities are pushed out of school. This is in sharp contrast to their same-age peers, who do not have as high rates of suspensions, dropout, or truancy. SWD who are chronically absent are included in absentee calculations even when they miss school due to chronic illness, such as asthma, or caring for younger siblings (US DOE, 2016a). Missed days of school due to suspensions are also included in truancy calculations which highly contributes to rates of chronic absenteeism for this population. Additionally, the overuse of suspensions for SWD greatly contributes to escalating chronic absenteeism apparent in elementary schools. US

DOE (2016a) CDRC and Civil Rights Project (2015) data indicates that SWD are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions than their same-age peers without disabilities. Furthermore, 5% of elementary school students with disabilities and 18% of secondary SWD have been suspended at least once during the school year, and this number is substantially higher for minority students with disabilities. Along with higher suspension rates, SWD also have much higher drop-out rates when compared to their same-age peers without disabilities. For SWD, the dropout rate of 16- to 24-year-olds was twice as large as that rate for peers without disabilities (US DOE, 2016b). CDRC (US DOE, 2016a) also reports that SWD with excessive absences in elementary grades have higher rates of dropping out of school as time progresses and gaps widen.

Gottfried et al. (2019) focus on the excessive absences of SWD while also addressing the patterns that emerge for this vulnerable group. While chronic absenteeism hurts all students, Gottfried et al. (2019) posit that SWD are particularly vulnerable due to the absence in research and policy to address this problem. High rates of absenteeism are linked to lower academic performance and weak social and behavioral outcomes for SWD. Gottfried et al. (2019) investigated this issue while illustrating disparities between SWD and their same-age peers without disabilities, finding that the classroom setting is associated with absenteeism. Specifically, those SWD who were in general education (GEN) majority classrooms were less like to be chronically absent than those students who were in classrooms where most students were other SWD. These results indicate that future policy, practice, and research should focus on the possibility that SWD, especially those with emotional disabilities, miss a tremendous amount of school when compared to their GEN peers. Additionally, their findings suggest that there are

several implications to bridge the gap for SWD who are chronically absent, including the inclusion of SWD in GEN majority classrooms.

Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) summarize the importance of being in school with their report on chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools. They posit that although students need to attend school daily to be successful, chronic absenteeism is not measured in many schools. They suggest that chronic absenteeism is not monitored or defined consistently across states which undermines efforts to understand the prevalence of chronic absenteeism. Overall, Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) analyze that there are significant numbers of SWD missing an extraordinary amount of schooling. They measure this from student attendance data across multiple states as well as a consortium that followed one cohort of students from first grade, five and seven years forward, and another from sixth grade, five years forward. From this data, the authors determined that those students at the most risk of chronic absenteeism are those that are living in poverty and are students receiving special education services. They also found that chronic absenteeism interacts with the rhythm of school such as transitions from kindergarten to first grade, middle to high school, and through senior year. This is especially prevalent for SWD who have more missed days than their non-disabled counterparts in later school years.

Recommendations to Address Attendance Challenges

To address the aforementioned and escalating absenteeism for SWD, federal, state, and local education agencies have proposed recommendations to combat rising truancy numbers. The US DOE (2015) proposed key policy letters to promote inclusive practices to tackle absenteeism for SWD and at-risk students. The Education Secretary and Deputy Secretary consider multiple avenues for challenging escalating absenteeism in districts including these actionable steps: (1) generate and act on absenteeism data, (2) create and deploy positive messages and measures, (3)

focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism, and (4) ensure responsibility across

sectors. These steps were chosen to support communities while addressing the barriers to daily

attendance for SWD and other at-risk populations of students (Lynch et al., 2015).

The first action step prioritizes the development of early warning systems so that students

are identified before becoming chronically absent, and therefore missing so much school that it is

impossible for them to catch up. The second actionable step focuses on the creation of positive

messages for students that are implemented through counseling, mentoring, and the creation of a

safe and supportive climate through PBIS. Since punitive measures are ineffective in addressing

absence challenges, they are discouraged from use in these steps. Step three focuses on

community support in addressing attendance challenges. Local community and school

partnerships can raise public awareness about the detrimental effects of chronic absenteeism and

can be addressed using evidence-based programs that focus on the connection between school,

home, and community to keep students in class and learning (Lynch et al., 2015). The final step

ensures responsibility across sectors and promotes regular communication to address the

problem of chronic absenteeism. Lynch et al. (2015) posits that education, health, housing, and

justice system leaders should work together to ensure shared accountability to address the causes

of chronic absenteeism. The authors cite these actionable steps as ways to diminish the

devastating effects that chronic absenteeism can have on a SWD's future. Specifically, they

examine how attendance tracking systems have failed to address the chronic absenteeism among

SWD and have masked the extent of chronic absenteeism in many districts. Current measures are

punitive and put the onus on students and families to improve attendance which further

disengages students from school (Lynch et al., 2015). These actionable steps put forth by the

Education Secretary attempt to address the current problems with attendance measures and provide support and guidance for schools to correct chronic absenteeism for SWD.

Escalating absenteeism for SWD is addressed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO; 2018) brief which echoes many of the US DOE's recommended actions. The NCEO recommends that states should create a clear definition of what chronic absenteeism is and how it is measured. This definition should be provided in multiple locations for parents and students to make communication a priority. Moreover, the root cause of absenteeism should be discovered and investigated to find other factors interfering with attendance for SWD. This can be done through examination of data, specifically monitoring the use of out-of-school suspensions and adoption of proven programs that benefit students with disabilities. The NCEO also recommends providing guidance, oversight, and professional development opportunities to district and school personnel so that they are aware of the warning signs and risk factors of chronic absenteeism in SWD.

TTF Report

The TTF report recommendations mirror many of the actionable steps from the Lynch et al. (2015) letter from the US DOE as well as the NCEO recommendations for SWD. The TTF met eight times between December 2013 and July 2014 and held three public hearings to inform the recommendations made to the district. The July 2014 report focuses on the three responsibilities of the TTF: (1) identify strategies to help educators and administrators address excessive absences; (2) support community and parent organizations in efforts to encourage positive social behaviors for students to be successful in school and in the community; and (3) promote professional development to equip school personnel with skills and knowledge to reduce contributing factors to excessive absences. From these responsibilities, the task force

determined recommendations centered around six areas with action items therein. The first two recommendations covered (1) *terminology*: the need for review of terminology for the sake of consistency within districts across the state and (2) *data collection and application*: accuracy of data, creation of a database, and distribution of data to stakeholders within the school district. The subsequent recommendations center around (3) *prevention:* PBIS, community-based organizations, hiring/training of attendance coordinators, (4) *interventions*: MTSS, targeted interventions at pre-kindergarten and 9th grade levels, (5) *program evaluations and monitoring*, and (6) further review and analysis.

The first recommendation from TTF explores the definitions and terminology that districts use to justify absences and what constitutes an excused absence. The TTF reviewed terminology related to attendance across the district and state and found that a consensus would clear up the status of children who were not present in school. The following terms were agreed upon for consistency: attendance, hours of learning, absence, full day or half day missed, excessive absences (i.e., defined by five percent of days absence, excused or unexcused, of the past 180 days), students absence rates that qualify as chronic truancy, chronic absence, excused or unexcused; chronic truancy; average daily attendance (ADA); and satisfactory attendance (i.e., students attending at least 95 percent of the past 180 days). This common terminology is not intended to be punitive, but as a means for reporting for the sake of prevention. These recommendations in changes to terminology were proposed to create clean and common definitions for consensus across districts.

The TTF recognizes the importance of data in decision making and the creation and use of systems that are timely, comprehensive, and appropriate for all stakeholders (TTF, 2014). Because of this, the TTF report's second recommendation outlines that current data collection

systems need to be evaluated to determine capabilities to align with the proposed recommendations. Accessibility and real time collection of data is crucial to ensure that chronic absenteeism is being monitored and addressed. By making certain that building- and district-level staff participate in once-a-year professional development related to attendance and data monitoring, schools can ensure that staff has familiarity with the data and what it means for their students and school. Some suggestions for required professional development include training and instruction on how to review data, guidance on data interpretation, guidelines on using data to inform strategies, and training on data collection. Parent access to data is another recommendation of the TT. Making attendance reports easy to read and understandable with the addition of same-day access to attendance information would require training on the part of staff, as well as disseminating information as a crucial part of addressing chronic attendance issues. With accessibility to data comes the responsibility to align data systems and collection, the TTF recommends that truancy and excessive absences should include as much information as possible when examining barriers to attendance. Some of these barriers could be violence, bullying, transportation, or lack of basic needs. Student absenteeism needs to be tracked at the state and local basis; therefore, existing systems need to be reviewed for consistency. The TTF recommends this be completed with school-level accountability and community partnerships.

The third recommendation from the TTF report focuses on the prevention of student absences and the creation of policies and procedures that inhibit the spread of truancy. The TTF recommends family engagement as an integral part of preventing further absences by providing training in relationship-based approaches to establish and maintain authentic relationships. Family-oriented programs that focus on issues relating to academics, parenting skills, and social issues that directly impact students can be foundational in creating opportunities for students and

18

families to engage with the school to promote feelings of inclusion. Additionally, community-based organizations should be sought out by schools to provide another support for parents in improving school attendance. By making these recommendations to promote family and community engagement, the TTF hopes to promote better outcomes for SWD who may have more absences than their same-age non-disabled peers.

Recommendation three directly addresses the need for awareness of excessive absences for SWD with the creations of an attendance coordinator and professional development to support the policies and procedures. The TTF recommends that teachers and administrators should look for "red flags" that indicate a student may need evaluation, such as excessive absences. The TTF also emphasized that it is not the sole responsibility of the parent to inform the district of a student's disability status. The district has an obligation to locate and identify SWD who are not receiving a public education, as absence patterns for SWD develop in early grades and become habit by middle grades and high school.

Interventions are needed wherever chronic absenteeism is occurring for SWD. Recommendation four addresses this by providing frameworks that create system and school-wide practices to foster better attendance and learning outcomes. Early childhood education, 9th grade on-track indicators, and MTSS are all cited as interventions that could ameliorate excessive absences and promote higher rates of school attendance for SWD. By setting the precedent for school attendance expectations and support early with early childhood education, students would feel supported and on track for graduation by the ninth grade on-track indicator. MTSS is recommended as the formulized process by which schools should handle chronic absenteeism by the TTF report. This is an integrated approach that the district should adopt to provide prevention outreach and targeted interventions that creates a system of school-wide

practices necessary. The recommendations also include mental health supports and wellness activities for students with attendance problems, especially those with disabilities who are at additional risk of absenteeism.

The fifth recommendation of the TTF report is program evaluation and progress monitoring. To understand the effectiveness of the recommendations, student data needs to be evaluated through the utilization of the MTSS model. Clear definition of the reason for student absences needs to be identified, then the determination of goals to drive progress and improved attendance among students should be evaluated. Progress towards goals must be evaluated, and school attendance teams should be at every step of the process.

The sixth and final recommendation from the TTF report ensures that further review and analysis are required to assess further action as the TTF dissolves. As a safeguard, the TTF recommends the creation of a permanent statewide truancy and re-engagement commission as well as the creation of a permanent special education programming commission. These recommendations were created to ensure that the work of the TTF would be continued after its dissolution.

Task Force Recommendations

The TTF has six specific areas with actionable items and sub-recommendations which focus on training and guidelines for how to use consistent terminology, collect, and disaggregate data on attendance, and provide parent access to data, all with the goal of preventing chronic absenteeism in the district.

Terminology

Terminology is the first recommendation of the TTF, so that consistency within the district as well as the state can be established when discussing chronic absenteeism. Specific

terminology related to attendance, absence, and truancy are used throughout the successive

recommendations for uniformity and ease in dissemination.

Data Collection and Application

Collection and dissemination of data is an important aspect of the TTF recommendations

because it is the cornerstone of progress toward the overall goal of reducing chronic absenteeism

in the district. The TTF (2014) recommended that the school district provide accurate data that

can easily be disaggregated to better inform the strategies and interventions needed to address the

current chronic absenteeism problem. Additional recommendations include providing

stakeholders with real-time access to attendance and truancy information. To further support this

goal, training and instruction on how to review data and understand variables, metrics, and

collection methods is recommended, as well as guidance on how to interpret data, inform

strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism, and utilize data to inform early warning signs of

chronic absenteeism in younger students (TTF, 2014).

To further support this recommendation, the TTF provides the following actionable

items: provide guidance, training, and instruction to parents and the school community on how

data is gathered, what it means, and how it can influence positive decision-making at the student

level. Demographics in collecting data are also addressed by the TTF. Since students of color

and SWD are at a significantly higher rate of chronic absenteeism than their peers, demographic

data can be used to help identify trends and target resources in an effective manner (TTF, 2014).

Additionally, a central database should be created in which school-level, network-level, and

district-level daily attendance and absentee data can be tracked, disaggregated, and accessed by

stakeholders including students, families, educators, and school personnel. Furthermore, TTF

(2014) recommends that attendance logs be audited and evaluated on a quarterly basis by central

office and network staff to ensure that schools are identifying warning signs of chronic

absenteeism.

Prevention

Recommendations for the prevention of chronic absenteeism by the TTF include policies

and interventions focused on creating a partnership between families, school, and community.

These proposed recommendations include aggressive marketing, communication of attendance

issues, and intentional effort to create a school environment that is receptive and responsive to

parents. Hiring and training is a large part of the prevention effort. The TTF recommends the

hiring and training of personnel to serve as attendance coordinators to reach out to students and

families and determine root causes for school non-attendance. They also suggest those personnel

assist families on issues that contribute to chronic attendance issues. Another recommendation of

the TTF focuses on revision of the Student Code of Conduct to address and reflect restorative

justice practices and determine which practices, policies, and procedures work to ameliorate

chronic absenteeism and widespread truancy for at-risk populations in the district.

PBIS. One of the EBPs that the TTF recommends for the prevention of chronic

absenteeism for SWD is PBIS. PBIS is a multi-tiered system of support and one of the EBPs

prevalent in the recommendations for combating chronic absenteeism (Lynch et al., 2015; US

DOE, 2015; 2016). The TTF (2014) cites PBIS as a school- and district-wide non-punitive

support for addressing the challenges of chronic absenteeism for SWD and at-risk students.

When implemented with fidelity, PBIS can clearly define, teach, and reinforce school-wide

expectations for behavior and attendance, assist in making data-based decisions to monitor

intervention implementation and student response, aid in making decisions to support levels of

student need, and sustain implementation (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

Freeman et al. (2016) posit that school-wide PBIS (SWPBIS) has a positive influence on attendance rates for students at the high-school level. The authors address interventions in three tiers that were designed to establish and support behaviors and attendance for students at all levels of need. For the current study, the SWPBIS tiers were designed so that tier 1 provides universal supports for students and staff at all settings within the school, tier 2 targets small groups of students who need additional behavioral support in addition to tier 1, and tier 3 supports students who need individualized plans or wraparound supports. Freeman et al. (2016) explores the relationship between tier 1 SWPBIS (i.e., similar to the intervention the TTF recommended implementing) and attendance and behavioral outcomes across the sample. They concluded that the effect of SWPBIS on attendance was statistically significant and recommended SWPBIS as a decision-making framework to improve attendance and decrease behavior referrals that often lead to missed school.

Research indicates that SWPBIS has positive outcomes for elementary and middle school student attendance as well as high school (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Reinke et al., 2013). By targeting barriers that lead to missed school, including illness or dental problems, mental health issues such as anxiety or depression, transportation problems, financial issues, or other obligations outside of school such as babysitting a younger sibling, SWPBIS can increase attendance for students in elementary and middle grades. These practices support higher attendance outcomes in later education (Connolly & Olson, 2012; Ehrlich et al., 2013; Gottfried, 2014; Rocque et al., 2016; Sprick & Sprick, 2019). For these reasons, as well as SWPBIS data-driven decision-making, the TTF chose SWPBIS as their intervention recommendation for the district at all grades and levels.

Interventions

Prevention outreach and targeted interventions that focus on school-wide practices are the cornerstone of the intervention recommendations from the TTF. Cohort-level interventions, as well as individualized interventions, are recommended to ensure efficiency in tackling chronic absenteeism. The TTF particularly focused on interventions that address chronic absenteeism in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten levels, which set the stage for future school attendance. Additionally, 9th grade interventions are recommended that can provide support for student academic and personal growth at a critical time of transition for students.

MTSS. MTSS is the main intervention recommendation from the TTF (2014). MTSS is a universal prevention effort that varies in intensity depending on the extent of chronic absenteeism at a specific school. It is based on a three-tiered triangle with most students (i.e., 80-90%) benefiting from tier 1 efforts, 5-15% of students benefitting from tier 2 efforts, and between 1% and 5% of students requiring tier 3 interventions (Sprick & Sprick, 2019). By using MTSS in addressing chronic absenteeism, schools can create awareness among students, teachers, families, and the community on the importance of attendance. This is a recommended support of choice because MTSS can be used as an overarching system that can be tailored to the needs of the school, family, and community (Sprick & Sprick, 2019).

MTSS can be used to instill the importance of school attendance at the elementary level, which can set the stage for future success and can also identify red flags to trigger greater levels of intervention before missed school becomes a chronic problem (Sprick & Sprick, 2019). School attendance is integral to student success throughout their career and beyond; therefore, setting that foundation early with MTSS can create better long-term outcomes for students, especially those that are SWD (Rocque et al., 2016; Sprick & Sprick, 2019).

Chronic absenteeism is over 25% higher for SWD than their same-age non-disabled peers (US DOE, 2019). Kearney and Graczyk (2019) posit that using MTSS for tackling attendance problems proves beneficial, especially for SWD. The authors state that MTSS framework has an emphasis on prevention via effective behavior management, reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, and school-based environmental change with additional supports as needed. MTSS has historically supported school attendance as a central mission due to the effect that chronic absences have on academic and mental health for SWD and at-risk students (Kearney & Graczyk, 2019). Kearney and Graczyk (2019) propose that school refusal can include school withdrawal and school exclusion due to emotional distress. For this reason, when addressing chronic absenteeism in the MTSS model, the tiers should have appropriate assessment practices such as universal screening to understand the behavior issues that may impact attendance. To further support SWD, the authors suggest that schools strengthen tier 1 and 2 supports to reduce the number of students having to receive intensive intervention in tier 3. Overall, MTSS is paramount in the education community when addressing chronic absenteeism and provides guidance for educators and administrators in how to support SWD at different levels of need. For these reasons, the TTF and US DOE recommend MTSS as an EBP for addressing chronic absenteeism (NCEO, 2018; TTF, 2014; US DOE, 2019).

Program Evaluation and Progress Monitoring

The TTF recommendations for program evaluation and progress monitoring are minimal in that they provide support for evaluation and monitoring with little direction on how to do so. Chronic absenteeism can only be evaluated through progress monitoring, so progress toward goals must be evaluated on a regular basis. This can be done by comparing actual and anticipated

statistics related to attendance, achievement, and behavior. If attendance intervention progress is not collected, then the attendance team must strategize and apply new interventions.

Implications for Further Review and Analysis

To review how the recommendations have been addressed within a district, the TTF recommends that a permanent commission be created that addresses chronic absenteeism and student re-engagement on a statewide basis. This commission would enable progress monitoring by the district, a clearinghouse for resources, and best practices in data collection related to chronic absenteeism. Additionally, any further evaluation of chronic absenteeism should include a "statutorily directed definition" (TTF, 2014, p.18). Finally, the TTF recommends a permanent Special Education Programming Commission to address factors in special needs populations. This would focus on chronic absenteeism in early childhood, elementary programs, and high school programs. Additionally, the commission would address factors relating to missed days of school for the homeless population, student in juvenile detention centers, and students who are perceived to be harshly disciplined at a disproportionate rate when compared to their peers.

Additional Considerations

The TTF tasked the district school board with some additional updates to current policies related to data and dissemination of procedures. Most notably, the district must immediately create, distribute, and implement administrative procedure manuals to all schools within the district including community partners. One of the main policies that the TTF intends to improve is the ADA. The statue at the time of the recommendations yields a false positive indicator of school attendance for the entire state. It does this by calling for the average of the three best months of student attendance, which is not an accurate description of the entire school year. The TTF recommends a Multiple Measure Index indicator that would be a better representation of

student chronic absences by keeping track of several data sources relating to student attendance. Finally, the TTF recommends that the district receive additional Board of Education funding and support to strengthen resources to support the TAOEP. This would expand services to students with attendance problems for the prevention of dropouts.

Frameworks

Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment Framework

The EPIS framework is a highly cited and widely used implementation framework that has been applied broadly in various settings (Moullin et al., 2020). EPIS has four components which include four phases that describe the process of implementation, identification of outer system and inner organizational contexts, innovation factors that relate to the EBP, and the dynamics, complexity, and interplay of these inner and outer contexts (Aarons et al., 2011).

Fig. 1 Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) framework including phases, Outer/Inner Context, Bridging Factors, and Innovation factors
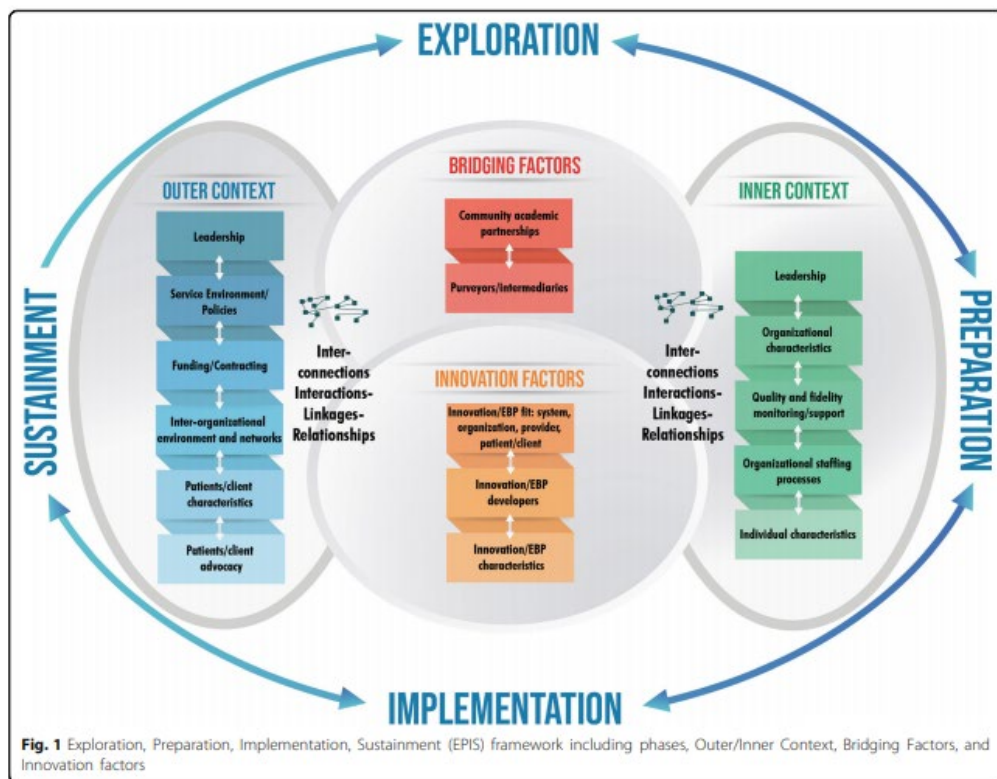
Figure 1. EPIS Framework by Moullin et al. (2020)

The first key component, as described by Moullin et al. (2020), is the four phases of the implementation process: *exploration, preparation, implementation,* and *sustainment*. In the exploration phase, stakeholders and organizational leaders consider the needs of the client, community, or school to identify the best EBP for implementation. Once implementers have explored the EBP to address the issue, they begin the preparation phase of identifying potential barriers to further assess and develop an implementation plan. In the next two phases of implementation and sustainment, the EBP is implemented and monitored so that the EBP continues to be delivered long after initial supports are removed (Moullin et al., 2020).

Moullin et al. (2020) describe the second key component of the EPIS framework as the contextual levels and factors comprised of the outer system context and inner organizational context. In each phase of the implementation process, inner and outer factors can be considered integral in the process and can influence various stages. Because of these inner and outer factors, it is important to reflect on the multi-layered and highly interactive nature that is exhibited in the EPIS framework when addressing EBP implementation.

The third component of EPIS is the emphasis on the fit of the EBP to be implemented and the factors that relate to the EBP itself (Moullin et al., 2020). Some adaptation will be necessary given the system or organization that the EBP is being implemented in, given the inner context of the organization (i.e., school or district) and the outer context of the population (i.e., students and staff). Moullin et al. (2020) maintain that the aim of this third component is to maintain the core of the EBP and to adapt only when necessary.

The final component of EPIS is the interconnectedness and relationships between the outer and inner contexts (Moullin et al., 2020). Moullin et al. (2020) consider these bridging factors that impact or influence the implementation process as the context in which the

organization operates. As an example of this bridging factor, schools need to adhere to the district policies and procedures that they are subject of. Moullin et al. (2020) consider adaptation necessary regarding the outer and inner contexts of implementation, as well as the adaptation of the EBP during implementation and sustainment. This adaptation of the EBP emphasizes improved fit within the framework to create appropriate implementation at the organizational site.

The use of EPIS framework has not been widely documented in the school setting; however, it is used in large scale settings to test theory and process, usually in health systems, justice systems, or with an implementation-science lens (Moullin et al., 2020). Since the school district sampled in this study is the third largest in the United States with over 360,000 students, the EPIS framework is used to retrospectively explore the implementation of EBPs across the district and monitor the effectiveness and sustainment of those EBPs (Moullin et al., 2020).

Implementation Outcomes Framework

To conceptualize and evaluate the implementation of the TTF recommendations, a working taxonomy of eight conceptually distinct outcomes from Proctor et al. (2010) are used. Proctor et al. (2010) posits acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability as implementation outcomes that can evaluate effectiveness by advancing the clarity of language to describe those outcomes. This study will use these implementation outcomes to better understand the TTF recommendations via focus group and teacher surveys.

Acceptability. The first outcomes that Proctor et al. (2010) discuss is acceptability as the perception among implementation stakeholders that a given treatment, service, practice, or innovation is agreeable, palatable, or satisfactory. Acceptability should be driven by what is

acceptable to the stakeholders within their specific setting. It is not measured as satisfaction, rather it refers to how the comfort, delivery, and credibility are experienced by various stakeholders. For the purpose of this study, acceptability will focus on what direct experience teachers have with the recommendations including the content, its complexity, and their comfort with these recommendations.

Adoption. The intention, initial decision, or action to employ an EBP is the basis for adoption or uptake when assessing implementation. Adoption can be measured from the perspective of the provider, organization, or in this study the teachers at a school in the district. To understand adoption in this study, teachers were asked about the actions that were taken to adopt the recommendations and what specific EBPs were adopted at their school site.

Appropriateness. The perceived fit, relevance, or compatibility of the EBP is the measure of an implementation outcome's appropriateness. Proctor et al. (2010) describes appropriateness as conceptually similar to acceptability; however, distinction is made between these two terms in this context. What is deemed appropriate may not be acceptable in each setting and vice versa. For this study, appropriateness is the perceived fit of the recommendations from the TTF and the compatibility of the EBPs within the school climate.

Feasibility. Proctor et al. (2010) define feasibility as the extent to which a new treatment or innovation can be successfully carried out within a given setting. Feasibility and appropriateness are related as implementation outcomes; however, they remain distinct concepts. For instance, a recommended program may be appropriate for a setting, but due to financial constraints it may not be feasible. This may be true in this study, where the feasibility of the extent of the recommendations from TTF will be examined as implementation outcomes via teacher response. Teachers provided information on how the TTF recommendations were carried

30

out within their school setting. It is possible the that the resource and financial requirements are prohibitive at different school sites within the same district.

Fidelity. Fidelity refers to the degree to which an intervention was implemented as prescribed in the original protocol (Proctor et al., 2010). Within this study this was measured by surveying teachers on how EBPs have been implemented as recommended by the TTF. Of the six recommendations, teachers described which were implemented consistently and with fidelity to the original document. The focus groups and survey questions investigated these aspects further in this study.

Implementation Cost. Implementation cost refers to the cost-effectiveness of implementing a program or the cost-benefit of adopting an intervention. This study aimed to understand the cost-benefit of implementation at school sites. Additionally, the question of whether schools or teachers were given any funding to implement EBPs was investigated via focus groups and survey questions.

Penetration. Penetration is defined as the integration of the intervention within the system it is implemented. Proctor et al. (2010) calculate penetration as the number of eligible persons who use a service divided by the number of persons eligible for a service. This study used Proctor et al.'s (2010) definition of penetration to understand the reach of the TTF recommendations at each school site.

Sustainability. The extent to which a newly implemented treatment is maintained in each setting is sustainability. While penetration and sustainability can be used in conjunction, sustainability focuses on the long-term viability of an EBP when implemented. This study aimed to understand how the TTF's recommended EBPs have been maintained and sustained at school

sites. Additionally, the study sought to determine what continuing education teachers were provided to support sustainment of these practices.

TTF Recommendations and Chronic Absenteeism Outcomes

When addressing chronic absenteeism, the EBPs of PBIS and MTSS, along with a focus on restorative practices can have correlating relationships that lead to better attendance outcomes for students. These EBPs can promote positive behaviors that exclusionary practices cannot. Exclusionary discipline or "zero-tolerance" policies negatively target SWD and do not provide alternative behavior methods for chronic attendance issues (Martinez, 2009). Additionally, exclusionary discipline places the onus of responsibility on the student for behaviors, rather than how other factors such as race and socio-economic status have created disparities in attendance outcomes. As an alternative, and used in conjunction, tiered systems and restorative practices could provide an inclusive school environment that keeps students in school and helps to undermine inequitable experiences in school attendance for SWD when compared with their same-age non-disabled peers (Simson, 2014). Both PBIS and restorative practices complement each other in their focus on relationships and promotion of a positive climate for students, and used in conjunction, could create even more positive effects on school attendance than their use alone. When school-wide clear and consistent routines are established, students understand what is expected of them and they are supported in achieving behavioral goals and expectations. Overall, the literature would suggest that with a shared philosophical alignment in school-wide implementation, PBIS, MTSS, and restorative practices would be highly successful when addressing chronic absenteeism for students at all tiers, especially those in the highest need (PBIS.org, 2022).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study explored the hypothesis that the TTF recommendations had been maintained across the district resulting in (1) administrative and teacher support for excessive absences, (2) community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance, and (3) ongoing professional development to reduce excessive absences. This study addressed the following research questions: (1) How are the six TTF recommendations being maintained? (2) What is the educator-reported knowledge of the three responsibilities of the TTF? and (3) What is the educator-reported knowledge of the six recommendations of the TTF? This section describes the methods and procedures used to address the study's research questions.

Setting

The study was conducted in Chicago, Illinois. There are over 32,000 public school teachers employed in the district. According to district data, there are 642 schools, 477 kindergarten through eighth grade schools and 165 public high schools. There are also 118 charter schools, and 9 contract schools, totaling over 360,000 students across all the schools in the district. Attendance data from the district indicate 24% of students are chronically absent, representing over 86,000 students.

Participants

One hundred twenty-five CPS district teachers participated in the survey study with almost 50% between the ages of 40 and 60 ($n = 62$) and over 42% having 10 to 20 years in education ($n = 53$). Participants worked in schools from all 7 regions of the city, with over half teaching in North and Northwest side schools ($n = 71$), over half in schools that served between

401 and 1000 students *(n = 65)*, and almost all working in public (non-charter) schools *(n = 123)*.

Table 1 contains the demographic characteristics of the full sample for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	104	83
Male	19	15
Other	2	2
Race or ethnicity		
White	73	58
Black or African American	12	10
Hispanic or Latino/a	29	23
Asian or Pacific Islander	7	6
Biracial or multi-racial	4	3
Age at time of survey (years)		
18-24	5	4
25-39	52	42
40-60	62	50
61 and above	6	5
Highest education level completed		
High school	1	1
Junior college	1	1

Table 1 Continued

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
Bachelors	26	21
Masters	93	74
Doctoral	4	3
Years in education		
1-9	42	34
10-20	53	42
21-30	25	20
31 and above	5	4
Current role in your school		
General teacher	65	52
Special education teacher	33	26
Teaching assistant/paraprofessional	6	5
Other	21	17
Current school level		
Pre-kindergarten	8	6
Kindergarten – 8th grade	89	71
High school	27	22
Other	1	1
Students in current role		
(i.e., *How often do you teach or support SWDs?*)		

Table 1 Continued

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
Five or more times per week	111	89
Three or four times per week	4	3
Once or twice a week	4	3
Other	6	5
School type		
Public	123	98
Charter	2	2
School size		
Less than 400 students	28	22
401 – 1,000 students	65	52
1,000 – 2,000 students	25	20
Over 2,000 students	7	6

Note. N = 125.

Design

To answer the research questions, a mixed methods approach and cross-sectional survey data analysis were used. These approaches were utilized to investigate educator level of perceived confidence in the implementation and sustainment of the recommendations of the TTF. Proctor et al.'s (2010) framework was used to design the focus group and survey questions. Eight components (i.e., acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity,

implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability) guided question development and themes and served as the implementation outcomes measured for this study.

Procedures

A researcher developed survey was used to answer the research questions. The survey was developed in collaboration with teachers who participated in focus groups and interviews prior to the study. Therefore, this section reports the procedures used for the focus groups and interviews and those used to implement the survey.

Recruitment

Participants for the focus groups and individual interviews and survey were recruited separately. Recruitment procedures used are detailed below.

Focus Group and Pre-study Interview Recruitment. Recruitment for the pre-study interviews and focus groups began once university IRB approval was granted. The researcher contacted known professionals in the district to recruit participants for the focus group. Using LinkedIn messaging, education community Twitter messaging, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) listserv email, and researcher personal and professional contacts' email, the researcher recruited four focus group participants and two individual interview participants. Once participants were identified, one-to-one interviews were provided as an option for teachers that could not attend one of the established focus group times. To ensure a robust conversation and garner the most information for the subsequent survey, it was required that sampled teachers and administrators had been teachers or administrators for at least five years in the district. The two focus groups took place via Zoom to honor city and state COVID-19 guidelines. The interviews also took place via Zoom at a time that was convenient for individual participant.

The script was emailed to the participants before the focus group or interview so that they could review the questions on their own time and opt out if desired. Verbal, recorded consent was established on Zoom before beginning the interview or focus group. A copy of this script is on file with the institutional IRB. The teachers that participated in the focus groups and interviews were told that their answers would be used to create a survey and that they could participate in at a later date. Due to the anonymity of the survey, it is not known whether these specific participants completed the subsequent survey.

Survey Recruitment. Recruitment for the survey began after the focus groups and interviews were conducted and feedback was evaluated. Procedures were like those used to recruit teachers for the focus groups and interviews and included LinkedIn messaging, education community Twitter messaging, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) listserv email, and researcher's personal and professional contacts to inform teachers of the study, including benefits and incentives available for taking the survey. The survey link was included in the message or email, as well as information on the purpose of the study and incentives for completing the survey. Additionally, the union for the district (Chicago Teachers Union) agreed to share the survey with their members via their member listserv. This union has over 20,000 members across the city that received the information on the study and survey link. Specifically, CTU emailed the survey three Fridays in a row in their weekly newsletter to all members with the following message, "Research study on attendance policies: CPS parent and special education teacher Annie Draeger is conducting a survey for her Ph.D. research about CPS attendance policies. Please take 10 - 15 minutes to complete the survey and earn a $10 Amazon gift card. Take the survey." The final sentence of this message included a link to the survey. Participants were informed of the nature of the research and that their participation was

voluntary. Completion and return of the survey was used as an indication of consent to participate in the research study.

Compensation

Participants were compensated for their time with $10 gift cards upon completion of the survey, focus group, or interview. After the focus groups, a gift card for each participant was emailed the same day. Upon submission of the survey, participants could enter their email address to be sent the $10 gift card if they wished. Gift cards were sent to the participant on the day they complete the survey. Compensation was funded by a University of Oregon, College of Education grant for dissertation work.

Focus Group and Interview Procedures

A total of six educators participated in this phase. Two focus groups with two participants each and two individual interviews were conducted to solicit input from educators on which questions should be included in the subsequent survey. To yield a more valid and representative sample, participants were recruited from across the district, resulting in three Northwest side participants, one North side participant, one West side participant, and one South side participant. The focus groups and interviews included educator experts (i.e., educators in the district for at least five years), and designed to provide a context in which participants could share insights freely, with an opportunity to respond to all questions.

The protocol for the focus groups and interviews began with an introduction to the researcher and consent to participate in the research. Participants were reminded they could opt out at any time, and they would be compensated for their time with a digital gift card. Next, an overview of the recommendations from TTF and their responsibilities were reviewed to ensure that all participants were provided background regarding the TTF, even if they were previously

familiar with the recommendations. Participants were then asked about their familiarity with the specific TTF recommendations including terminology, data collection and application, prevention, intervention, program evaluation and monitoring, and further review and analysis. These specific practices were discussed with participants to gauge not only recommendations in relation to the TTF, but those recommendations that are being implemented at the classroom-level. The subsequent questions were organized using Proctor et al.'s (2010) working taxonomy of eight distinct implementation outcomes: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability. For example, focus group participants were asked "What direct experience do you have with the recommendations from the TTF? If none, what is your experience with chronically absent or truant students?" Questions were intentionally open-ended to create an open and free dialogue between the participants and the researcher. The complete implementation outcome headings and questions used in the focus groups and interviews can be found in Appendix B.

To facilitate data analysis, Zoom meetings were recorded and transcribed. This study used Krueger and Casey's (2015) recommendations for designing and conducting focus group interviews. Krueger and Casey's (2015) approach was selected for this systematic analysis process because it provided guidance on questions, organization, notes, and analysis.

To incentivize participation, a $10 gift card was provided to participants at the end of the focus group or interview. For safety purposes, the focus groups and interviews took place via Zoom and were 30 minutes to one hour in duration, depending on the developing conversation. The questions, using Proctor et al.'s (2010) framework for implementation outcomes, address the three responsibilities of the TTF (2014), including:

Responsibility 1: Identify different strategies and approaches to help educators and the

district administration address the truancy and excessive absences epidemic in the

district's schools.

Responsibility 2: Support community-based organizations and parents in their ongoing

efforts to encourage youths to adopt and practice positive social behaviors that

will allow them to be successful in school and in their communities.

Responsibility 3: Promote ongoing professional development to equip school personnel

with the skills and knowledge necessary to reduce contributing factors to truancy

and excessive absences

Focus Group and Interview Data Analysis

Onwuegbuzie et al.'s (2009) qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing data in

focus group research was used. During each Zoom focus group and interview, the same format

was used, and questions were asked in the same order. Focus group and interview data was

analyzed by question, with amplifying quotes used to describe the findings and further illustrate

the prominent themes (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

The researcher transcribed the focus group and interview data, including both full

transcription of the Zoom recording and audio-based analysis, wherein the researcher listens to

the audio and then creates an abridged transcript (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2009). Transcription was

performed by uploading the recorded Zoom sessions to Microsoft Office 365 Word transcription.

After transcription was complete, the researcher identified recurring words and themes (Krueger

& Casey, 2015). After an initial review by the researcher of the recorded focus group or

interview data was coded to identify themes. In-vivo coding, where codes are derived using

words or short phrases from the data, was used to capture the participants' own spoken language

and to preserve their intent as much as possible (Given, 2008). Using this method, the researcher summarized passages from the interview into words and phrases as the first step to understanding the response data (Saldana, 2015). Both methods (i.e., audio-based analysis and in-vivo coding) were used to garner a deeper understanding of the themes that arose across groups.

Responses were grouped by question, then the main idea in each answer was labeled using relevant words or phrases. Next, the researcher identified the ideas that reoccurred across questions and identified quotes that illustrated these identified themes (Löfgren, 2013; Marek, 2015). For example, building relationships was one of the prominent themes that arose across all interviews and focus group responses from key words such as "connected," "community," or "family included." During analysis, the researcher took care to observe the frequency (i.e., comments made more often) and extensiveness (i.e., topics discussed more in depth) by the participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Those topics, themes, or questions that were discussed more frequently and extensively were identified as particularly important to participants and worth noting more deliberately in the survey questions. The key ideas that emerged from the focus group and interview analyses influenced the subsequent survey and were used to name the survey categories. They are: TTF, implementation drivers, building relationships, measuring chronic absenteeism, accommodations to get kids in school, interventions, fidelity to interventions, and training and funding. Subsequent survey questions for each of those categories were developed by relating back to the three responsibilities of the TTF as well as Proctor et al.'s (2010) implementation outcomes. For example, in line with focus group and interview processes, Proctor et al.'s (2010) "acceptability" provided survey questions relating to a school's current attendance policies and changes to those policies over the last five to ten years. This also addressed the TTF (2014, p. 1) responsibilities of "identifying different strategies and approaches

to help educators and administration address the truancy and excessive absences epidemic in the district's schools."

Measures and Instruments

Survey

Gathering information through focus groups and interviews was the first step in the development of the survey used to answer the research questions. Results from this step were used to develop the survey questions and included concepts related to TTF, implementation drivers, building relationships, measuring chronic absenteeism, accommodations to get kids in school, interventions, fidelity to interventions, and training and funding. The alignment to the framework was completed by matching the questions from the focus group and interview questions to the overall framework as seen in the Appendix C.

Questions were developed using the recommendations from Dillman et al. (2014) to ensure that the questions related to the themes and framework. First, the researcher chose the appropriate question format for each question depending on what was being asked. Closed-ended questions such as, "The following people or groups are involved in the daily attendance process: (check all that apply)"; open-ended questions including, "What percentage of days of school does a student miss to be considered chronically absent at your school?"; and partially closed-ended questions, where "other" is an available as an open-ended option, were developed to provide a wide range of options for participants to answer. A mixture of ordinal scales, including "What is your level of confidence in addressing attendance issues at your school?" and nominal questions such as, "How many years have you been in education (admin, teacher, or assistant)?" were developed to address the research questions in the survey (Dillman et al., 2014).

Next, the questions were reviewed by the researcher to ensure they were contextually accurate. Since the respondents for this survey were all educators, questions were related to the main themes of TTF recommendations for chronic absenteeism in schools and used familiar words that were technically accurate to avoid confusion (Dillman et al., 2014). Questions were formatted to only contain one question, rather than double- or triple-barreled questions which can be problematic when respondents agree with one part of a question, but not the entire question. Additionally, questions used complete sentences that took a question form and used simple sentence structures to keep questions clear and concise (Dillman et al., 2014). Efficiency for respondents was a main concern as the survey included a total of 87 questions.

The researcher grouped related questions that covered similar topics and themes to keep a logical order to questions and chose a first question that would be salient to all respondents (Dillman et al., 2014). Each question of the survey required an answer to be provided prior to the respondent moving to the next question, so the researcher ensured the questions were logical, necessary, and integral to the survey results. To not jeopardize the quality of the survey responses, an answer of "unsure" or "unknown" was available to respondents if they did not have an answer to a particular question.

The survey used in this study consisted of 11 demographic closed-ended nominal questions, 30 closed-ended ordinal questions using a Likert scale, 31 binary questions with yes or no options, 12 closed-ended multiple-choice questions, and 3 open-ended response questions focused on the sustainment of EBPs in the participant's school. The demographic questions provided additional contextual information for understanding how survey responses and themes correlated to the responses from teachers and staff from each region. Some sample demographic questions included: participants' current role and whether they teach SWD in that role; education

level of teacher; and school name. The educator survey questions were designed to address the research questions regarding maintenance and sustainment of EBPs. Sample questions content included who at the school addresses chronic absenteeism, what training was provided for program changes, and overall confidence in the knowledge and ability to implement TTF recommendations. All survey questions can be found in the Appendix C.

To confirm that the survey measured targeted constructs as intended, the questions were not only aligned with the Proctor et al. (2010) framework and themes from the focus groups and interviews, but also with the research questions as well. The survey questions addressed the following goals of TTF: (1) administrative and teacher support for excessive absences; (2) community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance; and (3) ongoing professional development to reduce excessive absences. Questions relating to the first goal asked whether administration was involved in addressing chronic absenteeism at the school and what supports were provided to teachers. To address the next goal, questions asked whether the school was considered a "community school" and if parents were involved in decision-making when discussing chronic absenteeism. Additionally, questions focusing on the third and final goal were developed to address ongoing PD and whether teachers used their own funds to attain PD relating to EBPs of PBIS and restorative practices.

To ensure the survey was valid, it was shared with a professional special educator in the district with over 10 years of experience. This educator reviewed and ensured that the survey was aligned with the intent of content. External validity was addressed by having a sample that is representative of the district. Sampling procedures included elementary, middle, and high schools from all seven regions of the city, which encompasses varying economic statuses, political views, and diverse racial and ethnic populations.

45

A table illustrating the TTF responsibilities, recommendations, and corresponding survey questions can be found in Appendix C. For further illustration, Table 2 shows the framework definitions and how they fit with survey themes and sample items from the survey. It is important to note that adoption and appropriateness were not applicable to this portion of the study as the survey addressed maintenance of the recommended EBPs rather than adoption. Additionally, appropriateness was not applicable within this study as it was completed before the study began. This study examines the real fit over perceived fit as implementation has already been established.

Statistical Analysis

To analyze the data in this study, the following analyses were conducted. To reject a false null hypothesis, the researcher conducted an *a priori* power analysis using G*Power3 (Erdfelder et al., 2007). This was completed to understand the appropriate sample size needed to have adequate statistical power. For the purposes of this study, a total sample size of 120 would have a significance level of $p < .05$, the desired power of 80%, and the effect size of .25. Therefore, with a sample size of $N = 125$ and two-tailed $p < .05$, there is sufficient power $(> .80)$ to detect a small-to-medium effect size $(r = .25)$. Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability, a Principal Component Analysis test of validity, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy were used to address internal consistency.

To answer the research questions in this study, descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted to analyze results from the survey analysis. As discussed in this study's literature review, tiered systems of support and restorative practices have shared theoretical applications that may contribute to higher positive behavioral outcomes for SWD. Therefore, correlation analyses will focus on those practices that are part of the tiered systems of MTSS and

Table 2

Definitions of Implementation Outcomes, Themes, and Corresponding Sample Survey Items

Implementation Outcome	Definition	Survey theme	Sample item from Educator Survey (2021)
Acceptability	Direct experience teachers have with the recommendations including the content, its complexity, and their comfort.	TTF Implementation Drivers	Parents were included in the planning for how to combat chronic absenteeism at my school. Yes or No
Adoption	Actions taken to adopt the recommendations.	Not applicable to this study	The recommendations were already adopted before the study began. This study addresses maintenance of the recommended EBPs rather than adoption.
Appropriateness	Perceived fit of the recommendations from the TTF and how compatible the EBPs are with the school climate.	Not applicable to this study	This was completed before the study began. This study examines "real fit" over perceived fit as implementation has already been established.
Feasibility	How can the recommendations from TTF be carried out within the school setting? It is possible the that the resource and financial requirements are prohibitive at different school sites in the district.	Training and Funding Measuring Chronic Absenteeism	Do you use the term "chronically absent" in your school? Y or N What percentage of days of school does a student miss to be considered chronically absent at your school? Ex: 3/5 days missed in a week= 60%

Table 2 Continued

Definitions of Implementation Outcomes, Themes, and Corresponding Sample Survey Items

Fidelity	How the EBPs have been implemented as recommended by the TTF recommendations and additional considerations.	Fidelity to Intervention	Have you seen a decrease in absences at your school since implementing interventions to address truancy? Y or N
			How often is data shared with teachers and staff?
Implementation Cost	Schools or teachers were given any funding or support to implement EBPs and What knowledge was gained	Interventions	Do you serve on a team at your school that addresses attendance interventions? Y or N
			Do you use data to support decision-making at your school? Y or N
Penetration	The integration of the intervention within the system it is implemented	Building Relationships	Teachers feel connected with the community at my school. Y or N
			Parents are included in planning at my school. Y or N
Sustainability	The long-term viability of an EBP when implemented.	Accommodations to get kids in school	Does your school do home visits for chronically absent
			students? Y or N
			Is there a disparity between what incentives can be offered, or are different or better incentives able to be offered in your?
			District: Yes No
			Region: Yes No
			School: Yes No

PBIS, are restorative practices, and focus on terminology and data-sharing practices that are EBPs for chronic absenteeism as described by the TTF report. The findings and results from these analyses are described in-depth in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in this chapter, including description of the statistical analyses conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Additionally, findings from the research questions are introduced.

Survey Analysis

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of items relating to the six recommendations of the TTF. Twenty-seven items were selected from the educator survey that address the six recommendations of the TTF directly. Those 27 items included yes or no responses with a 0, 1 scale (*yes* = 1, *no* = 0). Table 3 illustrates the selected questions from the educator survey that purposely addressed these six recommendations.

Table 3

Perceived Knowledge of Recommendations Question Items

Educator survey question	Number of items
We take attendance multiple times a day	1
In my school the clerk is the first person to handle attendance issues	1
I have a clear understanding of what unexcused absences are at my school	1
Parents receive an automated message via phone when their child is absent	1
I reach out to parents on the first day their child is absent	1
I reach out to parents on the (1) second (2) third (3) or more days	3
The leadership team handles issues with chronic attendance	1

Table 3 Continued

Perceived Knowledge of Recommendations Question Items

Educator survey question	Number of items
Do you use the term "(1) truant, (2) unexcused absence, (3) chronically absent"	3
Does your school use PBIS	1
Are you a PBIS school	1
Does your school use MTSS	1
Do (1) you or (2) anyone in your school use "check-in check-out"	2
Do you have a climate and culture team	1
Do you have a behavioral health team	1
Do you serve on a team that addresses attendance interventions	1
Are you familiar with restorative practices	1
Have you seen a shift toward restorative practices in your school	1
Are you part of the data team at your school	1
Do you employ a responsive classroom	1
Do you use data to support decision making at your school	1
As a teacher or administrator do you keep your own attendance data	1
Is your school considered a community school	1

Table 4 represents the internal consistency data of the 27 survey items that address the six recommendations of TTF. The alpha reliability for perceived knowledge of the six recommendations of the TTF was 0.69. Generally applied, this alpha is considered acceptable for interrelated reliability based on the tiered approach to coefficient interpretation from George and

Mallery (2003). For the purposes of this study, this alpha indicates that the 27 scale items contribute positively toward the same construct of perceived knowledge of the TTF recommended practices.

Table 4

Scale Reliability Using Cronbach's Alpha (α) for Perceived Knowledge of Recommendations

Scale	Number of items	A
Perceived knowledge	27	0.69

Note. N = 125.

Validity Analysis

A principal component analysis using SPSS software was run to determine underlying factors and verify the survey's practicality in measuring teachers' perceptions. For the purposes of this study, factor loading indicates that the selected items load on the same construct of perceived knowledge of recommended TTF practices and responsibilities. This study utilized the accepted cut-off of 0.40 or higher factor loading to signify significant communalities with a sample of this size (*N* = 125; Hair et al., 1998). To understand the perception of knowledge to the recommended practices, educators answered 27 no, yes statements (scale= 0,1 that related directly to the six recommendations from the TTF. For analysis consistency these questions are the same as utilized in the test of reliability. For the purposes of this study, factor loadings above .40 were included when addressing which variables measured which factors (Costello & Osborne, 2005). This principal component analysis utilized Oblimin rotation to allow for correlation between latent factors. Using a scree plot of Eigenvalues > 1.0, those 27 items from the educator survey loaded on 10 components. Those components were linked to the terminology utilized by the TTF when describing recommended practices and responsibilities of the TTF.

These components can be found in the notes section of Table 5, which also includes item factor loadings.

Table 5

Principal Component Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of Recommended Practices and

Responsibilities

Item	Component									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Absent2	.80									
Absent3	.80									
Absent1	.64									
Absent4	.60									
Restor1		.71								
Restor2		.70								
Respons		.52								
ChronAbs		.49								
PBIS1			.86							
PBIS2			.84							
PBISCheck1				.72						
PBISCheck2				.71						
AttData				.45						
Truant					.75					
Absenc					.51					
MTSS					.50					

53

Table 5 Continued

Principal Component Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of Recommended Practices and

Responsibilities

Item	Component									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interv1						.81				
DataTeam						.44				
Unexcused							.78			
BehavTeam							.56			
LeadTeam							.43			
Comm								.80		
Climate								.43		
DataDec									.73	
ParentMeas									.56	
Clerk										.83
Attendance										.60

Note. *N* = 125. Component 1 = terminology; 2 = program evaluations; 3 = prevention; 4 = data collection; 5 = intervention; 6 = further review; 7 = admin and teacher support; 8 = community and parent; 9 = professional development; 10 = application.

The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was used with this sample to ensure that the data was suitable to run a factor analysis and to determine what was intended to measure (George & Mallery, 2003). For the purposes of this study, the KMO rating of 0.54 (i.e., above 0.5) is considered acceptable for this test. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reported a

significant value below .05 ($p < .001$), rejecting the null hypothesis, indicating that the

correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Table 6 illustrates the results from these measures

below.

Table 6

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartletts Test of Sphericity

Scale	Number of items	Result
KMO	27	0.54
Bartletts test	27	$p < .001$

Note. $N = 125$.

Outcome Measures

Descriptive statistics were examined to ascertain the educator-reported knowledge of the

three responsibilities of the TTF to determine the level of knowledge teachers had regarding the

responsibilities and their familiarity with the six recommendations. This was utilized to answer

the research question: "What is the educator-reported knowledge of the three responsibilities of

TTF?" Results were examined by determining the frequency counts in response to a specific

question on a 1-100-point scale. The survey question used to determine the educator reported

knowledge of the three responsibilities of the TTF was, "How familiar educators were with the

truancy task force and their recommendations to CPS?"

Table 7 illustrates the educator familiarity with the TTF and their recommendations as

well as the representative sample percentage that answered per quadrant (0= not at all familiar, 1-

35= somewhat familiar, 36-70= moderately familiar, 71-100= extremely familiar). These

quadrants were chosen as they are representative of the perceived familiarity with the TTF based

on cumulative frequency counts. Overall, familiarity with the recommendations was low with

46% of respondents falling in the "not at all familiar" category and 37% reporting in the
"somewhat familiar" category.

Table 7

Frequency Count and Percentages of Educator Overall Familiarity with TTF Recommendations

Scale value	Frequency count	Percentage (%) of sample
Not at all familiar	57	46
Somewhat familiar	46	37
Moderately familiar	19	15
Extremely familiar	3	2

Note. $N = 125$. 0= not at all familiar, 1-35= somewhat familiar, 36-70= moderately familiar, 71-100= extremely familiar

      To determine educators' familiarity with each of the six recommendations, the frequency
of response for each of six items related to the six recommendations was calculated. The
questions used for the following table asked educators how familiar they were with those six
specific recommendations from the TTF. The same scale value was utilized for the breakdown of
the six recommendations as the overall familiarity score used in Table 7 including the
representative sample percentage that answered per quadrant (0= not at all familiar, 1-35=
somewhat familiar, 36-70= moderately familiar, 71-100= extremely familiar). These outcomes
are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Frequency Count and Percentages of Educator Familiarity with Six TTF Recommendations

Scale value	Frequency count	Percentage (%) of sample
Recommendation 1: Terminology		
Not at all familiar	47	38
Somewhat familiar	38	30
Moderately familiar	21	17
Extremely familiar	19	15
Recommendation 2: Data		
Not at all familiar	36	29
Somewhat familiar	42	34
Moderately familiar	24	19
Extremely familiar	23	18
Recommendation 3: Prevention		
Not at all familiar	39	31
Somewhat familiar	45	36
Moderately familiar	15	12
Extremely familiar	26	21
Recommendation 4: Intervention		
Not at all familiar	9	7
Somewhat familiar	21	17
Moderately familiar	33	26
Extremely familiar	62	50

Table 8 Continued

Frequency Count and Percentages of Educator Familiarity with Six TTF Recommendations

Scale value	Frequency count	Percentage (%) of sample
Recommendation 5: Evaluation		
Not at all familiar	27	22
Somewhat familiar	47	38
Moderately familiar	26	21
Extremely familiar	25	20
Recommendation 6: Review		
Not at all familiar	38	30
Somewhat familiar	50	40
Moderately familiar	19	15
Extremely familiar	18	14

Note. $N = 125$; Recommendation (1) terminology; (2) data collection and application; (3) prevention; (4) interventions; (5) program evaluations and monitoring; and (6) further review and analysis.

TTF Recommendations to Address Attendance Challenges

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze how each of the recommendations from TTF were maintained by educators at their school sites. Questions related to terminology addressed educators use of specific terminology such as chronically absent or unexcused absence and understanding of their definitions. For example, chronically absent is defined as the percentage of days a student must be absent to be considered chronically absent. When surveyed, on the number of days a student must be absent to be considered chronically absent at their school, the most consistent answer was "I don't know" or "unsure," with 24% ($n = 30$) of respondents

answering this way. The second most consistent answer was 10 or more days with over 20% of respondents ($n = 25$). Much of the same range in answers were found when addressing the percentage of days missed to be considered chronically absent with over 26% of responses indicating "unknown" *($n = 33$)* and 74% as anywhere from 10-100% of a week *($n = 92$)*.

To address data collection and application of attendance data, survey questions focused on how and if data supported decision-making was used at the participant's school. Educator use of data to support decisions made at their schools can contribute to better understanding of attendance trends in their schools and data transparency for all stakeholders. Over 91% ($n = 114$) of respondents reported using data to support decision-making at their schools and 70% ($n = 87$) kept their own attendance data. Additionally, almost 40% of all educators reported being a part of the data process team at their school sites.

Prevention questions addressed whether PBIS practices were used at school sites and intervention questions asked whether MTSS practices were implemented. When addressing prevention efforts, frequency results indicate that 43% of educators ($n = 54$) report that their school is a "PBIS school." When analyzing PBIS practices in their schools, 50% of educators ($n = 62$) report that they use "check-in check-out" in their own classroom, with 70% ($n = 87$) reporting that someone in their school uses the PBIS practice "check-in check-out" in their classroom. These results indicate that PBIS practices are still being utilized at the classroom-level by educators. When asked whether MTSS had been maintained at educator school sites, over 95% of educators ($n = 199$) reported positively. This high positive response provides evidence that MTSS has been sustained at schools.

To address program evaluation and progress monitoring, questions from the educator survey asked about data collection and decision-making practices at school sites. Over 91% ($n =$

114) of educators reported using data-based decision-making at their schools to evaluate

attendance data. Additionally, educators reported keeping their own data on student attendance

and behaviors to monitor progress toward student goals ($n = 87$). These practices and the number

and percentage of educators that use them can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

TTF Practice Use by Educators

TTF Practice	N	Percentage (%) of sample
Chronically absent		
Yes	92	73.6
No	33	26.6
Unexcused absence		
Yes	118	94.4
No	7	5.6
Clear understanding of unexcused absences definition		
Yes	78	62.4
No	47	37.6
Data to support decision-making		
Yes	114	91.2
No	11	8.8
Part of data process or team		
Yes	48	38.4
No	77	61.6
Keep own attendance data		
Yes	87	69.6

Table 9 Continued

TTF Practice Use by Educators

TTF Practice	*N*	Percentage (%) of sample
Keep own attendance data		
No	38	30.4
Positive behavior support and intervention school		
Yes	54	43.2
No	71	56.8
Personally use "Check-in/Check-out" in classroom		
Yes	62	49.6
No	63	50.4
Anyone in school use "Check-in/Check-out"		
Yes	87	69.6
No	38	30.4
Community school		
Yes	80	64.0
No	45	36.0
Clerk is first person to handle attendance issues		
Yes	77	61.6
No	48	38.4
Multi-tiered systems of support		
Yes	119	95.2
No	6	4.8

Table 9 Continued

TTF Practice Use by Educators

TTF Practice	*N*	Percentage (%) of sample
Behavioral health team		
Yes	87	69.6
No	38	30.4
Shift toward restorative practices		
Yes	107	85.6
No	18	14.4
Responsive classroom		
Yes	82	65.6
No	43	34.4

Note. *N* = 125.

Although 91% of the teachers reported using school-based data to share outcomes with families and communities, teachers reported feeling moderately confident in explaining attendance data to parents. Only half of the respondents reported feeling confident in explaining attendance data to parents (*n* = 88). These results are illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10

Frequency Count and Percentages of Educator Responses

Question	Scale value	Frequency count	Percentage (%) of sample
Explaining data			
	Not at all confident	14	11
	Somewhat confident	15	12

Table 10 Continued

Frequency Count and Percentages of Educator Responses

Question	Scale value	Frequency count	Percentage (%) of sample
	Moderately confident	29	23
	Extremely confident	67	54

Note. $N = 125$. 0= not at all confident, 1-35= somewhat confident, 36-70= moderately confident, 71-100= extremely confident.

The hiring and training of attendance coordinators was one of the main recommendations proposed by the TTF to ensure students were attending school. These coordinators were to serve as updated "truancy officers" to support students in their efforts to come to school on time and for the entire day to address the "empty desk epidemic." Although, survey responses indicate that 47% of educators have an attendance coordinator at their school involved in the daily attendance process *(n* = 59), when asked if attendance coordinators address chronic absenteeism at the school in any capacity, only 44% of educators responded positively *(n* = 55). School clerks are still being utilized as the main attendance drivers for the school, with 67% of educators reporting that clerks directly address chronic absenteeism *(n* = 84). Sixty percent (*n* = 75) of educators reported teachers as one of the main drivers in addressing chronic absenteeism. Greater discussion on these findings can be found in the implications for future research section of the last chapter.

Correlation Analyses

A Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationships between EBPs implemented at school sites and to answer the research question: "How are the six TTF recommendations being sustained in the district?" An examination of the correlations shows 27

relationships among the practices. These relationships indicate that these practices were implemented simultaneously in schools. For example, in schools that had a shift toward restorative practices, teachers reported employing a responsive classroom, $r(123) = .28, p < .01$. A second relationship was noted in schools where an attendance leadership team was established. In these schools, a positive correlation was found between a shift toward restorative practices, $r(123) = .23, p < .01$; PBIS practices, $r(123) = .20,; p < .05$; and the establishment of a climate and culture team that addresses and evaluates the learning environment and implications for students in the community, $r(123) = .21, p < .05$. These teams address the continued support from school administrators and faculty in sustainment of the EBPs. In schools where teachers employed a responsive classroom, a shift toward restorative practices in their schools, $r(123) = .28, p < .01$, and in their own classrooms, $r(123) = .28, p < .01$, as well as transparency in attendance data and decision making by administration, $r(123) = .18, p < .05$ was reported.

Finally, in schools identified as "PBIS schools" by teachers, there was a significant shift toward the use of restorative practices, $r(123) = .22, p < .01$; check-in, check out $r(123) = .23, p < .01$; and a climate and culture team was established $r(123) = .23, p < .05$. SWPBIS is often used in conjunction with restorative practices and the practice of check-in, check-out is a tier 2 PBIS practice that is often used in SWPBIS schools, however not all PBIS schools use this practice. Climate and culture teams were established in the district to support the school climate; however, they are not a part of traditional PBIS practices. The significant correlations found illustrate relations between recommended practices by the TTF that have been maintained at schools in the district. This maintenance of EBPs is not necessarily due to the implementation of TTF policy and could be explained by other factors; this will be further discussed in the next chapter. Descriptive statistics and significant correlation values can be found in Table 11.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Maintained TTF Practices

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Community school	1.36	0.48	—												
2. Data decision-making	1.09	0.28	.002	—											
3. Responsive classroom	1.34	0.48	-.017	.132	—										
4. Shift toward restorative practices	1.14	0.35	.072	.114	.279**	—									
5. Take attendance multiple times a day	1.49	0.5	.035	-.190*	.034	.010	—								
6. Attendance leadership team	1.39	0.49	.012	-.018	.108	.231**	.003	—							
7. PBIS	1.41	0.49	.090	.087	.153	.309**	-.127	.200*	—						
8. PBIS school	1.57	0.5	-.019	.043	.122	.220*	-.182*	.072	.691**	—					
9. MTSS	1.05	0.21	-.012	.062	.074	-.092	-.144	-.027	.194*	.120	—				

Table 11 Continued

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Maintained TTF Practices

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10. Check-in / check-out	1.5	0.5	.044	.082	.011	.179*	-.248**	.043	.238**	.168	-.002	—			
11. Check-in / check-out School	1.3	0.46	.084	.163	.144	.274**	-.158	.039	.301**	.225*	.014	.551**	—		
12. Climate and culture	1.29	0.45	.259**	.052	.134	.293**	-.020	.213*	.227*	.234**	.022	.136	.271**	—	
13. Restorative practices	1.11	0.32	.104	.158	.277**	.505**	.009	.027	.118	.105	-.080	.149	.151	.278**	—
14. Attendance data	1.30	0.46	.193*	.102	.180*	.076	.120	-.032	.088	.050	-.067	.064	-.134	.079	.151

Note. *N* = 125. PBIS = positive behavior intervention and support. MTSS = multi-tiered systems of support.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The following section will include the interpretation of results in relation to the TTF and sustainment of their recommendations and will detail implications for future research in the field. Additionally, this section will address the limitations of the study.

The hypothesis in this study proposed that the TTF recommendations had been maintained across the district resulting in (1) administrative and teacher support for excessive absences, (2) community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance, and (3) ongoing PD to reduce excessive absences. The results of each of the study's three research questions address the TTF recommendations in support of this hypothesis.

The first research question sought to determine how the six TTF recommendations were sustained in the district. Results from the correlation analysis of TTF practices resulted in significant correlations between attendance practices, parent efforts, and professional development to reduce chronic absenteeism. For example, in schools where an attendance leadership team was established, a positive correlation was found between a shift toward restorative practices, PBIS practices, and the establishment of a climate and culture team that addresses and evaluates the learning environment and implications for students in the community. Correlations were also found at the classroom level. Teachers who employed a responsive classroom, or who used non-punitive responses to behavior, reported a shift toward restorative practices in their schools and their own classrooms, as well as transparency in the use of attendance data and decision making by administration. This indicates that practices recommended by the TTF continue to be reported as used seven years after the initial recommendations. We cannot say definitively from the results in this study when the practices

67

were first implemented or if the practices were implemented as a result of the TTF report. The Proctor framework posits that acceptability is one of the eight conceptually distinct outcomes that influence implementation. Acceptability in this case focuses on the direct experience that teachers had with the content and complexity of the recommendation. Since teachers report a community of support from other teachers and administrators regarding the acceptability of the recommendations, this could have increased the success of the EBPs at school sites by educators.

To address the second research question on the educator-reported knowledge of the three responsibilities of the TTF and familiarity with the TTF and their recommendations, frequency data was examined. Overall, familiarity with the recommendations was low. However, data from this study also indicates that teachers are utilizing EBPs to address chronic absenteeism in their classrooms. Specifically, MTSS and PBIS practices, as well as practices to increase community and parent support, were implemented, even when teachers report low familiarity with the TTF intervention and prevention recommendations. This may indicate that familiarity with the recommendations is not important when addressing sustainment of the EBPs. If teachers are using those prevention and intervention EBPs to address chronic absenteeism and behaviors that lead to students being out of school, then familiarity with higher level TTF policies appears to be not as integral to the success of the EBPs' sustainment especially if teachers are seeing positive outcomes from the implementation of the practices. However, to fully understand this relationship, more research in this area is needed.

The third and final research question asked: "What is the educator-reported knowledge of the six recommendations of the TTF?" Results from this question addressed each of the six recommendations individually and ranged from "not at all familiar" to "extremely familiar." Overall, the frequency count and percentages of educator familiarity with the TTF

recommendations was higher than the educator-reported familiarity with the responsibilities of the TTF. For example, the percentage of educators reporting "somewhat familiar" with each of the recommendations was consistently higher for data collection and application, prevention, program evaluations and monitoring, and further review and analysis. For interventions to address chronic absenteeism, 50% of educators reported feeling "extreme familiarity," which was higher than any other reported percentage of sample. These results indicate that educators in the district have knowledge of the recommended practices, even if they do not have much familiarity with the TTF and their responsibilities. From these findings, it can be concluded that, while the TTF was not a piece of legislation that was widely known in the district at the educator-level, educators were still using EBPs that can decrease chronic absenteeism at school sites. As referenced in the Proctor framework, penetration is the integration of the intervention within the system in which it is implemented. While the TTF recommendations do not appear to be widely known by educators, the practices that were part of the legislation have penetrated educator practices at school sites. This could be related to the focus on implementing practices that directly affect students without the knowledge of where the policies came from or what legislation led to those changes.

The salient framework used to guide this study was Proctor et al.'s (2010) implementation outcomes which proposed a working taxonomy of eight distinct implementation outcomes, including: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability. All these outcomes, however, were not necessary for investigation for the purposes of this study. For example, adoption was not measured in this study because the recommendations were already adopted before the study began. This study addressed the maintenance of the recommended EBPs rather than their

adoption. Similarly, appropriateness was not applicable to this study as this area would have taken place before the study began. This study examines the "real fit" over "perceived fit," as implementation has already been established.

The implementation outcomes that were applicable to this study were acceptability, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability. These implementation outcomes helped guide the themes of the survey as well as the questions for the educator survey. By using acceptability as a guiding principle, we were able to measure the familiarity with the content of the TTF recommendations as well as the implementation drivers used to combat chronic absenteeism. Both PBIS and MTSS recommend and support the use of Implementation Drivers so that the implementation site can become self-sufficient with respect to training, coaching, assessment, and administrative supports (Fixsen et al., 2019). When asked about who leads school efforts to address chronic absenteeism, educators report that they are the main implementation drivers at their schools. While there is a data team, professional learning community, leadership team, or clerk that assists with attendance, teachers are still the first person to handle attendance issues in their classrooms. These responses indicate that while implementation drivers at different levels are available in the school and district, teachers are still the primary implementers of EBPs to address absenteeism in their classrooms. By having teachers and clerks provide the most support for attendance practices, we are not acknowledging the barriers that this can create. For one, there is no reported plan on how teachers should act as implementation drivers for attendance practices. Additionally, the district is not providing teachers and clerks with the same level of attendance and practice data to guide and programming for chronic attendance. This information can provide the district with guidance on

how to support teachers in these efforts now that familiarity with the content has already been established.

To understand the feasibility of the recommendations, we needed to understand the training and funding available to educators, as well as how they were measuring chronic absenteeism at their schools. Surveyed district educators report that they are providing much of their own funding when addressing professional development, but that their administrators are also finding and providing grants and district funds to address chronic issues. One area of value that repeatedly came up in focus groups, interviews, and surveys was the professional learning community and the support that teachers found with their grade level teams. These teams afforded teachers support with practices that benefit their students to address chronic behaviors that kept their students out of school. The establishment of the leadership team at the school, as well as automated messaging when students are tardy or absent, were also reported as a presence at school sites. These varied ways of accessing resources speak to the feasibility of the recommendations and the innovation of teachers to use the resources they have available to meet the needs of their students. The district can use this information to ensure that teachers have financial funding and professional development opportunities to continue the work of measuring and addressing chronic absenteeism at schools.

The implementation outcomes of fidelity and implementation cost allowed the researcher to evaluate the fidelity to the TTF recommendations as well as the interventions that were implemented as part of the final report. How teachers rate and define chronic absences in their schools varied across the district. While there was room for improvement with many of the recommendations so that schools could implement in the method that served their students and communities in the best possible way, fidelity to terminology and data-sharing was of major

importance. Additionally, implementation of the EBPs was the primary interest of this study and results show that fidelity to the recommended practices was continued 7 years after initial implementation. While addressing fidelity to the EBPs, districts can inquire which practices are working, what impact they have on students, and how the community can continue to play a supporting role in addressing chronic absenteeism.

The creation of family and community partnerships is integral to the success of many EBPs that address chronic absenteeism (Epstein, 2009). Penetration and sustainability provided information on building community relationships and long-term viability of the recommended EBPs and what accommodations were being made to get students to school on time for the entire day. When all stakeholders are involved, the long-term sustainment of the practices can be supported by families who are included in the decision-making process. Districts like the one in this study can use community and family partnerships to create sustainable change in student behavior, especially when addressing chronic issues like absenteeism for at-risk students.

Recommendations to Address Attendance Challenges

This study examined the sustainment of policy recommendations to address chronic absenteeism in a large school district. The following prevention and intervention practices were correlated with improved practice. Both PBIS and MTSS contribute to a reduction in absenteeism among students with disabilities and have action steps that can create more positive outcomes for these students. For example, the development of a safe and supportive climate through PBIS is an EBP for SWD that can have positive lasting effects. While we cannot say, in this study, that PBIS practices are directly responsible for increases in attendance among students with disabilities, research indicates that punitive measures are ineffective in addressing absence challenges, so supportive programming like PBIS is a research-backed way to address these

chronic issues. The following PBIS practices are recommended for schools to reduce absenteeism: data-based decisions to monitor intervention implementation and student response and school-wide expectations for behavior. These are EBPs that have a positive influence on attendance rates for schools at all levels and can be implemented district wide, as seen with this district. Teachers who report using PBIS practices or who work at a PBIS school also report a shift toward restorative practices. These practices are correlated and are both non-punitive ways of addressing student behavior. Additionally, the PBIS practice of check-in/check-out, both at the school and individual educator level, also correlate for better practice. These EBPs would be recommended for elementary and high school students to address chronic absenteeism, especially when targeting at-risk students including those with disabilities.

Prevention efforts such as PBIS, community-based organizations, and hiring or training of attendance coordinators are of salient importance in addressing chronic absenteeism. Another tiered practice, MTSS, is also recommended as an intervention for chronic absenteeism. MTSS can be used as an overarching system that can be tailored to the needs of the school, families, and community. These practices have a positive impact on chronic attendance issues because they are evidence-based for changing the school culture and incorporate families and community as change-agents. When teachers and administrators use these EBPs to invite and support students in school, students are more likely to attend on time and for the entire day. These practices are good for school culture because they increase the likelihood of improved attendance. The use of PBIS, MTSS, or restorative practices in schools, lead to positive student behaviors. These behaviors contribute to more positive interactions in schools, better classroom management, and an increase in student achievement.

Community-based organizations are an essential part of prevention efforts to combat chronic absenteeism. Research indicates that family and community partnerships are integral to student success, especially when supporting successful outcomes for our students in the greatest need (Epstein, 2009). These relationships can contribute to higher attendance for SWD as indicated by using EBPs for attendance data at community schools and the establishment of climate and culture teams to address student and family needs at community schools. Other districts can encourage community schools by inviting parents to be an active part of their child's education and creating opportunities for parents to be involved in the decision-making of the school. Other districts could examine how to fully integrate family and community partnerships at all school sites to better influence positive outcomes for student attendance.

Progress evaluation and use of data collection and application was also sustained in this district and highlights the need for accuracy and transparency in data sharing at the district level. Sharing data from individual school sites with the district to track and monitor chronic absenteeism can contribute to better understanding of attendance trends and data transparency for all stakeholders. The creation of a district databases is helpful because it can be shared to illustrate changes in attendance over time. However, this data can also be unintentionally skewed when schools are not demographically the same. For example, a smaller school could have less students chronically absent, but because this is a larger part of the student body, it appears to be a larger problem.

While chronic absenteeism is a problem for students across the country, SWD are out of school at significantly higher rates than their non-disabled peers. When districts implement interventions and systems that tackle attendance issues at all levels, all students win. Tiered systems, like PBIS and MTSS, are the most beneficial for SWD because they specifically target

the behavior issues at the students' level and can increase the probability of attendance for students in the most need. When addressing SWD and chronic absenteeism, EBPs like this district has implemented can have a great impact on attendance outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

The implications for future research in this study were developed from a gap in knowledge in this area. This study was primarily driven by the limited information available on the current status of the TTF recommendations and the role that knowledge about the success or failure of this type of policy implementation can have on the field. After distribution of the final TTF report in July 2014, little information was disseminated on who, if anyone, was monitoring implementation of the recommendations or their impact on chronic absenteeism rates. Because of this lack of information on how recommendations were implemented, inconsistent implementation of the recommendations was reported in this study. The inconsistent implementation of the recommendations showcases the need for consistent terminology and plan of action when implementing policies at this level. Additionally, the district could see higher implementation rates if data transparency is continued as one of the salient recommendations. Penetration and sustainability are the two most important components of the implementation framework when addressing sustainment of the recommendations. Penetration is useful in defining the integration of EBPs and understanding the reach of the TTF recommendations at each school site. Additionally, sustainment examines the extent to which a newly implemented treatment is maintained in each setting. While sustainment and penetration can be used in conjunction, this study and future studies in the district can look at sustainment to determine the long-term viability of the EBPs after initial implementation.

When addressing potential barriers and facilitators to implementation, this and other districts can utilize the EPIS implementation framework to frame the overall impact of policy implementation. In the exploration phase, practices are identified and potential barriers and facilitators to change are identified. By using this systematic way of identifying and addressing potential implementation issues, future researchers can have a jumping-off point to address what may come up as a potential problem. In this study, barriers to implementation were consistent terminology and the use of clerks and teachers as implementation drivers, when no PD support was indicated to guide them in this practice. Conversely, professional learning communities where teachers felt supported and were provided guidance by their peers was a facilitator in implementation of the recommended EBPs. For future research, these areas can be further explored during the exploration phase to better understand what supports are needed for consistent implementation of recommended practices.

While the media was the initial impetus for the TTF, it did not seem to affect the implementation of a specific recommendation. A follow-up article written in the Chicago Tribune regarding the Empty Desk Epidemic of 2012 (Chicago Tribune, 2016) detailed how the TTF made recommendations to bring back "truancy officers" in an updated form as attendance coordinators, which could have a large impact on chronic absenteeism in district schools. However, this study found that this recommendation was not sustained. This study identified the maintenance of EBPs that create better outcomes for SWD and chronic attendance issues. Future studies can examine barriers and facilitators to not only the implementation but also the maintenance of practices from policy recommendations.

For a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and sustainment of policy, it is important for future studies to more closely examine how policies are implemented. To support this area, a wider group of stakeholders can be included such as administrators, district personnel, parents, and community members.

Research shows that higher incidences of attendance in youth starting in kindergarten yields higher attendance and academic achievement outcomes in higher grades. Future studies can examine factors affecting attendance across grades. For example, which practices are more effective with high school students as they are more independent in getting to school. Additionally, future studies could investigate the reasons why younger students are not making it to school on time, or at all, and the role that parent and community involvement might play in supporting student attendance. Additionally, future research in this area could address differences in school-level data. For example, by separating high school level data and kindergarten through grade 8 data we could address differences or disparities in the attendance practices and outcomes of those grades. This study addressed all grade levels in the application of EBPs to address chronic absenteeism, however by looking through a higher-grade lens, we could better understand what EBPs are most effective to support students in attending school, leading to higher graduation rates for these students.

The framework for this study can also be used to develop and support questions for future research in this area. When using the Proctor et al.'s (2010) framework of implementation outcomes, future research can investigate if there is an association between implementation outcomes. For example, future research should explore how and if acceptability is predictive of sustainment, among other relations. The implementation outcomes were used to guide the questions of this study by providing a framework for understanding maintenance of the

recommendations. Future studies could explore specific EBPs and track their sustainment at individual school sites to understand how implementation varies across this large district. This study was conducted in the third-largest school district in the United States and examined district-wide policies. It aimed to identify how those recommendations were implemented district-wide by analyzing individual teacher responses. This study can prompt research into how policies are being implemented in school districts in other areas of the country and examine what the implications are for SWD. The TTF was created to serve those students who were being pushed out of school due to socioeconomic status, race, and disability status. From these TTF recommendations, future research could investigate the exclusionary practices that are still being used in some schools and how EBPs that support students could be implemented. Additionally, further research in this area can examine whether familiarity with recommendations is related to practice and whether processes exist for getting new teachers onboard with policy recommendations, EBPs, and grade-level team decisions.

From the focus groups and survey responses, teachers reported finding and funding their own PD to better serve their students. When addressing policy recommendations, future research could investigate whether district-wide policy change occurs based on the resourcefulness of teachers and how that resourcefulness is supported by administration. Furthermore, future research in policy application could investigate whether there is a relationship between teachers' years of service and sustainment of attendance outcomes. There was a wide range of teachers who participated in the survey; however most had over five years of experience as a teacher. One could question whether experience as an educator could prompt higher levels of use of EBPs. Teachers also reported their own grade level professional learning communities as contributing to higher knowledge regarding EBPs to address chronic absenteeism. Future research could

address whether years of service and sustainment of attendance outcomes are related, and how these professional learning communities are being help at grade- and school-level, as well as district-wide.

Limitations

The most disruptive limitation to this study was the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial study proposed to address two schools and their response to the TTF recommendations using in-person focus groups with teachers at school sites to solicit input for the subsequent survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school district stopped all research at school sites and would not allow for outside researchers to work in schools. This limitation was circumvented by working with the teachers' union and nearly 20,000 teachers and clinicians that are part of this union. While conclusions based on the current sample population can be informative, an in-depth study of how the TTF have directly affected school personnel at specific school sites would be beneficial for future research. Another limitation was the unavailability of teachers to participate in the focus groups or interviews. Since the focus groups and interviews were conducted over the summer, many teachers were not in email contact or involved in professional social networks; several reached out to the researcher after the survey development recruitment period was already closed when they returned to these activities in the late summer/early fall.

Survey data from this study focused primarily on the educator experience and perceptions of implementation relating to the day-to-day application from educators. A limitation with this lens is that the administrator perspective was not taken into consideration when addressing how the EBPs from the TTF recommendations were established and implemented at school sites. Administrators were included in this study, however not enough had responded to be able to disaggregate data. It is possible that administrators were privy to information on implementation

that was not shared with educators at the time of implementation. Additionally, implementation of the EBPs could have had more regional or district wide application that was not viewed as necessary when applying the recommendations to specific school sites. This limitation could be circumvented in the future by including administrators on the survey and questions that address perceptions from this group in implementation outcomes.

Conclusion

This study evaluated whether district-wide attendance recommendations were being maintained and the extent of educator-reported knowledge of the TTF recommendations at the current point in time, seven years post-initial publication of the TTF report. When addressing sustainment of the implemented recommendations, one main point emerged. Overall, teachers are using the recommended EBPs even when knowledge of the TTF is limited. While the maintenance of EBPs is not necessarily due to the sustainment of TTF policy, it can be explained by other factors. As discussed, teachers have found and funded their own PD, kept their own attendance data, used terminology that is consistent with other schools across the district, and created grade-level professional learning communities to address attendance concerns in their schools. This study provides preliminary evidence that the TTF recommendations could have been the impetus for changes in attendance policies that have sustained across the district and have grown in a grassroots-type movement with teachers and administrators at their school sites.

TABLE OF RESPONSIBILITIES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SURVEY

QUESTIONS

Truancy Task Force (TTF) Responsibilities, Recommendations, and Corresponding Survey Questions

TTF Responsibilities	TTF Recommendations	Questions from Educator Survey (2021)
Administrative and teacher support for excessive absences	(1) terminology; the need for review of terminology for the sake of consistency within districts across the state (2) data collection and application; accuracy of data, creation of a database, and distribution of data to stakeholders within the school district	(1) Terminology: Questions; 12-18, 30, 44-46, 86 (2) Data Collection: Questions; 19-23, (26_1-26_11), 28, 29, 36, 73
Community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance	(3) prevention; PBIS, community-based organizations, hiring/training of attendance coordinators (4) interventions; MTSS, targeted interventions at pre-K and ninth-grade levels	(3) Prevention: Questions; 24, (25_1-25_11), 31, 32-35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, (52_1-52_3), 58, 59, 60, 67, (69_1-69_13), 81, 82-85, 87 (4) Interventions: Questions; (48_1-48_8other), (49_1-49_5), 50, (51_1-51_11), 53-57, 61-63, (68_1-68_5), (71_1-71_7other), 79, 80
Ongoing professional development to reduce excessive absences	(5) program evaluations and monitoring (6) further review and analysis	(5) Program Evaluation and Monitoring: Questions; (27_1-27_11), 42, 43, 47, (70_1-70_3), 75, 76, (6) Further review and analysis: Questions; 64-66, 72, 74, 77, 78

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW SCRIPT

These three themes, based on the three responsibilities of the Truancy Task Force (TTF), will help guide the conversation: (1) administrative and teacher support for excessive absences; (2) community and parent efforts to encourage school attendance; (3) ongoing professional development to reduce excessive absences. The TTF described the impetus for the creation of their committee and their resulting recommendations: The Truancy Task force was developed to address the empty desk epidemic in Chicago Public Schools. This focus group will focus on the six recommendations of the task force and whether they were maintained over time at school sites. We are looking for information on how teachers are supported in addressing chronic absenteeism in their schools. This will give us more information on how we can better serve our students and our teachers in the district.

Are you familiar with the truancy task force and their recommendations to CPS?

The six recommendations of TTF include: (1) terminology, (2) data collection and application, (3) prevention, (4) interventions (including positive behavioral supports and intervention and multi-tiered systems of support), (5) program evaluations and monitoring, and (6) further review and analysis.

Questions were asked in the following order:

   Acceptability

      What direct experience do you have with the recommendations from the TTF?

      If none, what is your experience with chronically absent or truant students?

      What are your school's current attendance practices?

      How have those practices changed over the last 5 to 10 years?

Were you included in any planning in how to combat chronic absenteeism at your

school?

Adoption

What actions were taken by teachers to adopt the recommendations?

What EBPs were adopted at the school site?

What terminology does your school use when referring to absences or chronically absent

students?

How were families included in adopting the recommendations?

Are you a PBIS school? What does that mean for your school?

Appropriateness

What is the perceived fit of the recommendations?

Do they work for your school? Do they fit with the district goals?

What are your school's current attendance practices? Are they similar to TTF

recommendations?

How compatible are the EBPs with the school climate?

What was the community or parent response to changes in chronic absenteeism

programming at the school?

Feasibility

How can recommendations be carried out within the school setting?

What resources were you given to support your efforts to combat chronic absenteeism?

What training were you given to implement recommendations from TTF?

Fidelity

How have the EBPs been implemented as prescribed by the original recommendations?

How are the attendance interventions being maintained and sustained in your school?

Have you seen a decrease in absences at your school since implementing interventions to address truancy?

Implementation Cost

What is the cost-benefit of implementation?

Have you seen any benefit from addressing truancy or chronic absences in your school?

Was your school given any funding to support the implementation of EBPs (specifically to address truancy)?

Were you as a teacher given any funding to support the implementation of EBPs?

How do you monitor progress toward attendance goals in your classroom?

Does your school implement MTSS? How has this been implemented?

How has your school leadership supported behavior interventions in your classroom?

Penetration

What is the reach of the recommendations at your school site?

What is your level of perceived confidence in the implementation and sustainment of the three responsibilities of the task force?

How confident do you feel in the interventions used for addressing chronic absenteeism/truancy?

Sustainability

How have these EBPs been maintained and sustained at your school site?

Have you been given any PD related to chronic absenteeism? If so what types of PD?

Do you have a point person to go to with questions related to chronic absenteeism?

Do you have implementation drivers? Or other people who serve that role?

What behaviors are targeted for change in your classroom? How about your school?

What changes have you seen with excessive absences in your school?

EDUCATOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE ATTENDANCE SURVEY

Demographic Information

Please circle the (1) most appropriate answer.

Gender

What is your gender?

- o Female

- o Male

- o Other

Race/Ethnicity

How do you usually describe yourself?

- o White

- o Black or African American

- o Hispanic or Latino/a

- o Asian or Pacific Islander

- o American Indian or Alaskan

- o Biracial or Multi racial

- o Other

Age

What is your age group?

- o 18 - 24

- o 25-39

- o 40-60

o   61 and above

Years in Education

How many years have you been in education (admin, teacher, or assistant)?

o   1-9

o   10-20

o   21-30

o   31 and above

Current Role

What role are you currently serving at this school?

o   General Teacher

o   Special Education Teacher

o   Teaching Assistant/Paraprofessional

o   Administrator

Students in Current Role

How often do you teach, work with, or support students with disabilities?

o   five or more times per week

o   three or four times per week

o   once or twice a week

o   I do not work with, support, or teach students with disabilities in my current role

Education Level

What is your highest completed degree?

o   High School

o   Junior College

- o   Bachelors

- o   Masters

- o   Doctoral

Current School Level

What school level are you currently working in?

- o   Pre-K

- o   K-8

- o   High School

- o   Other

School Type

What school type are you currently working in?

- o   Public

- o   Charter

School Size

What size school are you working in?

- o   less than 400 students

- o   401 to 1000 students

- o   1000 to 2000 students

- o   over 2000 students

School Region

What region of the city is your school in?

- o   North side

- o   Northwest side

- o West side

- o South side

- o Far South side

- o Southwest side

- o Central

Educator Survey

Please rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 10, as outlined in each question.

Theme 1: Truancy Task Force

The Truancy Task force was developed to address the empty desk epidemic in Chicago Public Schools. This survey will focus on the six recommendations of the task force and whether they were maintained over time at school sites. We are looking for information on how teachers are supported in addressing chronic absenteeism in their schools. This will give us more information on how we can better serve our students and our teachers in the district.

Q1a: How familiar are you with the truancy task force and their recommendations to CPS? Please rate your familiarity using the 1-10 scale with 1 = no familiarity and 10= high familiarity

Q1b: Please rate your familiarity with each of the following recommendations using the 1-10 scale with 1 = no familiarity and 10= high familiarity

The six recommendations of TTF:

1. Terminology,

2. Data collection and application

3. Prevention,

4. Interventions (including PBIS and MTSS),

5. Program evaluations and monitoring,

6. Further review and analysis

For the next questions, please rate how much you agree with each statement using the 1-10 scale. 1= Do Not Agree to 10 = Strongly Agree

Q3: I have direct experience with the recommendations from the TTF.

Q4: I have direct experience with chronically absent or truant students.

Q5: My school has clearly defined attendance practices.

Q6: I have seen a change in attendance practices over the last 5 to 10 years at my school.

Q7: I was included in the planning for how to combat chronic absenteeism at my school.

Q8: Parents were included in the planning for how to combat chronic absenteeism at my school.

Theme 2: Implementation Drivers

Q1: The following people or groups are **present** at my school: (check all that apply)

Clerks

Attendance coordinator

Counselor

Case manager

Leadership team

Teachers

Automated messages from teacher attendance

LEA

Professional learning community

Data team

Instructional leadership team

Q2: The following people or groups are **involved** in the daily attendance process: (check all that apply)

Clerks

Attendance coordinator

Counselor

Case manager

Leadership team

Teachers

Automated messages from teacher attendance

LEA

Professional learning community

Data team

Instructional leadership team

Q3: The following people or groups **address chronic absenteeism** at my school: (check all that apply)

Clerks

Attendance coordinator

Counselor

Case manager

Leadership team

Teachers

Automated messages from teacher attendance

LEA

Professional learning community

Data team

Instructional leadership team

For the following questions you will circle Yes (Y) or No (N)

Q4: In my school, we take attendance multiple times a day. Y or N

Q5: In my school, the clerk is the first person to handle attendance issues. Y or N

Q6: I have a clear understanding of what unexcused absences are at my school. Y or N

Q7: Parents receive an automated message via phone when their child is absent from school. Y or N

Q8: I reach out to parents on the first day their child is absent. Y or N

Q9: I reach out to parents on the second day their child is absent. Y or N

Q10: I reach out to parents on the third day their child is absent. Y or N

Q11: I reach out to parents after their child has been absent for more than three days. Y or N

Q12: The leadership team at my school handles issues with chronic attendance. Y or N

Theme 3: Building Relationships

For the next questions, please rate how much you agree with each statement using the 1-10 scale. 1= Do Not Agree to 10 = Strongly Agree

Q1: Teachers feel connected with the community at my school.

Q2: Parents are included in planning at my school.

Q3: At my school, we feel that parents are the experts on their child.

Q4: We are a community centered school.

Q5: Students are included in decision making in our school.

Theme 4: Measuring chronic absenteeism

The following questions will ask you to rate how your school measures and defines chronic absenteeism.

Q1: How many days must a student be absent in order to be considered chronically absent?

Q2: What percentage of days of school does a student miss to be considered chronically absent at your school? Ex: 3/5 days missed in a week= 60%

Q3: Do you use the term "truant" in your school? Y or N

Q4: Do you use the term "unexcused absence" in your school? Y or N

Q5: Do you use the term "chronically absent" in your school? Y or N

Q6: How many days must a student miss to be considered truant?

Theme 5: Accommodations to get kids in school

The following questions will ask you about the accommodations that are used to get students to school.

Q1: Does your school use any of the following incentives? Check all that apply

Pizza Parties

Certificates for perfect attendance

Perfect attendance pencil giveaway with school name

Lunch with the teacher

Parent incentives

Other student incentives

Q2: Who decides what incentives are used or offered for students?

District leadership

Regional leadership

School leadership

Grade level leadership

Classroom teacher

Q3: Does your school do home visits for chronically absent students?

Q4: Who does the home visit for chronically absent students? To either get them to school or address issues with the parent. Check all that apply

Teacher

Social worker

Principal

Dean

Assistant principal

SRO

Case Manager

School Clerk

Truancy officer

Other_____

Q5: Is there a disparity between what incentives can be offered, or are different or better incentives able to be offered in your:

District: Yes No

Region: Yes No

School: Yes No

Theme 6: Interventions

The following questions will address the interventions that you use to combat chronic absenteeism at your school.

Q1: Does your school use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)? Yes or No

Q2: Are you a "PBIS school"? Yes or No

Q3: Does your school use multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)? Y or No

Q4: Do you use "Check in Check out" in your classroom? Y or No

Q5: Does anyone in your school use "check in check out"? Y or N

Q6: Do you have a climate and culture team? Y or N

Q7: Do you have a Behavioral health team? Y or N

Q8: Do you serve on a team at your school that addresses attendance interventions? Y or N

Q9: Are you familiar with restorative practices? Y or N

Q10: Have you seen a shift toward restorative practices in your school? Y or N

Q11: Do you employ a responsive classroom?

Q12: Do you use data to support decision-making at your school?

Q13: Are you part of the data process or team at your school?

Q14: As a teacher or administrator, do you keep your own attendance data?

Q15: Is your school considered a Community School?

Q16: Which of the following services or programs are available to your students? (Check all that apply)

Becoming A Man (BAM)

Working On Womanhood (WOW)

Dental services

Health clinic

Money management

Q17: Which of the following services or programs are available to your parents? (Circle all that apply)

Bilingual advisory committee

Community relations representatives

Diverse learner parent supports

Parent involvement specialists

Parent Teacher Organization (PTA)

Parent advisory council

Parent leadership institute

Family and community engagement

Parent collaborative

Community action councils

Parent university

Family advisory board

Chicago Multilingual parent council

Theme 7: Fidelity to interventions

Q1: Who oversees creating and keeping data on attendance? (Check all that apply)

Teachers

Administration

Data specialists

Other_____

Q2: What practices do you use at your school to change behaviors? (Check all that apply)

PBIS

Check in Check out

Restorative practices

MTSS

Community based solutions

Q3: What is your level of confidence in addressing attendance issues at your school? 1- no confidence in ability to address attendance issues to 10 – fully confident in my ability to address attendance issues

Q4: How often do you take your own data on attendance in your classroom?

Every period

Twice daily

Three times daily

I do not take data on attendance in my classroom

Q5: Have you seen a decrease in absences at your school since implementing interventions to address truancy? Y or N

Q6: How often is data shared with teachers and staff?

Daily

Weekly

Bi- weekly

Only at all staff meetings

Data is rarely shared

Data is never shared with teachers and staff at my school

Theme 8: Training and Funding

Q1: I am confident in my ability to read and understand data and charts relating to attendance at my school. 1- no confidence to 10- fully confident

The following questions will ask you how much you agree with each statement. 1 disagree, 2 somewhat disagree, 3 somewhat agree, 4 agree

Q2: My school has received Grants and School Funding to address chronic absenteeism.

Q3: I feel confident in explaining attendance data to parents.

Q3: I have received professional development on interventions (PBIS, Behavior, etc) at my school.

Q4: I have spent my own time reviewing best practices for addressing problematic behaviors in my classroom including attendance.

Q5: I have had training on what prohibits students in my school from attending.

Q6: I have had training on restorative practices.

Q7: My school has a team to plan training opportunities for teachers.

Q8: I have sought out my own funding opportunities for professional development.

Q9: We use some behavior interventions, but not consistently.

Q10: There is a clear difference between tardy and absent at my school.

Q11: We include parents in planning at my school.

Please enter the email address where you would like to receive your gift card.

REFERENCES CITED

Aarons, G. A., Hurlburt, M., & Horwitz, S. M. (2011). Advancing a conceptual model of evidence-based practice implementation in public service sectors. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *38*(1), 4-23.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic absenteeism: Summarizing what we know from nationally available data.* Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Becan, J. E., Bartkowski, J. P., Knight, D. K., Wiley, T. R., DiClemente, R., Ducharme, L., & Aarons, G. A. (2018). A model for rigorously applying the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment (EPIS) framework in the design and measurement of a large-scale collaborative multi-site study. *Health & Justice, 6*(1), 1-14.

Bradshaw, C. P., Koth, C. W., Thornton, L. A., & Leaf, P. J. (2009). Altering school climate through school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Findings from a group-randomized effectiveness trial. *Prevention Science, 10,* 100–115

California Department of Education (2021, December 8). *The California Department of Education's definition of Multi-Tiered System of Support and comparison between it and Response to Instruction and Intervention* [Website]. CDE.CA.gov

Chicago Public Schools (2016, August 16). *CPS students achieve record-high attendance last school year* [Press release]. http://www.cps.edu

Losen, D., Hodson, C., Keith, M, Morrison, K, & Belway, S. (2015, February). *Are we closing the school discipline gap?* The Civil Rights Project. Civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

Civil Rights Data Collection (2018). 2017-18 State and National Estimations. Ocrdata.ed.gov

Connolly, F., & Olson, L.S. (2012) *Early elementary performance and attendance in Baltimore City Schools' pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.* Baltimore Education Research Consortium.

Cook, D. A. (2012). If you teach them, they will learn: why medical education needs comparative effectiveness research. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, *17*(3), 305-310.

Costello, A. B., & Osborne, J. (2005). Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: Four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, *10*(1), 7.

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*. John Wiley & Sons.

Eddy, D. M. (2005). *A manual for assessing health practices & designing practice policies: the explicit approach*. American College of Physicians.

Ehrlich, S.B., Gwynne, J.S., Pareja, A.S., & Allensworth, E.M. (2013). *Preschool attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with learning outcomes and reasons for absences.* University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge.

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G* Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior research methods*, *39*(2), 175-191.

Every Student Succeeds Act. (2015, December). US Department of Education. Ed.gov/essa

Fixsen, D. L., Van Dyke, M., & Blase, K. A. (2019). Science and implementation. *Active Implementation Research Network. Retrieved August*, *7*, 2021.

Freeman, J., Simonsen, B., McCoach, D. B., Sugai, G., Lombardi, A., & Horner, R. (2016). Relationship between school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports and academic, attendance, and behavior outcomes in high schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *18*(1), 41-51.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and Reference: 11.0 update* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Gershenson, S., Jacknowitz, A., & Brannegan, A. (2016). Are student absences worth the worry in U.S. primary schools? *Education Finance and Policy.*

Ginsberg, A., Chang, H., & Jordan, P. (2014). *Absences add up: How school attendance influences student success.* www.attendanceworks.org/absences-add-up

Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage Publications.

Gottfried M.A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 19*, 53-75.

Hair, J.F., Tatham, R.L., Anderson, R.E., & Black, W. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis.* (5th ed.) Prentice-Hall.

Jackson, D., Marx, G., Richards, A. (2012, November). *An empty-desk epidemic.* The Chicago Tribune.

Kearney, C. A., Gonzálvez, C., Graczyk, P. A., & Fornander, M. J. (2019). Reconciling contemporary approaches to school attendance and school absenteeism: Toward promotion and nimble response, global policy review and implementation, and future adaptability (Part 1). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2222.

Krueger, R., & Casey, M. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th Ed.). Sage Publication.

Lewis, T. J., & Sugai, G. (1999). Effective behavior support: A systems approach to proactive school wide management. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 31,* 1–24

Löfgren, K. [kentlofgren]. (2013, May 19). *Qualitative analysis of interview data: A step-by-step guide* [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRL4PF2u9XA&t=41s

Lynch, L., Castro, J., Burwell, S., & Duncan, A. (2015, October). *Dear colleague letter: Chronic absenteeism.* https://www2. ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/151007.html

Martinez, S. (2009). A System Gone Berserk: How Are Zero-Tolerance Policies Really Affecting Schools? *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth,53*(3), 153- 158. doi:10.3200/psfl.53.3.153-158

Marek, M. (2015). *Re: Does anyone know how to analyze Focus Group Discussion (qualitative data)?.* https://www.researchgate.net/post/Does-anyone-know-how-to-analyze-Focus-Group-Discussion-qualitative-data/566b901e7eddd308618b4569/citation/download.

Moullin, J. C., Dickson, K. S., Stadnick, N. A., Albers, B., Nilsen, P., Broder-Fingert, S., Mukasa, B., & Aarons, G. A. (2020). Ten recommendations for using implementation frameworks in research and practice. *Implementation science communications*, *1*(1), 1-12.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009). A qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing data in focus group research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *8*(3), 1-21.

PBIS (2022). Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [Website]. www.pbis.org.

Proctor, E., Silmere, H., Raghavan, R., Hovmand, P., Aarons, G., Bunger, A., Griffey, R., & Hensley, M.(2010). Outcomes for implementation research: conceptual distinctions, measurement challenges, and research agenda. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *38*(2), 65-76.

Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Stormont, M. (2013). Classroom-level positive behavior supports in schools implementing SW-PBIS: Identifying areas for enhancement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *15*(1), 39-50.

Rocque, M., Jennings, W.G., Piquero, A.R., Ozkan, T., & Farrington, D.P. (2016). The importance of school attendance: Findings from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development on the Life-Course Effects of Truancy. *Crime & Delinquency, 63,* 592-612.

Saldana, J. (2015). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage.

Simson, D. (2014). Exclusion, Punishment, Racism and Our Schools: A Critical Race Theory Perspective On School Discipline. *UCLA Law Review,506*, 507-563.

Sprick, J., & Sprick, R. (2018). *School leader's guide to tackling attendance challenges*. ASCD.

Thurlow, M., Albus, D. A., & Lazarus, S.S. (2017). *2014-15 publicly reported assessment results for students with disabilities and ELs with disabilities* (NCEO Report 405). University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force. (2014). *Final report to the Illinois general assembly.* http://isbe.net

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). http://ed.gov/essa

U.S. Department of Education. (2016a). 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC): First look: Key data highlights on equity and opportunity gaps in our nation's public schools. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2016b). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States.* https://nces.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.asp

U.S. Department of Education. (2019). Chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools: A hidden educational crisis. https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html