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The Evaluation of a School-Court Program that Deals with Chronic Absenteeism of Middle School Students

Robert A. Duell
Western Michigan University

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THE EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM
THAT DEALS WITH CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM
OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Robert A. Duell

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Western Michigan University
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THE EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM
THAT DEALS WITH CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM
OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Robert A. Duell, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 1984

The purposes of this study were to examine the perceptions of middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges regarding chronic absenteeism of rural middle school students and to evaluate a school-court pilot program designed to deal with chronic attendance problems.

Four major research questions were examined in this paper. First, do rural middle schools have chronically absent students? Second, if there are such students, is their chronic absenteeism symptomatic of other serious problems? Third, if there are such students, do the school administrators, probation officers, and judges want to cooperate to deal with those students? Finally, do these three groups have different perceptions of the effectiveness of the proposed school-court truancy program.

The method of data collection was survey research. An instrument was sent to a sample of middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges.

Four hypotheses examining the significant differences in the perceived effectiveness of each step of the pilot program by these groups were tested by use of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Analysis of the data did not indicate any significant
differences. Therefore, no conclusions about different perceptions of this program by these three groups can be made. Further analysis of the data did show that the four steps of the pilot program were strongly supported by these groups. Four other hypotheses were developed to test the differences in the perceptions of each group concerning the extent of the absenteeism, whether absenteeism is symptomatic of other school and/or home problems, and whether the surveyed groups presently work together to deal with the chronic absentee problem. When testing these hypotheses, the alpha level of .05 was used in the chi square of independence. It was concluded that there was a difference in the percentage of chronic absentees as perceived by each of the surveyed groups. However, no significant differences were found for the other three hypotheses. Further examination of the descriptive data tended to establish that all groups perceived that chronic absentees have other school and/or home problems, and that the three surveyed groups do cooperate in dealing with chronic absentees.
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THE EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM THAT DEALS WITH CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Western Michigan University

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my parents,

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph William Duell.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of this paper was a tedious labor demanding much time and energy. Time and energy afforded by the support and encouragement of many. Special thanks must go to Dr. Richard Munsterman, committee chairman, for his patience and persistent prodding. He seemed to know the appropriate time to support, challenge, or threaten. Dr. Munsterman's counseling has been a real help in my professional growth.

A further acknowledgment must be made to Dr. Carol Sheffer, who first encouraged me to pursue a doctorate through her excitement and enthusiasm about the field of educational leadership. A special note of gratitude must be made to Dr. Sheffer for her patience and guidance in the writing and rewriting of the paper. It was she who helped me tackle a major weakness—communicating in the written form.

Special thanks must also go to Judge Gene Duffin, who supported the pilot program written for this paper. He has been very supportive of me and of other school administrators who are attempting to use the pilot program to deal with absenteeism and its implications. Judge Duffin's positive concern for youth has been a constant encouragement for me as an educational administrator as well as a doctoral candidate.

An additional note of appreciation must also go to my boss, Dr. Kent Evans, whose encouragement and friendship were very meaningful.
The dissertation would never have been finished without the constant support of my wife, Jane. She assumed the role of mother and father when studies and writing occupied so much of my time. To my children, Nathan, Joshua, and Carrie, a special thank you filled with love must be made for all their patience and concern.

Robert A. Duell
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The importance of mandatory school attendance has been a controversial issue since the beginning of American education. As early as 1789, Thomas Jefferson began to speak out on behalf of free, compulsory education. Jefferson emphasized his belief that education of the population would minimize the threat of political tyranny by seeking out and cultivating the natural talents of American children (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Jefferson promoted compulsory education, but many years would follow before the general populous would accept Jefferson's notion. Slowly, people began to realize the importance of education, but over 50 years passed before people were concerned enough to spend tax money to support the public school. However, by 1848, 24 of the 30 states had a state office of education and had levied a school tax (Good, 1964).

The adoption of a school tax by state legislatures made money available to support schools for the population but still did not completely convince the population to accept the concept of compulsory attendance. Some parents feared schools would corrupt the religious views of the child. For other families, the child had already entered the work force and financially could not be spared for schooling. Some families were simply not informed about the
educational opportunities that were available.

It soon became obvious that a legal device was needed to enforce school attendance. The Massachusetts legislature pioneered the first compulsory school attendance law in 1852, and the concept of compulsory school attendance has continued to grow. Presently, all states except Mississippi have compulsory attendance laws. With the enactment of mandatory attendance laws, the initial enrollment of a student in school was assured; however, new concerns emerged. How many days should a child attend? What should constitute an acceptable absence? How should the school deal with absentees? Hence, the problem of absenteeism developed early in the history of compulsory education and continues to concern school administrators.

It is obvious that all school children are not able to have perfect attendance. Almost all children are unable to attend school at some point during the school year because of sickness. A student may have a dental or medical appointment which forces him/her to miss some school. A student may have to miss school to attend a family funeral or to appear in court. Absences of this nature are neither a threat to the education of the student nor a problem to the administrator. However, according to a report compiled by the Educational Research Service (ERS) in 1977, absences due to illness or other acceptable reasons accounted for only 4% of the total days of school. That is to say, in a school year of 180 days, the average absence rate due to illness or other acceptable reasons is only about 7 days of the entire school year.
By contrast, an absentee rate that exceeds this 4% rate may threaten the education of the student and does create problems for the educator. The educational concern addressed in this study was the truant or chronically absent student. Most judges and probation officers consider a student who is absent more than 10% of the school year as a chronic absentee (L. Frey, personal communication, January 1982). Considering the ERS statistic of a 4% absentee rate, using a 10% figure to represent chronic absenteeism seems reasonable.

Chronic absenteeism is joined by truancy as an important concern for the educational administrator. The severity of truancy is stated in the Indiana Law 20-8.1-3-31 (28-5335):

Confirmed truants—On petition or recommendation of the attendance officer and superintendent having jurisdiction and a child who habitually absents himself from school in violation of this chapter (20-8.1-3-1—24 20-8.1-3-37) may be tried by the judge of any juvenile, circuit or superior court.

It is this truancy and chronic absenteeism that this study examines.

In a 1976 poll of 500 members of the National Association of Secondary School Administrators, only vandalism outranked absenteeism as an administrator's biggest concern (ERS, 1977). This concern was echoed by the public in a 1982 poll where only drug and alcohol problems outranked absenteeism as a major concern (Gallup, 1982). Educators must meet the problem of chronic absenteeism directly and formulate programs that encourage attendance of poor attenders.

It is appropriate to note that even though absenteeism is a significant concern for school officials, the number of students who
are chronically absent or truant is small. The Educational Research Service (1977) indicated that the average absentee rate across the nation is 9%. However, this figure is the percentage of total absentees, not those who are the problem attenders. The report further explains that problem attenders range from a low of 1% to a high of 26% to the total school district population, with the national average being 4% of the students (ERS, 1977). This study examines truancy and absenteeism among problem attenders.

If the concern over absenteeism does not seem justified by the low percentage of chronically absent students in a school, it must be stressed that chronic absenteeism is a strong indicator of other social problems. Saccuzzo and Milligan (1973), in a Juvenile Justice Task Force Report, suggested the major reason chronic absenteeism, no matter how small the percentage, must be dealt with when they stated:

Standard groups, commentators and experts agree that erratic attendance and poor patterns of school behavior are some of the primary indicators of delinquent tendencies. Today's truant is tomorrow's school dropout, unemployable and forced to resort to crime to earn a livelihood. (p. 31)

An Elkhart County, Indiana, probation officer stated in an interview that many times delinquency starts in the home, surfaces in the school, and finally winds up in the streets (L. Frey, personal communication, January 1982). It is, therefore, very important to identify a student's problem at an early age.

Because chronic absenteeism is often a sign of other problems, dealing effectively with attendance offenders is an important portion of the administrator's day. A poll by Gallup (1982) found that
administrators spend more time dealing with the chronically absent student than with most other problems in the school. However, much controversy exists over the method of handling chronic absenteeism. Some educators believe that eliminating mandatory attendance is the answer. Johnson (1973) stated:

Any expectation that the social and economic problems created by children being out of school can be solved by enforcing more and longer attendance should be abandoned. Recognizing that school learning cannot be fostered in a compulsory format as we now have it is the first step in alleviating the problem. (p. 227)

Another view is that enforcement of compulsory education by the courts is the only answer to the school's dilemma. Novak (1973), in the University of Pittsburgh Law Review, stated:

If the assumption is that each child must receive a given amount of formalized schooling to obtain the tools he or she needs to become a law-abiding and productive member of society, some form of coerced involvement in the educational process will be necessary to deal with those who shun the socializing process. Some commentators note that to expect the school to deal with the problem of a child who is not in attendance is unrealistic. The only institution with ultimate constitutional ability to intervene is the court. To place this responsibility with any other group, be it public or private would be a basic denial of due process of law. (p. 73)

In the case of the 3%-4% of chronic absentees, the most effective method of dealing with the problem may be with the involvement and cooperation of the judicial system. Since poor attendance is a potential indicator of other problems, school administrators should receive help in dealing with the actual causes of the poor attendance record. The judicial system can be used to establish a positive and acceptable means for controlling student behavior.
Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the chronic absenteeism of seventh and eighth grade students in rural schools. Several questions are addressed. First, do rural communities have chronic absentee problems? Do administrators, judges, and probation officers believe that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of other problems? Finally, what can be done to reduce chronic absenteeism in the rural schools?

Significance of the Study

The assumption of this study is that chronic absenteeism is a symptom of other problems that are potentially more serious. The study becomes significant when the early identification of a chronically absent student leads to the discovery of that student's real problem. With the early identification of the root problem, a solution becomes a real possibility. By identifying the cause of chronic absenteeism in the seventh and eighth grade, schools and outside agencies have more opportunities to encourage the behavioral and/or environmental adjustments that may alleviate the absentee's problem. Effectively dealing with the root problem should improve the attendance of the student which may in turn enable the school to have more time to prepare that student before high school. Dealing effectively with a student's problem before high school could decrease the high school dropout rate.
Dealing at an early age with the root problems leading to absenteeism could also decrease the rate of juvenile delinquency. A director of probation in an Indiana county believes that early detection and intervention of juvenile delinquency is one of the most promising ways to change the delinquent behavior of the individual (D. Rathbone, personal communication, July 1982). In many cases, when the delinquent tendencies were not identified until a student had committed a crime it was too late for the school or public agencies to effectively reverse the delinquent tendency. If, in fact, chronic absenteeism in the seventh and eighth grade is an indicator of delinquent tendencies, this early detection can allow time for the counseling necessary to encourage an effective change in behavior.

The early detection and/or prevention of delinquent tendencies, the increased success of the student, and the reduction of the school dropout and juvenile delinquency rate make this study potentially significant to the school, to the court system, and to the community.

This researcher developed a program that combines the work of the school and the work of the judicial department in dealing with chronically absent seventh and eighth graders. Hopefully, this pilot program and the information gained through surveying middle school administrators, judges, and probation departments involved with the program will provide useful information to other professionals as they attempt to deal with chronically absent children.
Research Questions

Four major questions are examined in this study: (1) Do rural middle schools have chronically absent seventh and/or eighth graders? (2) If there are such students, is their chronic absenteeism symptomatic of other serious problems? (3) If there are such students, do the school administrators, probation officers, and judges want to cooperate to deal with those students? (4) Do juvenile judges, probation officers, and middle school principals have different perceptions of the effectiveness of the proposed School-Court Truancy Program?

Overview of the Study

Chapter I includes a discussion of the historical background of compulsory attendance, a brief identification of the need for the enforcement of school attendance laws, and finally, an identification of problems associated with chronic absenteeism. That chronic absenteeism of seventh and eighth graders is a symptom of more serious problems is stressed. The early detection of chronically absent tendencies should enable school officials to help a student deal with his/her problems related to absenteeism.

Chapter II includes a report of the examination of literature related to chronic absenteeism as a problem as well as a symptom of more serious problems. The literature review includes a report of the examination of programs that have been used to deal effectively with chronic absenteeism and truancy.
Chapter III contains a description of the pilot program established to deal with truants and chronic absentees and of the statistics obtained when the pilot program was in effect from 1979 to 1982. The chapter also includes a statement of the hypotheses established from the research questions and the methods used to test the hypotheses. The development of the instrument, the determination of the population, the sampling procedure, and the method of data collection are also explained in Chapter III.

Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data gathered and the results of the hypothesis testing. The response rate and problems encountered during data collection are included in Chapter IV.

The final chapter includes conclusions drawn by the researcher concerning the analyzed data and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The issues of attendance, chronic absenteeism, and truancy are well-researched topics. The literature examined for purposes of this study included topics ranging from the controversy over compulsory attendance versus voluntary attendance to the problems of truancy and chronic absenteeism. The literature reviewed dealt extensively with a variety of factors that affect attendance.

The literature reviewed for this study is presented in six sections. The first section provides the historical perspective for compulsory attendance. The second section presents an historical view of the involvement of the juvenile court with schools and particularly with school attendance. The third section, which presents reviews of literature relating to attendance problems, is followed by section four, a discussion of the controversy over the involvement of the juvenile court in school attendance problems. Section five examines literature regarding the problems of chronic absenteeism and truancy. Finally, section six identifies the present school-law enforcement programs dealing with truancy and chronic absenteeism.
History of Attendance

The concept of a free and universal education has been a major issue since the very beginnings of this country. The belief in the value of the education of the masses was a logical outgrowth of our nation's newly-created democracy. One of the first and foremost spokesmen for the cause of free universal education was Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson (cited in Butts & Cremen, 1953) held that the education of the population would minimize the threat of political tyranny by seeking and cultivating the natural talents of children.

Jefferson's views were not readily accepted at the time they were introduced. Colonial education had been family-based. Formal, public education was considered to be of secondary importance to family and/or religious instruction. However, as the new country and its economy grew, the need for improved education became evident. The United States was changing from a rural, frontier society to an urban-based industrialized country, and this change served as a catalyst for educational development (Brookover, 1974). The early assumed need of an education to strengthen the church and family unit had changed to the assumed need to educate people in the methods of living and coping with a new faster-moving society.

By 1848, 70 years after Jefferson had spoken out for free universal education, advocates of free, tax-supported education had finally prevailed. Twenty-four of the then 30 states of the Union had state-level school offices and were collecting tax money for the support of public education (Good, 1964). It became evident at this
point in the history of the United States, that more people believed in the value of free universal education as a method to improve the American life.

The American people believed that an education was important and the emphasis now switched to methods to insure that all children attend school. Early school administrators were plagued with problems of irregular attendance. It became evident that a method for the enforcement of attendance was necessary. Massachusetts pioneered the first compulsory school attendance law in 1852: "Every child between seven and fourteen shall attend some public school in the city or town in which they reside during the entire time the public day schools are in session" (Laws of Massachusetts, 1852/1902, p. 477). Many other states followed the example of Massachusetts with compulsory school attendance laws. However, new attendance laws often met with stiff resistance. Resistance was even evident within the ranks of educators. In 1890, Oscar H. Cooper (cited in G. Abbott, 1938), State Superintendent of Education in Texas, in an address to the National Education Association, said:

I hold that compulsory education is contrary to the dominant idea which has pervaded the development of the American institution. Education is the inherent right of the family and parents. The dangers to the welfare of society resulting from a great mass of illiteracy are appalling, but the evils of illiteracy are less perilous than those which result from the distraction of parental authority and loosening of family ties. (pp. 310-311)

The compulsory education controversy raged until the attendance laws were finally tested by the court. As early as 1901, a court case to determine the constitutionality of compulsory attendance set
legal precedence. The Indiana Supreme Court, in the case, State v. Bally (1901), upheld the constitutionality of the compulsory attendance law. The court held that the parent is obligated to educate his child not only as a duty owed to the child but also as a duty to the state. Cooper and others who resisted compulsory education did not prevail. By 1920 all states but Mississippi had compulsory attendance laws, and the right of the state to enforce the law was well-accepted by the general public (Good, 1964).

However, several attacks on the constitutionality of the compulsory attendance law were still made. In a 1925 court case, the right of a parent to educate his child in private schools was insured by the United States Supreme Court. In the case, Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925), the Supreme Court ruled that laws requiring attendance at a public school were an unconstitutional interference with the liberty of parents to provide education for their child. The Pierce v. Society of Sisters decision did not negate the compulsory attendance law but rather held that private as well as public schools had the same interest in education. The court decision provided the child an option to meet the compulsory attendance law.

Other assaults have been made on the compulsory attendance law through the state courts and through the United States Supreme Court but to very little avail. In 1970, in the case of Oklahoma City v. York, the first preliminary injunction requiring parents to send their child to school was issued. In this 1970 decision, a parent was not sending his child to a newly integrated school, and the judge's decision emphasized the responsibility of a parent to insure
that his/her child attend school.

In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld the Amish claim for exemption to compulsory school attendance in the Wisconsin v. Yoder (cited in Reutter & Hamilton, 1976) decision. The Amish stated that schooling beyond the eighth grade was an interference with their religious beliefs. This decision in favor of the Amish claim is the only decision that contradicts the compulsory attendance law. This exemption was made after several attempts by well-established religious groups on behalf of religious freedom.

Today many are speaking in favor of and in opposition to the compulsory attendance law. William F. Russell (cited in Butts, 1973), Professor of Education at Columbia University, recently stated, "Our concept of a just society based upon principals of liberty and equality requires a public education available to all" (p. 240). Russell also expressed the belief that there is overwhelming evidence that American public schools have been one major factor in providing a higher per capita economic level in America than in any other country. Therefore, in Russell's view, not to require attendance to school would be devastating to American society.

Another test of the peoples' views of compulsory attendance laws came in a Gallup Poll (Gallup, 1972). Over 90% of the public favored compulsory attendance at least for the elementary and junior high school grades. Seventy-three percent of the total public and 56% of professional educators polled favored compulsory attendance through senior high school.
Obviously, the compulsory education law has weathered a great deal of criticism. After many years of court tests and decisions the compulsory law has been upheld in every state in the Union except Mississippi. The public, for the most part, no longer questions the right of the school to demand the attendance of every school-aged child.

However, a new problem has become evident. Who should enforce the law and how should that law be enforced? It is important at this point, to examine the history of the juvenile court and its involvement in school affairs, notably in attendance problems.

History of the Juvenile Court System

Before the introduction of a separate juvenile court system, juvenile and adult offenders were handled in the same manner. Children were tried for their crimes in adult criminal courts and were often sent to the same jails or prisons as adult offenders. As early as 1825, the need for separate treatment of juvenile and adult offenders was noted. Founders of juvenile justice reform insisted that children be housed in different facilities. The early pioneers in juvenile reform held that the retraining of the child should be of paramount importance (Bremner, 1971). According to Bremner (1971), the early reformers "conceded that childhood diminished responsibility for crime... They aimed instead to train youths to become independent moral agents by inculcating them with workshop habits, Protestant pieties, and common school skills" (p. 671). The early reformers paved the way for the development of the juvenile court...
system. By 1912, 22 states had set up juvenile courts dedicated to the discipline or punishment of the juvenile offender (President's Commission on Law Enforcement, 1967).

One of the chief offenses addressed by the juvenile courts was the enforcement of the state's compulsory attendance law. The juvenile court was created to deal with juveniles involved in noncriminal offenses, i.e., truancy. In fact, many of the early juvenile courts were made up of school officials (truancy officers, teachers, and administrators) who assumed responsibility for the supervision of school-aged minors who were truant (Platt, 1969). It is obvious that the creation of the juvenile court system in the United States was born for the most part out of the need to deal efficaciously with attendance problems.

From the very conception of the juvenile court the goal of the judicial system was to retain and reform the offender (Mach, 1909-1910). Today's court still deals with truants and chronic absentees. All across America, schools and school administrators judges and juvenile court officers have a common goal: to encourage an education. This study investigated whether this common goal was being pursued today by examining the hypotheses that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators had the same attitude about working together to deal with chronic absentees.

Absenteeism: How Prevalent?

Truancy and chronic absenteeism have been rated by members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals as major...
problems ("Student Absenteeism", 1978). A study done by the National Center for Education Statistics, a division of the U.S. Office of Education, shows that from 1929-1930 to the 1975-1976 school year the average daily attendance rose from 82.8% to 92.3%. These statistics show absenteeism to be declining, yet truancy and chronic absenteeism continue to be ranked as major problems by secondary school administrators (Educational Research Service, 1977). Ninety-two and three-tenths percent overall average attendance seems to be an excellent daily attendance average until one examines a report given in the NASSP Journal, The Practitioner, entitled "Student Attendance and Absenteeism" (1975). Health officials estimate that a normal rate of pupil absence due to illness should be about 4.5% a year. This means that on the average approximately 4% of the absentees are missing for no satisfactory reason. It is that 4% figure that is alarming.

In specific geographic areas, the problems are much more severe. Ten schools targeted for examination in New Orleans had a daily average attendance of 78% in 1974-1975 (Educational Research Service, 1977). In Baltimore, Baltimore Evening Star writer, Stephen McKerrow (cited in Educational Research Service, 1977) reported that by June 1976, 36,000 or more Baltimore public school students had missed 40 or more days in the school year 1975-1976.

In 1966, the low mean number of unexcused absences in the San Francisco high schools was 5.5 per student. In 1968, the low mean was 10.6 unexcused absences per student (Meyer, Chase, & Invearity, 1971). More recent figures show that the problem still exists in San Francisco. A study in 1974 showed that 22% of all high school
students had accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences (Dornbusch, 1974).

In New York City, the daily average attendance fell from 80% in 1967 to 73.5% in 1972, and in some New York City high schools, there was almost a 50% absenteeism rate ("Attendance Statistics," 1972). In 1975-1976, the very best average daily attendance in the New York City schools was 84%, according to Carne (cited in Birman & Natriello, 1978). In large schools like New York City, the percentage of chronically absent students is 15-30%, and in a nationwide survey the average of chronically absent students was 4% (Educational Research Service, 1977). Regardless of the percentage of chronically absent students, absenteeism is seen by school administrators as a major problem (Duke & Meckel, 1980).

The literature suggested that in the rural schools, absenteeism is also a problem; and despite the attention given to it, the problem continues. Although chronic absenteeism involves a minority of students, the problems that may ensue warrant the concern of administrators.

Because of the suggestions revealed in the reviewed literature, the extent of chronic absenteeism in rural Indiana is examined in this study. One of the hypothesis tested in this study was: The percentage of chronic absentees in each county will be perceived to be different by judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.
That chronic absenteeism exists is well established in the review of literature. A discussion of why absenteeism is prevalent follows.

Absence: Why Is it Prevalent?

The reasons for the increase of unexplained chronic absenteeism are significant and should be examined. Educational philosopher Ziegler, as early as 1928, stated: "When writing on truancy or chronic absence from school most authors suggest to us strongly that these factors are symptoms of other elements which are more important than the absence and their effect upon the scholastic progress of the child" (p. 28). Although very few people listened to Ziegler at that time, the view that chronic absenteeism was "symptomatic" became a prevalent theory in later literature. Birman and Natriello (1978) stated: "Absence is a symptomatic behavior associated with certain other independent variables each of which tends to be individually symptomatic of an unfavorable adjustment between learner and the educational and social environment in which he is operating" (p. 33). Chronic absenteeism viewed as a symptom suggests that administrators should discover the cause of the absence. It might then be possible to deal appropriately with the chronically absent student.

One of the causes of absenteeism may be teacher attitude toward the student. Ziegler (1928) believed that teacher attitude toward the student affected attendance. Teachers who showed extensive interest in the students had better attendance records in their classes. More recently Braithwait and Wilson (cited in Giamundo,
1981) completed research that showed that chronically absent students most frequently believed that their teachers did not care about them. They believed that they were being picked on and that the teacher's expectations were too high. Consequently, the chronically absent are often frustrated and lacking in confidence. McMillian (1976) concluded that formation of a student's attitude toward school was strongly influenced by teacher interaction, pupil background, and parental attitude.

A survey conducted in 1965 determined that family structure, socioeconomic status, and the education of the parents were factors which affected a child's attendance (Giamundo, 1981). This survey suggests that a confused or unstable family structure and a low socioeconomic status are factors which can contribute to chronic absenteeism. Carroll (1977) believed that pupil problems such as truancy were best explained by examining people's homes and neighborhoods. Morris (1972), in an article in Today's Education, stated that both school and police officials believe that unhappiness at home is a major factor in truancy cases. Farmington (1972), in an article in New Society, stated that truants and delinquents have been found to differ from other children in having less satisfactory home backgrounds.

Involvement in the drug culture can affect a student's attendance pattern just as teacher attitude and the pupil backgrounds affect student's attendance. McDonald (cited in Morris, 1972) an attorney and former Supreme Court Justice in the state of New York, expressed his belief that the continued use of marijuana among
adolescents results in a lackadasical, amoral lifestyle. He stated that students using marijuana cease to be motivated to improve their capacities for education or employment (p. 41). Lack of motivation often accounts for poor attendance in school. In agreement with McDonald, Morris (1972) concurred that the current drug culture was doing more than its share to increase truancy directly or indirectly.

Many researchers believe that in order to examine absenteeism, one must examine society as a whole. Absenteeism cannot be explained in a simplistic way. It is the holistic result of many complicated factors. However, most all researchers agree that absenteeism is a symptom of other deeper problems. These problems, however complicated or varied they may be, must be dealt with effectively. Some literature discussing the causes of absenteeism stress absenteeism as the problem, but current researchers believe that absenteeism is a symptom of other problems. That chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of other problems is examined in this study through the testing of the following hypotheses:

1. Judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions in response to the question that chronic absenteees have other school problems.

2. Judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions in response to the question that chronic absenteees have other home problems.
Effects of Absenteeism on the Individual and Society

Researchers have determined that good attendance patterns positively affect grades. The longer a student was absent from school the more that absence adversely affected the grades (Ziegler, 1928). Gulick (1973) and Brooks (1974) both placed irregular school attendance and truancy as major causes of pupils leaving school. In 1972, research was conducted that showed that a high rate of absenteeism was also one of the causes of the persistent decline in Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores (Wirtz, 1977). An additional factor was that absenteeism can result in loss of a chance to acquire necessary credentials, i.e., a high school diploma.

In 1979, research called Operation Stay in School was conducted (Technical Assistance Bulletin #15, 1979). The following conclusion was made:

Truancy decreases student learning time and may eventually end in dropping out or repeating grades all of which waste school resources. Truancy is also seen as increasing the incidence of crime such as burglary, vandalism and drug trafficking and may lead to the student being institutionalized thus incurring the subsequent cost to the community and society. (p. 3)

The negative ramifications of truancy are far-reaching. Continuing in the examination of the effect of absenteeism on society, it is noted by Birman and Natriello (1978) that:

From the societal perspective, high school absenteeism presents short term and long term problems. The immediate problems are the delinquency and crime which occur when large numbers of adolescents are out of school and unemployed and left with nothing constructive to occupy their time. The long term problem is created by these same students when they fail to acquire the basic competency necessary for a productive adult life. (p. 31)
Contemporary research affirms that the school truancy may result in serious complications.

A program implemented in 1972 in Los Angeles provides evidence of the affects the truant has on society. The Los Angeles police launched a major assault on daytime juvenile crime in the city's highest crime rate area. Over a 4-day period, 174 juveniles were apprehended for truancy violation. The resultant drop in daytime crime was remarkable. During the time the youths were taken off the streets and returned to school, daytime burglaries dropped 30% and daytime auto thefts dropped an unbelievable 75% (Morris, 1972).

In the work world, attendance is essential. The following policy statement written by the New York State Educational Department (cited in Giamundo, 1981) clearly shows the importance of attendance and its effects today:

> Attendance is the result of habits good or bad which develop during the years an individual is in school. We in the schools must do our best to prevent such habits from taking root. We are living in an era when attendance is important. It is important on the job, in business or industry. Management consultants conclude that absenteeism is one of the top supervisory headaches in business today. It affects cost, profits, and the individual progress in his job no matter how competent he may be otherwise. (p. 34)

The New York State Educational Department policy statement considers the relationship between nonattendance and the potential development of school failure and maladjustment and delinquency to be a strong relationship.

Schepses (1973) researched the truant and made the following statement: "Today's truant is tomorrow's school dropout,
unemployable, and forced to resort to crime to earn a livelihood" (p. 42). Such literature affirms the importance of dealing effectively with the truant or excessively absent student.

In an article in the *Journal of Child Psychology*, Berg, Hullin, McGuire, and Tyler (1977) made this statement about truancy: "The main significance of truancy or child psychiatry lies in its being a common symptom of conduct disturbance and closely associated with other kinds of delinquent behavior" (p. 359). All of this research supports the need for regular school attendance, the serious problems of the chronically absent, and the complex factors causing absenteeism. The present problem of absenteeism does not merely touch the lives of the truant but is rather all encompassing. The truant, the taxpayer, the citizen, and the society as a whole are affected by this problem. With the severity and complexity of the problem in mind, the question of the court's involvement can be presented.

**Should the Court Be Involved With School Attendance Problems**

The topic of court involvement for adolescents has been debated for several years. Historically, the juvenile court has been involved with the enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws. However, the type of offenses to be tried in juvenile court are still debated. The term "status offenses" has been established to refer to those offenses that, when committed by a juvenile, are illegal but when committed by an adult are not illegal. Examples of status offenses are truancy, runaway, and incorrigibility.
There was much written in the 1970s against juvenile court jurisdiction over status offenses. Baylor (cited in Braden, 1978) believed that the juvenile court has no jurisdiction to commit children in status offenses. He further believed that the court is a dumping ground for agencies who cannot successfully deal with these children. He stressed that the community should find a solution to deal with these children through existing community social services. He also stressed that neither the parents nor the community need to look for solutions while the juvenile court is available.

Some literature discusses the negative aspects of court involvement in status offenses. Calof (1973), in a paper prepared for the Youth Council on Corrections, had the concern that having a child go through the court system has an adverse effect on the child. This is the "labeling theory" that a child called a delinquent becomes a delinquent. Another critic (Johnson, 1973) stated that the financial and social cost of enforcing compulsory attendance especially through the court is not worth the effort.

Some experts suggest that the court's power to intervene in the case of truancy should be exercised only when a child's continued absence from school clearly indicates that he/she is in need of services and that all possibilities for obtaining these services outside the court system have been employed and exhausted. Even though a review of literature uncovers many views against juvenile court becoming involved with status offenses, especially truancy, many researchers support court involvement.
Some experts believe that truancy and other status offenses are signs of more complex problems which may result in further acts of juvenile delinquency. Lindsey (1974) believed that although the particular behavior forming the basis for court intervention may appear relatively insignificant, it is likely to be indicative of some serious underlying difficulty, possibly even more serious a difficulty than would be indicated by a criminal act. In a project completed in 1977 by the U.S. Department of Justice, an excellent rationale for using the court was given:

Rationale for using the court is characterized by the belief that poor behavior and attendance in school are early indicators of delinquency and that today's truant will become tomorrow's dropout with little choice of finding a good job resulting in his/her turning to criminal means of support. Inability or unwillingness to follow commands of parents or school authorities is seen as indicative of an ultimate inability or unwillingness to conform to the society's criminal law. (p. 42)

That excessive absenteeism is indicative of other problems is significant to the thrust of this research, as is the tendency of the schools to use the courts for support in reaching the truant. Involvement with the court enables school administrators to seek the aid of community professionals (i.e., social workers, probation officers, and judges) in the early identification of and intervention in the students' problems. Thus, the pathway to the early detection of juvenile problems by the schools can be an aid to the juvenile court process.

Elliot (1923) stated that "the presence of a court with ample jurisdiction and a tradition of wise precedents would greatly strengthen the hands of competent educational authorities"
The key words of these passages are "strengthen the hands of competent educational authorities." Surely literature affirms that addressing the attendance problem as early as possible may deter delinquent behavior in the future. In 1923, according to Elliot, juvenile reformers believed that the school could use the courts to encourage or force parents to meet their obligation to their children. They believed that such court involvement could greatly strengthen the hands of competent educational authorities.

Another Task Force on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime (President's Commission on Law Enforcement, 1972) made this statement: "A firm objective way is needed to apply the truancy laws, fortify flagging parents, and encourage substitutes of healthful for self-destructive truants before it is too late" (p. 15). Such a firm and objective way can be implemented by the juvenile courts.

In the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice report in 1967, it was stated that there was very little dispute over the fact that juvenile delinquency is closely associated with all types of childhood educational problems. Since there is little dispute that these problems are related, there should be more examples of cooperation between the two agencies. Many experts stress that the school should not be required to enforce attendance. The enforcement of school attendance should be placed in the hands of the court. Novak (1973) stated:

If the assumption is that each child must receive a given amount of formalized schooling to obtain the tools he or she needs to become a law abiding and productive member of society some form of coerced involvement is necessary to deal with those who shun this socializing process.
Some commentators note that to expect the school to deal with the problem of a child who is not even in attendance is unrealistic. The only institution with ultimate constitutional ability to intervene is the court, to place this responsibility with any other agency be it public or private would be a basic denial of due process of law. Moreover there is some evidence that involvement with the juvenile justice system, that having to appear in court before a judge can have a long range effect of reducing not only further truancy but also further delinquency.

(p. 90)

Novak's conclusion is significant to this research in its support of the juvenile court as a deterrent to truant behavior.

An historical examination of the juvenile court has revealed that the basic purpose for the establishment of that court was to deal with truancy and to enforce the compulsory attendance laws which throughout the years have proven valuable and necessary to the public. Even in the 1980s, the power of the juvenile court is still needed to help keep students in school. After examining today's absenteeism problem and its effects, it becomes obvious that some measure must be taken to curb the truancy problem. Because of its constitutional power, its original involvement in school attendance, and the severe effects of truancy, the court system seems to be a realistic way to deal with and control the truancy problem.

However, before an examination of the contemporary attendance programs that utilize the court, a thorough look at what schools themselves are doing to handle attendance problems is in order.

School Programs That Affect Attendance

Since absenteeism is one of the top concerns of administrators today, several policies and programs have been developed to improve
attendance. The following policies and programs were summarized by the Educational Research Service in a 1977 report. One program adopted by large and small schools across the country limited the number of days a student could miss and still make up work. In Alma High School, Alma, Arkansas, after being absent 10 days per semester, the students would not be allowed to make up work missed unless he/she had a note from the doctor. Although Alma had only 843 students, the policy increased attendance 2.3%. This small percentage resulted in an increase of 1,726.6 days of school attendance. Napa High School, Napa, California, utilized a very similar policy with a limit of 12 days. Any student absent more than 12 days lost credit in the course. There are now many hundreds of schools using similar policies.

Boulder High School in Boulder, Colorado, allowed the parents to determine one of three ways to handle attendance problems. The first choice was not to involve the parents at all, and if the student went over the limit he/she withdrew from school. The second method involved notifying the parents only when the problem started to affect the student's work but before the damage was irremediable. The third method was to notify the parents every time the student was absent unless the parent had already notified the school.

The school district of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, developed special attendance teams to help chronic absentees back into the classroom by developing and promoting new programs. The teams included an administrator, a school nurse, a school community coordinator, a teacher, home and school visitors, and a resource person in
the community. Each school developed its own program which ranged from attendance races to prizes and drawings to encourage better attendance. Attendance improved 4% after one semester.

The Baltimore City Public Schools, which had an absentee rate of 29%, set up two different teams for each school. One team was used to visit homes and get the student back into school. The other team was used to alleviate educational problems within the school. The statistics on this program were not conclusive. Of the 12 schools in the program, only three increased their percentage of attendance, and only one exceeded its goal.

Madison High School of Portland, Oregon, developed an entirely special program with a special curriculum for the very poor attendees. No statistics on results were available on this program.

School districts have tried many different methods to deal with the problem and have had some limited success. The use of the court system should not negate the success of the schools' programs. The court should be used only after all methods available to reach the chronic absentee have not been successful.

School-Court Programs

Schools have definitely made many innovative steps toward dealing with chronic absenteeism, but further steps must be taken to curb absenteeism and to help the truant student succeed in school.

Court and school involvement can be effective, but historically, the two bodies have not worked well together. Technical Assistance Bulletin #14 (1979), a research tool of the Juvenile Justice Network,
Youth crime and delinquency and disruption are community problems which require a collaborative community response involving public and private human service agencies, citizens, and youth. The various components of the juvenile justice system and youth service provider have tended to operate and evolve independently and their differences have been accentuated as human service providers have taken a broader approach to service delivery. (p. 4)

When agencies do not collaborate when dealing with a troubled student's life, the result can be more detrimental than helpful. The Technical Assistance Bulletin #31 (1980) further stated: "Schools and courts throughout the nation despite common concerns and goals, have traditionally operated as separate, isolated, and sometimes hostile systems" (p. 1).

The reason for hostility and separation of the two systems are varied. Technical Assistance Bulletin #31 (1980) gave four reasons why this split has occurred. First, school officials are unfamiliar and reluctant to get involved with the court system. Secondly, school administrative structure often does not provide for a well-defined liaison role with the court. Thirdly, courts suffer from a poor organizational structure. Finally, courts are burdened by excessive supervisory case loads (p. 17).

However, positive progress can be achieved when the juvenile justice system and the schools work together. In 1972, the Los Angeles Police worked with the schools in apprehending those children who did not have a valid reason for being absent from school. The apprehending of the student did not help solve the problem causing the absenteeism, but the schools were afforded the opportunity to
talk with the parents. Since the police were involved, many parents were more willing to talk to the school officials and some of the truant student's problems were identified (Morris, 1972).

Another program established in Fresno, California, in 1979 was called Operation Stay in School (Technical Assistance Bulletin #15, 1979). This program was similar to the program in Los Angeles where police apprehended truants. However, the students were not taken to police headquarters but rather to the Operation Stay in School center. Professional counselors trained to work with the students and the families were found at the centers. These counselors could effectively determine the causes of the attendance problem. They, in turn, could make one of the following recommendations:

1. Send the student back to school—The young person was being mischievous and the counselors did not see this as a continuing problem.

2. Continue professional counseling because there were some underlying problems.

3. Send the student to court because there were other crimes or because the child needs to be determined "a child in need of services." (p. 17)

Operation Stay in School was effective in many ways. It decreased daytime crime, helped students and families with problems, and showed the students that the school has official legal backing.

In Lucas County Ohio, Judge Andy Devine started a program because of his concerns about truancy and low level juvenile crime. Because of his belief, that a greater emphasis on school attendance can discourage juvenile delinquency, Judge Devine developed a task force to deal with truants. This task force was to determine the
individual student's problem and to try to service that particular need. The task force was made up of representatives from different social service agencies. If the task force members were not successful, a court referral was made. Collected research showed that attendance improved, and that the task force had identified many problems. The recommendation from that task force was that the program be implemented in earlier school years, i.e., the late elementary and/or early junior high years (Technical Assistance Bulletin #14, 1979).

A similar program was started in Los Angeles by Judge David Kenyon and Police Chief Edward Davis. In this program, a center was built to house all the agencies that provide youth services. When a child was referred by school, parent, or police on a truancy charge, someone in the center would deal with his/her problem. If the agencies at the center were not successful, a court referral was made. The results of this program were again successful, but the researchers believed the center soon became too large and too bureaucratic (Technical Assistance Bulletin #14, 1979).

The state of Maryland developed a statewide program that pulled together representatives from 10 to 15 youth programs. Decisions were made both publically and privately to promote cooperation among the social agencies, the school, and the juvenile justice system. The Maryland system is designed to service status offenders (Technical Assistance Bulletin #14, 1979).

A recently initiated program that involves intensive school-court relationships was established in Berrien County, Michigan. The
Berrien County program began when a local junior high school principal brought his concern of student absenteeism to the Berrien County Board of Public Safety. He indicated that more assistance was needed from the court. Countywide research on school and court relationship was conducted, and researchers found that communications between the court and the school district were poor. The Berrien County program was especially effective in establishing lines of communication between the school district and the court. Each Berrien County school designated a liaison person to facilitate communications between school and court. This liaison person allowed the courts to give the school official support in dealing with truancy and with truancy related cases without being officially involved. The program increased the probability that the school could be effective in this concern without having to go to court. However, court referrals were still a possibility.

A lack of communication between the school and the court is not unique. The United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1978) researched school-court relationships and drew the following conclusion:

The severe communications problem which exists between the schools and the courts were highlighted when school administrators across the country were asked about the amount of support they receive from the courts. When it comes to local courts, the principals vote is "no confidence." Only sixteen percent said the courts provide very much support. (p. 14)

Throughout the literature examined, it is evident that a program linking court and school can deter school truancies. Poor communication can impede such a program; so it is necessary to set up a very
organized program with specific guidelines for communication.

Communication between the school and the student and his/her parent/s can be improved by cooperation between the school and the court system. An historical link between the two institutions has been shown in the review of literature. The value of this link in this struggle against juvenile delinquency has also been made apparent. Attendance offenders can be identified, challenged, and corrected through the use of an organized and well-defined attendance program. The goal of the pilot program used in this study is to discover and deal with the root problems of attendance offenders as early as possible. The literature reviewed supports both the validity and the effectiveness of such a goal.

The pilot program presented in the following chapter reflects the belief that poor attendance is symptomatic of other problems, and attempts to involve both school and court in the earliest possible detection of the actual problems. The perceived effectiveness of such a court-school attendance program is tested in this study. The pilot program consists of four steps that involve local middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges in a coordinated program for identifying and dealing with chronic absentees/truants in the local schools. Four hypotheses which examine the perceived effectiveness of each step of the program are proposed in the following chapter. However, it is of utmost importance to the research conducted in this study that the reader has a thorough understanding of the pilot program. In that light, the pilot program is explained in detail in the following chapter.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A special pilot program was developed for this study. The development of that program, the statistics gained during the implementation of that program, and the legal aspects of the program are described in this chapter. Following the discussion of the pilot program, the research hypotheses and the methods used to test the hypotheses are examined. These methods include the research design, the population and sample selection procedure, the data collection, a validity statement, and the method of data analysis.

Pilot Program Development

The model for this study was a pilot program established in October of 1978. It was established to coordinate the services and efforts of a public school administrator, probation officers from the juvenile court, and a juvenile judge in working with the chronic absentees in a junior high school in Indiana. Although only a few students were considered to be chronic absentees, it seemed apparent that they were plagued with many serious problems other than absenteeism.

The judge, probation officers, and the school administrator involved in the pilot program have all changed since its
implementation, but the program has been continued at the junior high school. Furthermore, the program has been used successfully in other middle schools in the county. Since its implementation, the program has been examined and used by several school administrators, probation officers, attorneys, and judges. After an examination of their suggestions and criticisms, the pilot program was modified and refined. The following modified program was utilized in this study.

Pilot Program Procedures

The following is a description of procedures utilized in the pilot program as refined during the 4 years preceding this study:

**STEP I.** School officials examine attendance records to determine problem attendance patterns. Students who are truant or absent consistently with parental excuses will merit closer examination.

**ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITY:**

1. **Set up parent conference or home visit.** In the case of students who are consistently absent with parental excuse, the administrator must determine whether the absences are legitimate or whether other problems are appearing.

2. **Discipline of truancy.** Disciplinary steps are taken if the student is proven truant.

3. **Counsel.** Intra- or extra-school counseling should be employed if other problems become apparent. Example: Family Counseling, Youth Services, etc.

4. **Inform parents.** Parents should be made aware that continued truancy or absences for questionable reasons will result in an informal visit by a probation officer.

**PROBATION OFFICER AND JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Neither the probation officer nor the judge are involved in STEP I. However it is important that
both realize the school is utilizing the above steps before asking for outside help.

STEP II. The probation department would be contacted to make an informal visit on the student's next questionable absence or truancy. This visit can be made in the home or school, but no matter where it takes place, the school administrator should be present.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue any counseling sessions.
3. Continue disciplinary measures for truants.
4. Continue contacts with parents.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Examine the situation.
2. Informally explain to the student his/her legal responsibility to attend school.
3. Informally explain to the parents that they are legally responsible to make sure their child attends school.
4. Recommend any possible solutions to the parent and/or students.
5. Warn parents that continued poor attendance could result in an official referral.

The probation officer can be firmer with both points 2 and 3 depending on where he/she feels the problem lies.

STEP III. If, after the informal visit by the probation officer the attendance does not improve, STEP III should be employed. STEP III should be used no later than the third truancy or the 9th or 10th questionable absence in a semester.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue communications with parents.
3. Refer the student to the probation department and provide all information on attendance, academics, and behavior.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Follow normal intake procedures which could include one of the following:
   a. Dismiss the case if the information is insignificant.
   b. Warn and release the student.
   c. Refer to another agency in Public Welfare.
   d. Send to a court hearing.
   e. Place on informal probation.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

The judge is not directly involved in this step.

STEP IV. The court hearing is recommended by the probation officer and evaluated by the prosecuting attorney (this recommendation follows truancy or questionable problems).

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Attend the hearing with all pertinent information.

2. Give the probation department all information prior to the court hearing and make a recommendation.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Keep the school informed as to the date of the court hearing, probation's recommendations, and school official's responsibility during the hearing.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Hear the case under normal procedures, hopefully, finding a solution to the problem.
2. Allow the school to have a copy of the judge's decision.

Statistics of the Pilot Program

The following statistics were obtained from truancy referrals made by the county in which the pilot program was implemented during the 1978-1979, 1979-1980, 1980-1981, and 1981-1982 school years. Not all of the referrals were made solely for attendance problems. It should be noted that in some cases other charges accompanied the truancy charge.

During the implementation of the pilot program, 115 referrals were handled by the juvenile probation office. Seventy-one of those referrals were scheduled for a court appearance, and 44 referrals were handled without a court appearance.

In the 44 referrals handled outside the court, 15 cases were warned and released. In these 15 cases the school officials and the probation department (a division of the juvenile court) believed a stiff warning would be effective. Six cases were dismissed. Four of these cases were dismissed by recommendation of school officials. Apparently, involvement in the court proceeding had sufficiently changed the student's attendance behavior. The other two cases were dismissed because the court believed that the school had not shown sufficient cause.

Eleven cases were referred to the Department of Public Welfare. In these cases serious home problems were detected and placement out of the home was being seriously considered.
Finally, 10 students were transferred to another probation office when their parents moved to another town, and two students were expelled from school thus negating the effectiveness of the court.

In the 71 cases heard in court, 65 students were placed on formal probation, 1 student was placed on informal probation, and 5 students were placed in juvenile correctional institutions. In many of the court hearings, the judge was quite creative in dealing with the student and/or parent(s). For example, students placed on probation often were required to meet three or four different conditions. One required condition was the student's participation in "Project Inform." The "Inform" program was established to show students what prison life is like. Another condition included participation in a program developed by the probation department to help students with school work. Fifty-one students were told to seek psychological counseling and/or testing. In 16 cases family counseling was requested; while in 19 occasions, drug and/or alcohol evaluations were requested. The services of Lifeline, Youth Services Bureau, or other agencies were employed in 16 cases. Nineteen students were required to have a study table for 1 or 2 hours a night. (This condition was only as effective as parent cooperation made it. However, it seemed to be especially effective with seventh graders.) Two students were asked to write papers discussing his/her future. House arrest, where students could only go to school, to work, or out with parents, was required for six students. In one dramatic decision, a parent was jailed for 5 days for failure to get her child to school. In another
decision, the student was jailed for a weekend in the detention center.

In all of these cases, one condition consistent in each case was that the student attend school regularly. The students who were placed on probation were also required to maintain passing grades or grades equivalent to the student's ability. School officials, therefore, had to monitor each student's progress and report to court regularly.

The following statistics were based on attendance changes following the court hearing:

- Five students improved 100%. This means no absences for 6 months following the hearing.
- Nineteen improved 75%.
- Sixteen improved 50%.
- Nine improved 25%.
- Thirteen—no improvement.
- Two—too early to tell. The court hearing was held recently.
- Two moved away and no statistics were available.
- Statistics were not available on the five students placed in correctional institutions.

Research Design

The design used in this study was descriptive research using a survey. Although it was possible to survey all juvenile judges, it was difficult to survey accurately all middle school administrators in Indiana. Therefore, a sample of this group was used. The survey
was designed to answer four research questions from each individual and to answer collective responses of middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges. The four research questions were as stated below.

1. Do rural middle schools in Indiana have chronically absent seventh and/or eighth grade students?

2. Is this chronic absenteeism symptomatic of other serious problems?

3. Do probation officers, judges, and middle school administrators cooperate in dealing with the chronically absent or truant student?

4. Are there any differences in the perceived effectiveness of the four step School-Court Truancy Program developed for this paper?

The hypotheses established from these research questions and the method of testing the hypotheses are explained later in this chapter.

Population and Sample Selection Procedure

The pilot program evaluated in this study was designed specifically to deal with the attendance problems of seventh and eighth grade children in an Indiana county. This county is basically a rural area with several small towns. The largest city in the county had a population of slightly more than 40,000 people. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the population survey was limited to counties similar in size and makeup to the county in which the pilot study was used.
The following definitions were established to determine the population survey to be used. Middle school administrators, for the purpose of this study, are administrators in a school that contains grades seven and eight and goes no higher than grade nine and no lower than grade six. Each school was part of a school system which was no larger than 5,500 students. To be included in the study, the probation officer was one who dealt with seventh and eighth grade youth in a county that contained a school that met the middle school definition. The judges surveyed were those who preside over cases that included seventh and eighth grade youth from a school that met the middle school definition. The judge was sometimes referred to as a juvenile referee depending upon the procedures of the local county court system.

Considering the definitions established to identify the survey population, 20 counties were eliminated from the total population of 92 counties. Three counties were eliminated because they did not contain a school system with 5,500 students or less. Seven counties were eliminated because they did not contain middle schools that met the middle school definition. Seven counties were eliminated because they did not have their own probation officer and the judge's jurisdiction covered two counties. One county was eliminated because the schools, probation department, and judge were used in the pilot program. After these eliminations, the remaining 72 counties were numbered from 1 to 72 so that a random sample of 20 counties could be selected.
The Chemical Rubber Company (1964) *Standard Mathematical Tables* contains five pages of 14,000 random numbers. The page, row, and column to use as a starting point was chosen by a random selection of index cards which contained the page numbers and numbered rows and columns. After the starting point was chosen, the next 20 random numbers were listed and the counties with the corresponding numbers were selected for the random sample of counties to be used in the survey (see Appendix A). All middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges within the 20 selected counties were surveyed.

The addresses and names of the middle school administrators were obtained from the Indiana Department of Public Instruction, Indiana School Directory 1982 and 1983. Addresses and names of the probation officers and juvenile judges/referees were obtained from the Juvenile Justice Directory, 1983.

**Data Collection**

A survey was sent to 35 probation officers, 55 school administrators, and 26 judges in the 20 counties randomly selected to be surveyed (see Appendix B). The survey included general questions designed to determine if each of the prospective participants believed that there were chronically absent students in their respective counties, and if so, whether they wanted to cooperate to solve the problems causing absenteeism. The survey also included a thorough presentation of the four steps of the pilot program. After the presentation of each step, questions were asked to determine if the individual considered the step effective, and if he/she would use
that step to deal with absenteeism.

During the first week of April 1983 the survey was sent to each respondent. Fifteen days after the mailing, a postcard was sent as a reminder to those who had not returned the survey. Fifteen days after the postcard mailing, a phone call was made to those who had not returned the survey. Fifteen days after the first phone call, another phone call was made to determine why the respondent did not return the survey.

Validation of Survey Questions

A group of three administrators, two probation officers, and two judges were requested to validate the proposed survey questions. Each person in the validation group was familiar with the School-Court Truancy Program and was expert regarding middle school students and chronic absenteeism. The group was asked to examine eight questions associated with the steps of the pilot program (as presented on pages 37-40). They reviewed the questions for clarity, redundancy, and appropriateness to the program. Upon recommendations of the validation group, the questions for the final survey instrument were reduced to three for Step I of the pilot program procedures, five for Step II, and four each for Steps III and IV.

Data Analysis

The first research question pertained to chronic absenteeism in rural middle schools in Indiana. The review of literature in Chapter II generated the following null hypothesis to be tested in this
study.

**Hypothesis 1**: There is no significant difference in the percentages of chronic absentees in each county as perceived by the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.

This hypothesis was tested by utilizing a chi-square test of independence on Question 19 of the survey (see Appendix D). This chi-square test compared the observed frequencies of responses to a specific question in the survey to the expected frequency of responses to the same question. The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

The second research question pertained to chronic absenteeism being symptomatic of other problems. Literature reviewed and reported in Chapter II helped to generate the following two null hypotheses concerning Research Question 2.

**Hypothesis 2**: There is no significant difference in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and school administrators to the question that chronic absentees will have other school problems.

**Hypothesis 3**: There is no significant difference in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and school administrators to the question that chronic absentees will have other home problems.

As with Hypothesis 1, the above null hypotheses were tested utilizing the chi-square test of independence. The responses to Questions 21 and 22 in the survey were used to test the two hypotheses (see Appendix D).
Research Question 3 related to judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators cooperating in dealing with problem absentees. The following is the null hypothesis generated from that question and tested in this study.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant difference in the responses of judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators when asked if they would cooperate in dealing with chronic absenteeism.

This hypothesis was tested utilizing a chi-square test of independence. The response to Question 20 in the survey was used to obtain the appropriate statistics.

The literature review and the researcher's experience during the doctoral internship generated a desire to establish a school-court attendance program. Research Question 4 pertained to the perceptions of the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators toward the effectiveness of each step of the pilot program. The following four null hypotheses were generated from that question.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of Step I in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.

**Hypothesis 6:** There is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of Step II in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.

**Hypothesis 7:** There is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of Step III in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.
Hypothesis 8: There is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of Step IV in the responses of the judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators.

These hypotheses were tested by using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This method determined whether the differences of the means of the responses were statistically significant at the .05 α level. The statistic computed is called an F ratio.

Summary

This chapter has examined the development and the use of the school-court attendance program. Many of the results of this pilot program were also discussed. The remainder of this chapter included the construction of the survey, the data collection, the validation of the survey, and the method of data analysis. The following chapter presents the interpretation of the data following the methods explained in Chapter III.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Introduction

Chapter IV continues the sequential presentation of information pertinent to the organization of this study. Chapter III contained the description of the program, the survey, and the population sampling. The hypotheses and the method of data analysis were also presented. The survey responses and the result of the testing of the hypotheses are reported in this chapter.

Survey Responses

Surveys were sent to middle school administrators, juvenile judges, and juvenile probation officers in 20 counties in Indiana. The number of surveys sent to each group and the number and percentage of returns are identified in Table 1. The probation officers had an 89% return with 31 out of 35 probation officers returning the survey. The school administrators followed with 44 out of 55 replies, or an 80% return. The lowest return rate came from the judges with a 70% return in which 18 out of 26 judges replied.

During the week of April 4, 1983, the surveys were sent to all members of the sample population. Respondents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire describing the program. The respondents were guaranteed anonymity. They were also invited to request the
statistics concerning the pilot program and the results of this study.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Returned Questionnaires From Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number sent freq.</th>
<th>Returned freq.</th>
<th>Questionnaire return rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two weeks following the expected arrival of the survey, a follow-up letter was sent to nonrespondents encouraging them to complete the questionnaire. If no response was received a telephone follow-up was made 4 weeks later again encouraging his/her participation. A fourth contact was made after 6 weeks had elapsed in an attempt to determine why the respondent had not taken part in the survey.

Eleven middle school administrators did not respond. It was discovered that one of the nonrespondents was due to the recent closing of a school. Another was due to a position vacancy. One other administrator could not be reached, and the remaining eight expressed interest in the study but did not return the survey.
It was difficult to make contact with the judges. In many cases they were involved in two or more courts and were rarely in the office. It was often helpful when secretaries were told of the survey and were asked to encourage the judges to fill out the questionnaire. Of the eight nonrespondents six were never reached, and the other two expressed interest but did not return the survey.

The highest return rate was made by probation officers. However, the only individual who refused to participate was a probation officer. The other three nonrespondent probation officers expressed interest but did not return the survey.

The overall 80% return rate was not as high as expected considering the extensive follow-up effort. However, it was considered satisfactory, and there was a sufficient number of respondents in each of the sample populations to continue the research.

The breakdown by county of surveys sent and returned by each respondent group is indicated in Table 2. Eleven counties had 100% response, and one county had no response. The probation officers and school administrators were represented in 19 out of 20 counties. The judges were represented in 15 out of 20 counties. It is demonstrated by the information in Table 1 and Table 2 that the number of respondents can be considered an acceptable response of the sample population. The respondent groups represent the original sample with no indication that nonrespondents came from a specific location or particular position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>School administrator</th>
<th>Probation officer</th>
<th>Judge</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>Ret.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>School administrator</th>
<th>Probation officer</th>
<th>Judge</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Ret. %</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Ret. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics of Respondents

The following information is given to help establish the professional experience of people who responded. A breakdown was made of the number of years each respondent group had been in his/her field. The mean of the years of experience of the judges was 6.76 years. The mean for the probation officers' years of experience was 4.56 years. The school administrators were the most experienced with 11.28 average years of experience. The mean for the number of years of on-the-job experience was high for each group. It can be assumed the respondents were knowledgeable in their areas.

Table 3
Mean Years of Experience of Each Surveyed Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses Testing Results

Research Hypothesis 1 stated that the percentage of chronic absentees in each county would be perceived to be different by judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators. Each
official, judge, probation officer, or school administrator, was
given one of the following choices to describe the percentage of
chronic absentees in his/her area: (1) 0-3%, (2) 4-6%, (3) 7-9%, (4)
10-15%, or (5) more than 15%. Table 4 presents the data as deter-
mined by the choices made by each official to the following question:
What percentage of students in the schools in your area do you con-
sider to have chronic absentee problems?

Table 4
Percentage of Chronic Absentees as Perceived by Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>0-3%</td>
<td>4-6%</td>
<td>7-9%</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi square = 25.50; 6 degrees of freedom; significance = .0013.

None of the respondents chose the fifth response, that more than
15% of middle school students have chronic absentee problems. Uti-
lizing an alpha level of .05, there is a significant difference in
the responses. Eighty-four percent of the administrators believed
the chronic absentee problem was at a low 0-3%. Sixty percent of the
judges rated the chronic absentee problem as low as 0-3%. Nearly 52%
of probation officers placed the problem absentee rate as 4-6%.
Because of this difference in the perceived percentage of chronic
absentees, the null hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) was rejected. There
was a difference in the percentage of chronic absentees as perceived
by the different groups.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 purport that chronic absenteeism is sympto­
matic of other problems. Hypothesis 2 stated that judges, probation
officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions
in response to the question that chronic absentees have other school
problems. They were given the choices: (1) always, (2) almost
always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, and (5) never. Table 5
presents the data showing the responses for each group. Choices 4
(almost never) and 5 (never) were not chosen by any of the respon­
dents. One hundred percent of the judges, 88.7% of the administra­
tors, and 93.6% of the probation officers chose Response 1 (always)
or 2 (almost always).

Table 5
Is Chronic Absenteeism Symptomatic of Other School Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 20.5%</td>
<td>2 68.2%</td>
<td>3 11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi square = 2.47; 4 degrees of freedom; significance = .6496.
No support was found for rejecting the null hypothesis that school administrators, judges, and probation officers have different views on chronic absentees having other school problems. The data seems to indicate that they all agree that truancy is symptomatic of other school problems.

In testing Hypothesis 3, which states that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions in response to the question that chronic absentees have other home problems, the officials were given the same choices: (1) always, (2) almost always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, and (5) never. Table 6 presents the data as determined from the responses of the officials. Again, (1) always and (2) almost always were most frequently chosen.

Table 6
Is Chronic Absenteeism Symptomatic of Home Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi square = 6.02; 4 degrees of freedom; significance = .1970.

There is, therefore, no support for rejecting the null hypothesis that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators
have different views on chronic absenteeism being symptomatic of home problems. The responses showed that the groups tended to agree that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of home problems.

Hypothesis 4 states that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different attitudes about cooperating in dealing with chronic absentees. Table 7 records the responses of each group when they were asked if they worked together in dealing with chronic absentees. The same five choices (as in Hypotheses 2 and 3) were given. The respondents did not select choice Number 5, never. Less than 10% chose Response 4, almost never.

Table 7
Do School Administrators, Judges, and Probation Officers Work Together in Dealing With Chronic Absentees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Chi square = 11.54; 6 degrees of freedom; significance = .0728.

No support was found for rejecting the null hypothesis that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have
different attitudes about working with chronic absentees. All groups
tended to believe that they worked together well in dealing with
chronic absentees. The judges believed very strongly that the groups
worked together with 94% of the judges choosing Responses 1, always,
and 2, almost always. The school administrators gave the lowest
scores for cooperation with only 63% of the respondents selecting
Responses 1 and 2.

A great variety of answers were given to the question regarding
the use of expulsion as a final step for poor attenders or truants.
Table 8 shows the data resulting from responses to the use of expul­sion as a final step in dealing with chronic absentees. The re­sponses were distributed throughout the five choices. The implica­tions of the data in Table 8 are explained in Chapter V.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses 5, 6, 7, and 8 pertain to the perceived effectiveness
of each step of the school-court program. For each step, three to
five questions were posed which required a 1-5 choice as an answer. The five choices were the same used in each of the previous hypotheses. The responses of each official for each step of the pilot program are examined in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12.

The data collected when questions were asked about Step I are portrayed in Table 9. In Step I school officials examined school attendance records to determine problem attendance patterns. The ratio resulting from the data does not exceed the critical value at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no support for rejecting the null hypothesis that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions about the effectiveness of Step I.

It should be noted that three questions were asked following the presentation of Step I of the pilot program. The respondents were asked to select an answer which ranged from (1) always, (2) almost always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, to (5) never. The responses could, therefore, range from a low of three where Response 1 was chosen for each question to a high of 15 where all responses were Number 5. The mean of the responses to the questions following Step I shown in Table 9 was less than 6. A mean of less than 6 would be a response of 2 to each question. This selection of 2 (almost always) shows that the respondents perceive Step I to be viable.
Table 9
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Attitudes Toward Step I of the Pilot Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.6502</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>166.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Descriptive statistics

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<td>5.72</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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</table>

Table 10 shows the data collected when questions were asked about the perceived effectiveness of Step II of the program. Probation officers were recommended to make informal visits to chronically absent students in Step II. The F ratio resulting from the data does not exceed the critical value at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no support for rejecting the null hypothesis that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions about the effectiveness of Step II.
Table 10

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Attitudes Toward Step II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
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<th>F prob.</th>
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<td>25.7</td>
<td>12.83</td>
<td>2.076</td>
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<td>Within groups</td>
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<td>6.18</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Descriptive statistics

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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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</table>

It should be noted that five questions were asked following the presentation of Step II of the program. The respondents were asked to select an answer which ranged from (1) always, (2) almost always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, to (5) never. The responses could, therefore, range from a low of 5 where Response 1 was chosen for each question to a high of 25 where all responses were Number 5. A score of 10 would be an answer of 2, almost always, to each of the questions. The mean of the responses from each respondent group (as shown in Table 10) ranged from 9.14 to 10.32. Therefore, the mean resulting from this computation indicates that the respondents
perceive Step II of the pilot program to be viable.

Table 11 reveals the data collected when questions were asked about the perceived effectiveness of Step III of the program. Step III involves a formal referral to the probation department. The computed F ratio of 1.011 does not exceed the critical value at the .05 level of significance. Again, there is no support for rejecting the null hypothesis that judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators have different perceptions about the effectiveness of Step III of the program. The mean and standard deviations emphasize the lack of difference of opinions.

Table 11

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Attitudes Toward Step III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>.3679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>161.56</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>165.19</td>
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<td></td>
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Descriptive statistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>1.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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</table>
Four questions were asked following the presentation of Step III of the pilot program. The respondents were asked to select an answer which ranged from (1) always, (2) almost always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, to (5) never. The responses could, therefore, range from a low of 4 where Response 1 was chosen for each question to a high of 20 where all responses were Number 5. The mean of each group surveyed (as shown in Table 11) ranged from 5.94 to 6.50. A mean of 8.00 would be a response of 2, almost always, for each of the four questions. Once again the range of the mean indicates that the respondents perceive Step III of the pilot program to be viable.

The data collected regarding the final step of the program is portrayed in Table 12. Step IV, the final step, suggests a formal court hearing with the judge. The computed $F$ ratio of 1.92 does not exceed the critical value at the .05 level of significance. The $F$ ratio and the mean and standard deviations give no support for rejecting the null hypothesis that probation officers, judges, and middle school administrators have different perceptions about the effectiveness of Step IV of the program.

It should be noted that four questions were asked following the presentation of Step IV of the pilot program. The respondents were asked to select an answer which ranged from (1) always, (2) almost always, (3) occasionally, (4) almost never, to (5) never. The responses could, therefore, range from a low of four where Response 1 was chosen for each question to a high of 20 where all responses were Number 5. The mean of each group (as shown in Table 12) ranged from 6.11 to 6.70. Again, this mean is well below a mean of 8.00 which
would be a score of 2, almost always, on all four questions. Therefore, this statistic indicates the respondents perceive the fourth step of the pilot program to be viable.

Table 12
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Attitudes Toward Step IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Degrees of freedom</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.1526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>157.93</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>164.67</td>
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</table>

Descriptive statistics

<table>
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<th>Groups</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School administrators</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there were no significant differences in each of the steps, the results of the data do suggest that there was some interesting information available when examining the responses to each step by county. Appendix G shows each of the responses by county. This appendix shows that there were consistent responses to the procedure of Step I by each of the surveyed individuals. Some differences were found within counties regarding Step II procedures that
can be examined in Appendix G. Respondents from three counties had major discrepancies. In these three counties, probation officers expressed less willingness to utilize the procedures of Step II than the school administrators and the judges. The responses of the judges, probation officers, and school administrators to Step III procedures are similar. However, the responses to Step IV procedures indicate some inconsistencies. In one county the probation officers resisted the use of Step IV procedures. In three other counties the judges resisted the use of Step IV procedures.

Summary

An interpretation of the data collected through the survey was presented in this chapter. A summary and a report on the conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter V. Recommendations for future investigations on this topic are also included in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

The final chapter is divided into three sections. The first section contains a review of the work accomplished in the first four chapters. The findings, followed by a conclusion and a discussion of each of the hypotheses, comprise the second section. The final section of this chapter includes recommendations for further research.

Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the problem of chronic absenteeism and truancy in the junior high school and to evaluate a pilot program developed by the researcher to deal with this problem. The pilot program was developed and used in an Indiana county for several years. Data were derived from the records of students who participated in the pilot program. Since no control group was used, the statistics generated from the data could not be used to draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of the pilot program. However, the data collected at each step of the pilot program and the attitude of the people working with the program were sufficiently encouraging to warrant more research.

The review of literature established that truancy and chronic absenteeism are perceived to be widespread. Furthermore, many
schools and communities are apparently searching for methods to deal effectively with this problem. Because of the extent of truancy and absenteeism, the effective and appropriate responses to the problems have not been developed by schools and social agencies, and of the researcher's interest in this problem, it was selected as the dissertation topic. Utilizing acceptable research techniques, a sample population was identified. After conferring with expert researchers, it was decided to survey middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges. The sample included a total of 55 middle school administrators, 35 probation officers, and 26 judges in 20 different counties in Indiana. All 20 counties in the sample were counties which were represented by respondents from at least two of the three groups surveyed. The conclusions drawn from the responses of the professionals who answered the survey are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis deals with the percentage of chronic absentees as perceived by each group (middle school administrators, probation officers, and judges). The responses from these professionals confirm that each group perceived the percentage of absenteeism to be a small percentage of the total middle school student population.

The chi-square distribution showed that there was a significant difference among the three groups in the percentage they perceived as
representing chronic absentee students. In examining this statistic, it can be concluded that the middle school administrators believed strongly (84% chose 0-3%) that chronic absenteeism is a very small percentage of the student population. Sixty percent of the judges also chose 0-3% as representative of chronic absentees. However, it must be noted that 20% of the judges indicated that the chronic absentee rate was closer to the 6% level. The majority of the probation officers (51.9%) also put the rate at the 6% level, while 18.5% of the probation officers indicated that the rate was even higher. The perceptions of the combined answers of the three groups was consistent with national statistics concerning chronic absentees found by the Educational Research Service (1977).

The middle school administrators chose 0-3% as the percentage of chronic absentees. They tend to work with attendance figures on a daily basis and, consequently, are likely to be more accurate in their perceptions.

Judges see the percentage of chronic absentees as being higher than the middle school administrators. Their perceptions may be based on the 12-15 students per month that they see during court proceedings and not on the total number of students in the region of their respective courts. In most cases, the student who faces a judge is probably a student with problem attendance. Similarly, probation officers view the problem as more severe than do middle school administrators. Almost 70% of the probation officers viewed the percentage of chronic absentees as greater than 3%. This perception may originate from information they have about the students with
whom they work. The majority of students that probation officers are required to work with are also students with problem attendance. Therefore, it is not surprising that their perceptions of the chronic absentee rate is higher.

Although there was a difference in the perceptions of middle school administrators, judges, and probation officers concerning the rate of chronic absentees, there are at least two consistencies in their perceptions. First, all believe that the chronically absent students do exist. Secondly, they all believe chronically absent students do not comprise a large percentage of the total student population.

Hypothesis 2

Research Hypothesis 2 examined the differences in responses of school administrators, probation officers, and juvenile judges when asked whether they believed that chronic absenteeism was symptomatic of other school problems. The analysis of the data demonstrated that no differences were found in the responses of all three groups. Eighty-eight percent of the administrators, 100% of the judges, and 93% of the probation officers responded that chronic absentees always or almost always have other school problems. These statistics compare favorably to the U.S. Department of Justice (1977) report in which researchers concluded that attendance was symptomatic of other school problems.

It should be noted that only 88% of middle school administrators believed that chronic absentees do have other school problems.
Administrators apparently see some exceptions to this statement. They reported that some students are successful in school in spite of a poor attendance record. These students probably face other problems that range from the need for babysitting at home to extensive social fears about the school setting. These students are the exception, but the middle school administrators do recognize that they exist.

It appears from studying the data that chronically absent students do, almost always, face other school problems.

Hypothesis 3

Research Hypothesis 3 examined the differences in responses of the three groups when asked whether chronic absentees have home problems in addition to their attendance problems. No differences were found when the data were analyzed. One hundred percent of the judges responded that chronic absentees always or almost always have home problems. More than 88% of the school administrators reported that such students always or almost always have home problems. The probation officers responded that 90% of chronic absentees always or almost always had home problems.

All groups believed very strongly that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of home problems.

The data gained from the survey compared favorably with the views presented in the review of literature. Judge Lindsey (1973) and Saccuzzo and Milligan (1973) believe that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of other home problems.
Hypothesis 4

Research Hypothesis 4 examined the differences in attitudes of the three groups about working together in dealing with chronic absenteeism. The data showed that there was no significant difference in their perceptions of the three groups working together; however, the data did not show absolute consistency. The judges believed the strongest about the groups working together, and the middle school administrators perceived the least cooperation. However, it seems evident that a majority of the three groups perceived that the groups worked together to deal with the problem of chronic absenteeism.

It should be noted that there were some middle school administrators and judges who responded that there was almost never any cooperation among the three groups. This perception might be the result of each group not knowing what the other is doing; in other words, a lack of communication among the groups. In some counties the three groups almost never seem to utilize each other’s services. This seems to be true with administrators and judges in those counties where probation officers are often considered the liaison person between the court and the school. If the probation officer is not diligent in informing both the school and the judge of actions taken by the judge or school administrator, it is natural that the judge and school administrator may not perceive the cooperation, but that the probation officer would perceive this cooperation.
Hypothesis 5

Hypotheses 5 through 8 examined the perception of the procedures of the pilot program by each of the surveyed groups. Hypothesis 5 pertained to the perceived effectiveness of the procedures of Step I of the pilot program. The means of the responses of each group were similar and the analysis of variance showed no significant difference in attitudes. This suggests that the respondents were supportive of the use of the procedures in Step I of the pilot program. Step I procedure involved the examination of a student's attendance records by the middle school administrator. It is not surprising that the three groups support the desirability of this step since it is consistent with the generally acknowledged role of the school. Because of the school's legal responsibility to students under 16 years of age, administrators and school officials should be carrying out the procedure of Step I as effectively as possible.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 examined the attitude of each group toward the use of proceeding with Step II of the pilot program. The data demonstrated that the mean of the choices of each group was similar and the analysis of variance showed no significant difference.

Results of the analysis of the data suggested that each of the groups strongly agree that the procedures of Step II of the program could be used. Step II procedures involve an informal contact with the truant/chronic absentee and/or his/her parents by the probation
officer. As suggested by the Step II procedure, the probation officer explains what can happen if the child's attendance pattern does not change. The researcher expected that Step II procedure would produce dissimilar responses from the groups because of the increased workload that would be produced for the probation officer. The potential legal complications and the infiltration of other agencies into a school problem was also expected to cause some negative response to the step. Results of the data analyzed showed that all three groups favored the use of Step II procedures. Consequently, the data suggested that the groups believed in the need to work together. This expressed need for cooperation may stem in part from the fact that rural schools and smaller legal systems do not have extra funds and services available to them. However, it is also possible that each of the respondents believed that cooperation of agencies is in the best interest of the students.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 examined the use of Step III procedures in the pilot program. The analysis of the data showed a high degree of support for the procedures. The analysis of variance showed no significant difference between the responses of any of the groups. The data suggest that all the groups believe that the use of this Step III procedure is valuable.

Step III procedure involved an official referral of the chronic absentee to the court system. The procedure requires a legal affidavit by the school and a mandatory follow-up by the probation officer.
Since the referral requires the school to file an affidavit, this step increases the case load of the already burdened probation officers and could potentially add to the already burdened court docket. Because of these disadvantages, Step III was expected to receive some negative response. The positive response in spite of the disadvantages underlined an even greater support for the use of Step III.

**Hypothesis 8**

The final hypothesis examined the attitude of the groups regarding the use of procedures in Step IV of the pilot program. The means of each group were similar and showed strong support of the use of Step IV procedures. The analysis of variance showed no significant differences of attitude among the groups. Analyzing the data from the groups shows support for the use of Step IV procedures as presented in the pilot program.

Step IV procedures involved a court hearing as recommended by the probation officer after the official referral has not succeeded in encouraging the student to change his/her attendance pattern. Step IV procedures require the school administrator to spend time in the hearing and to implement the decision of the judge. The court hearing increases the workload of the probation officer and may also burden a busy and perhaps overloaded court docket. The hearing often requires a somewhat creative decision by the judge. Negative responses by some of the groups were expected by the researcher. The responses were positive, emphasizing the support of the groups for the use of Step IV procedures.
Summary of the Conclusions

Analyses of the data generated by this study suggest that the school administrators, judges, and probation officers agree that there is a problem with chronic absenteeism in the schools represented in this study population. A review of the literature supports this perception.

There were differences in the perception of each group regarding the percentage of chronic absentees but it was agreed by each group to be less than 10%. All groups surveyed for this study believed that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of school and home problems. There was no significant difference in the perceptions concerning the desirable levels of cooperation needed among the three groups when dealing with students with attendance problems. Analyses of the data showed that there was agreement and strong support for the use of the procedures of each step of the established pilot program. This study supported the effectiveness and continued use of the pilot program. This study also pointed out some recommendations for future study which are discussed in the following section.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The pilot program was accepted as a feasible method of dealing with chronic absenteeism and truancy by judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators surveyed in this study. These three groups demonstrated a willingness to cooperate in solving the problem of chronic absenteeism in their geographic region. However, in
analyzing the data generated by each hypothesis, areas of future study become evident.

The analysis of data generated for Hypothesis 1 showed that a difference of opinion about the percentage of chronic absenteeism actually exists. Absenteeism and truancy have been studied many times in the past. A recommendation resulting from this study would be to examine the actual percentage of chronic absenteeism that exists in rural area schools.

The analysis of data generated for Hypothesis 2 was intended to determine whether the groups believed that students who are chronically absent have other school problems. All three groups believed that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of other school problems. Future studies could include an examination of the type of school problems that would cause students to become chronically absent or truant during their middle school years. An awareness of these types of problems could aid in the early detection of attendance problems and possibly prevent chronic absenteeism.

The third hypothesis stated that chronic absenteeism is symptomatic of home problems. There was a strong consensus by all three groups that chronically absent or truant students do often have home problems. Another study could examine the types of home problems that become evident when counseling a student who has exhibited chronic absenteeism or truant behavior. Such a study could determine if problems in the family structure or family relationships are the source of the student's problem. If it is determined that family structure or family relationships are the source of attendance
problems then possibly these problems can be moderated prior to their becoming chronic.

The fourth hypothesis examined the amount of cooperation that existed among the middle school administrators, judges, and probation officers. It was the belief of each group that cooperation among the groups exists. A future study could examine how much cooperation exists and how many opportunities for cooperation the groups do have. An examination of the cooperation that exists among these three groups could aid in identifying the needs of each group. This could also help establish a more efficient and consistent method of helping the chronically absent student.

The final four hypotheses examined the perceived effectiveness of each procedural step of the pilot program. Since each group expressed support for each procedure, a future study could be designed to measure statistically the effectiveness of each procedure. A control group and an experimental group within a specific county could be used to increase the effectiveness of each procedural step. By testing the effectiveness of each procedure, the effectiveness of the entire pilot program could be identified.
Appendix A

List of Counties
## Counties Sampled

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<td>Hancock</td>
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<td>Hendricks</td>
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<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Tippicanoe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>Union</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Letter to Survey Recipients
January 23, 1983

Dear

I am an administrator in the Goshen Indiana Community School System and a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. Most of my fifteen years in education have been spent with the middle school student.

As a part of my doctoral studies, I have developed a program to deal with the middle school student who has a very poor attendance pattern. The program uses the symptoms of a very poor attendance as the indicator and the tool to get at the student's real problem.

This program which establishes a close dialogue between the school and the court has been used and judged successful in Elkhart County by several schools, by the Elkhart County Circuit Court Probation Department, and by Judge Gene Duffin.

I am attempting to determine if this is a viable program in other counties in the State of Indiana. Enclosed you will find a description of the four step program and a few questions after each step. Please take a few minutes to read the program and answer the related questions.

After the survey is returned the code in the top right corner will be the only identifying factor. However, if you are interested in receiving a copy of the statistics already gathered on the pilot program and the result of the survey you just completed, please fill out the enclosed postcard and return it to me. The statistics of the program include the type of decision made by the Probation Department and the Judge.

Very truly yours,

Robert Duell
Vice Principal
Goshen High School

Doctoral Advisor
Dr. Richard Munsterman

RD/cb
ENGL.

COPY

[Letter has been reduced to 75% of the original.]
Appendix C

Follow-Up Letter to Survey Recipients
Dear

Sometime during the first week of April you should have received a letter and survey from me. I sent out 120 surveys to judges, probation officers, and middle school administrators as a part of my doctoral dissertation. The response has been excellent, however, I have not received your survey. I realize that the mail is sometimes unreliable so I am sending you all of the original material again. Please take the time to read the survey and answer the few questions. The survey should take only a few minutes of your time, and when you are finished you may drop it into the mail.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. I am anxiously awaiting your reply.

Sincerely,

Robert Duell  
Vice Principal  
Goshen High School

Dr. Richard Munsterman  
Doctoral Advisor

RD/cb  
ENCL.

COPY

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Appendix D

Middle School Administrators' Survey Questions
SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM USED TO DEAL WITH ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

SCHOOL SURVEY

The following is a description of the four-step program with questions following each step. Please answer the questions as they pertain to the previous step using the following scale:


STEP I
School officials examine attendance records to determine problem attendance patterns. Students who are truant or absent consistently with parental excuses will merit closer examination.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Set up parent conference or home visit. In the case of students who are consistently absent with parental excuse, the administrator must determine whether the absences are legitimate or whether other problems are appearing.
2. Discipline of truancy—Disciplinary steps are taken if the student is proven truant.
3. Counsel—Intra or extra-school counseling should be employed if other problems become apparent. Example: Family Counseling, Youth Services, etc.
4. Inform parents—Parents should be made aware that continued truancy or absences for questionable reasons will result in an informal visit by a probation officer. Parents must be reminded school attendance is mandatory.

PROBATION OFFICER AND JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Neither probation officer nor judge are involved in STEP I. However, it is important that both realize the school is utilizing the above steps before asking for outside help.

QUESTIONS:
1. Do you use the four suggestions listed in STEP I to deal with truants and chronic absentees? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Will the suggestions in STEP I change the attendance of the truant or chronic absentee? 1 2 3 4 5
3. If you have tried all the suggestions in STEP I and have not been successful would you be willing to refer this to the probation department? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP II
The probation department should be contacted to make an informal visit on the student's next questionable absence or truancy. The visit can be made in the home or at school, but no matter where it takes place, the school administrator should be present.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue any counseling sessions.
3. Continue disciplinary measures for truants.
4. Continue contacts with parents.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Examine the situation.
2. Informally explain to the student his/her legal responsibility to attend school.
3. Informally explain to the parents that they are legally responsible to make sure their child attends school.
4. Recommend any possible solutions to the parent and/or students.
5. Warn parents that continued poor attendance could result in an official referral.

The probation officer can be firmer with both Points #2 and #3 depending on where he/she feels the problem lies.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.

QUESTIONS:
4. Do you feel you can continue the four suggestions for administrators in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Do you see any legal problems in following STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Do you feel the probation department will follow the suggested responsibilities in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you feel STEP II will help solve the problem causing poor attendance, considering STEP I was NOT successful? 1 2 3 4 5
8. If you have tried all of STEP II and are not successful, do you want to officially refer? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP III
If, after the informal visit by the probation officer, the attendance does not improve, STEP III should be employed. STEP III should be used no later than the third truancy or the ninth or tenth questionable absence in a semester.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue communications with parents.
3. Refer the student to the probation department and provide all information on attendance, academic, and behavior.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY:
1. Follow normal intake procedures which could include one of the following:
   a. Dismiss the case if the information is insignificant.
   b. Warn and release the student.
   c. Refer to another agency in Public Welfare.
   d. Send to a court hearing.
   e. Place on Informal Probation.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.
QUESTIONS:
9. Would you be willing to supply the probation department the information on academics, attendance, and behavior of the referred student? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Would the probation officer willingly cooperate with the school and strive to reach a solution to the problem? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Would an official referral to the probation department be a factor in improving a student's attendance pattern? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Assuming STEPS I, II, and III do not work would you want the probation officer to go to STEP IV and ask for a court hearing? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP IV
The court hearing is recommended by the probation officer and evaluated by the prosecuting attorney (this recommendation follows the next truancy or questionable problem).

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Attend the hearing with all pertinent information.
2. Give the probation department all information prior to the court hearing and make a recommendation.
3. Keep communications open with the parents and the students.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Keep the school informed as to the date of the court hearing, probation's recommendations, and school official's responsibility during the hearing.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Hear the case under normal procedures, hopefully finding a solution to the problem.
2. Allow the school to have a copy of the judge's decisions.

QUESTIONS:
13. Would you be willing to attend a court hearing and give information on a student you referred? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Would the judge cooperate in hearing a case of this nature and try to determine the best solution? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Would you be willing to follow the decision of the judge after the court hearing? 1 2 3 4 5
16. Would a court hearing be a factor in improving a student's attendance? 1 2 3 4 5

GENERAL QUESTIONS:
17. How many total years have you been an administrator in the public schools? 
18. On the average, how many students per month in your school have been involved with the judicial system because they broke the law? 
19. What percentage of students in your school during one semester do you consider have chronic absentee problems?
   0-3%  4-6%  7-9%  10-15%  More than 15%  

20. Does the school and local court presently work together in dealing with problem absentees?  
   1  2  3  4  5

21. Do the chronically absent students have other school problems?  
   1  2  3  4  5

22. Do chronic absentee students have home problems?  
   1  2  3  4  5

23. Do you use expulsion as a final step for poor attenders or truants?  
   1  2  3  4  5

GENERAL COMMENTS:
Appendix E

Probation Officers' Survey Questions
SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM USED TO DEAL WITH ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

PROBATION DEPARTMENT SURVEY

The following is a description of the four-step program with questions following each step. Please answer the questions as they pertain to the previous step using the following scale:

STEP I
School officials examine attendance records to determine problem attendance patterns. Students who are truant or absent consistently with parental excuses will merit closer examination.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Set up parent conference or home visit. In the case of students who are consistently absent with parental excuse, the administrator must determine whether the absences are legitimate or whether other problems are appearing.
2. Discipline of truancy—Disciplinary steps are taken if the student is proven truant.
3. Counsel—Intra or extra-school counseling should be employed if other problems become apparent. Example: Family Counseling, Youth Services, etc.
4. Inform parents—Parents should be made aware that continued truancy or absences for questionable reasons will result in an informal visit by a probation officer. Parents must be reminded school attendance is mandatory.

PROBATION OFFICER AND JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Neither probation officer nor judge are involved in STEP I. However, it is important that both realize the school is utilizing the above steps before asking for outside help.

QUESTIONS:
1. Do the schools utilize the four suggestions listed in STEP I to deal with truants and chronic absentees? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Will the suggestions in STEP I change the attendance of the truant or chronic absentee? 1 2 3 4 5
3. If the school has tried all the suggestions in STEP I and has not been successful would you agree with the school informally referring the problem to the probation department? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP II
The probation department should be contacted to make an informal visit on the student's next questionable absence or truancy. This visit can be made in the home or at school, but no matter where it takes place, the school administrator should be present.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue any counseling sessions.
3. Continue disciplinary measures for truants.
4. Continue contacts with parents.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Examine the situation.
2. Informally explain to the student his/her legal responsibility to attend school.
3. Informally explain to the parents that they are legally responsible to make sure their child attends school.
4. Recommend any possible solutions to the parent and/or students.
5. Warn parents that continued poor attendance could result in an official referral.

The probation officer can be firmer with both Points #2 and #3 depending on where he/she feels the problem lies.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.

QUESTIONS:
4. Do you feel the school will follow the four suggestions given in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Do you see any legal problems in following STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Will you follow the suggestions given in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you feel STEP II will help solve the problem causing poor attendance, considering STEP I was NOT successful? 1 2 3 4 5
8. If you and the school have tried the suggestions in STEP II and are not successful, do you want the school to officially refer the case? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP III
If, after the informal visit by the probation officer, the attendance does not improve, STEP III should be employed. STEP III should be used no later than the third truancy or the ninth or tenth questionable absence in a semester.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue communications with parents.
3. Refer the student to the probation department and provide all information on attendance, academic, and behavior.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY:
1. Follow normal intake procedures which could include one of the following:
   a. Dismiss the case if the information is insignificant.
   b. Warn and release the student.
   c. Refer to another agency in Public Welfare.
   d. Send to a court hearing.
   e. Place on Informal Probation.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.
QUESTIONS:
9. Would the school willingly supply the information on academics, attendance, and behavior on the referred student? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Would you work with the school and strive to reach a solution to the problem? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Would an official referral to the probation department be a factor in improving a student's attendance pattern? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Assuming STEPS I, II, and III do not work would you go to STEP IV and ask for a court hearing? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP IV
The court hearing is recommended by the probation officer and evaluated by the prosecuting attorney (this recommendation follows truancy or questionable problems).

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Attend the hearing with all pertinent information.
2. Give the probation department all information prior to the court hearing and make a recommendation.
3. Keep communications open with the parents and the students.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Keep the school informed as to the date of the court hearing, probation's recommendations, and school official's responsibility during the hearing.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Hear the case under normal procedures, hopefully finding a solution to the problem.
2. Allow the school to have a copy of the judge's decisions.

QUESTIONS:
13. Would the school official be willing to attend a court hearing and supply information on the student that was referred? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Would the judge cooperate in hearing a case of this nature and try to find the best solution to the problem? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Would the school willingly follow the decision of the judge after the court hearing? 1 2 3 4 5
16. Would a court hearing be a factor in improving a student's attendance? 1 2 3 4 5

GENERAL QUESTIONS:
17. How many total years have you been a probation officer? 
18. On the average, how many middle school students (age 12 to 14) per month are involved with the judicial system?
19. What percentage of students in the schools in your area do you consider to have chronic absentee problems?
   0-3%  4-6%  7-9%  10-15%  More than 15%  

20. Does the school and local court presently work together in dealing with problem absentees?  
   1  2  3  4  5  

21. Do the chronically absent students have other school problems?  
   1  2  3  4  5  

22. Do chronic absentee students have home problems?  
   1  2  3  4  5  

23. Do the middle school administrators use expulsion as a final step for poor attendance or truants?  
   1  2  3  4  5  

GENERAL COMMENTS:
Appendix F

Judges' Survey Questions
SCHOOL-COURT PROGRAM USED TO DEAL WITH ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

JUDGE SURVEY

The following is a description of the four-step program with questions following each step. Please answer the questions as they pertain to the previous step using the following scale:


STEP I
School officials examine attendance records to determine problem attendance patterns. Students who are truant or absent consistently with parental excuses will merit closer examination.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Set up parent conference or home visit. In the case of students who are consistently absent with parental excuse, the administrator must determine whether the absences are legitimate or whether other problems are appearing.
2. Discipline of truancy—Disciplinary steps are taken if the student is proven truant.
3. Counsel—Intra or extra-school counseling should be employed if other problems become apparent. Example: Family Counseling, Youth Services, etc.
4. Inform parents—Parents should be made aware that continued truancy or absences for questionable reasons will result in an informal visit by a probation officer. Parents must be reminded school attendance is mandatory.

PROBATION OFFICER AND JUDGE RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Neither probation officer nor judge are involved in STEP I. However, it is important that both realize the school is utilizing the above steps before asking for outside help.

QUESTIONS:
1. Do the schools use the four suggestions listed in STEP I to deal with truants and chronic absentees? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Will the suggestions in STEP I change the attendance of the truant or chronic absentee? 1 2 3 4 5
3. If the school has tried all the suggestions in STEP I and have not been successful, would you agree with the school informally referring the problem to the probation department? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP II
The probation department should be contacted to make an informal visit on the student's next questionable absence or truancy. The visit can be made in the home or at school, but no matter where it takes place, the school administrator should be present.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue any counseling sessions.
3. Continue disciplinary measures for truants.
4. Continue contacts with parents.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Examine the situation.
2. Informally explain to the student his/her legal responsibility to attend school.
3. Informally explain to the parents that they are legally responsible to make sure their child attends school.
4. Recommend any possible solutions to the parent and/or students.
5. Warn parents that continued poor attendance could result in an official referral.
   The probation officer can be firmer with both Points #2 and #3 depending on where he/she feels the problem lies.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.

QUESTIONS:
4. Do you feel the school will follow the four suggestions given in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Do you see any legal problems in following STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Do you feel the probation department will follow the suggested responsibilities in STEP II? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you feel STEP II will help solve the problem causing poor attendance, considering STEP I was NOT successful? 1 2 3 4 5
8. If the school and the probation department have tried the suggestions in STEP II and are not successful, do you want the school to officially refer? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP III
If, after the informal visit by the probation officer, the attendance does not improve, STEP III should be employed. STEP III should be used no later than the third truancy or the ninth or tenth questionable absence in a semester.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Continue to monitor attendance.
2. Continue communications with parents.
3. Refer the student to the probation department and provide all information on attendance, academic, and behavior.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY:
1. Follow normal intake procedures which could include one of the following:
   a. Dismiss the case if the information is insignificant.
   b. Warn and release the student.
   c. Refer to another agency in Public Welfare.
   d. Send to a court hearing.
   e. Place on Informal Probation.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
The judge is not directly involved in this step.
QUESTIONS:
9. Would the school willingly supply the probation department the information on academics, attendance, and behavior of the referred student? 1 2 3 4 5
10. Would the probation officer willingly cooperate with the school and strive to reach a solution to the problem? 1 2 3 4 5
11. Would an official referral to the probation department be a factor in improving a student's attendance pattern? 1 2 3 4 5
12. Assuming STEPS I, II, and III do not work would you want the probation officer to go to STEP IV and ask for a court hearing? 1 2 3 4 5

STEP IV
The court hearing is recommended by the probation officer and evaluated by the prosecuting attorney (this recommendation follows the next truancy or questionable problem).

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Attend the hearing with all pertinent information.
2. Give the probation department all information prior to the court hearing and make a recommendation.
3. Keep communications open with the parents and the students.

PROBATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Keep the school informed as to the date of the court hearing, probation's recommendations, and school official's responsibility during the hearing.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Hear the case under normal procedures, hopefully finding a solution to the problem.
2. Allow the school to have a copy of the judge's decisions.

QUESTIONS:
13. Would the school official be willing to attend a court hearing and supply information on the student that was referred? 1 2 3 4 5
14. Would you cooperate in hearing a case of this nature and try to find the best solution to the problem? 1 2 3 4 5
15. Would the school willingly follow the decision of the court after the hearing? 1 2 3 4 5
16. Would a court hearing be a factor in improving a student's attendance? 1 2 3 4 5

GENERAL QUESTIONS:
17. How many total years have you been a judge? _________
18. On the average, how many middle school students (age 12 to 14) per month are involved in the judicial system? _________
19. What percentage of students in the schools in your area do you consider to have chronic absentee problems?
   0-3%  4-6%  7-9%  10-15%  More than 15% 

20. Does the school and local court presently work together in dealing with problem absentees?
    1  2  3  4  5

21. Do the chronically absent students have other school problems?
    1  2  3  4  5

22. Do chronic absentee students have home problems?
    1  2  3  4  5

23. Does the middle school administrator use expulsion as a final step for poor attendance or truants?
    1  2  3  4  5

GENERAL COMMENTS:
Appendix G

Responses to Questions on Each Step by County
### Responses to Questions on Each Step by County

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<td>8.00</td>
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</table>
## Responses to Questions on Each Step by County—Continued

<table>
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<th>County</th>
<th>Group</th>
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<td>NR</td>
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