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# Attendance Works: The Effects of Truancy on High School Students Success

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Attendance Works: The Effects of Truancy on High School Students Success

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I would like to thank my family, my friends, and my classmates for supporting me throughout my time in the Counselor Education Department. This experience has changed me for the better, and I now have the tools to succeed in my next endeavors.

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### Abstract

Chronic absenteeism affects 5 to 7.5 million students in the United States. Students who are chronically absent are developmentally behind, suffer academically, and have increased negative behaviors in school. This results in students receiving lower academic marks affecting their GPA, receiving more referrals, and being retained. Chronic absenteeism is defined as students who are absent from school 20 or more days, 10 percent of the year, or 3 days in a month both excused and unexcused. The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism at Brockport High School and determine the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate. Brockport High School reported having 140 students (e.g. 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders) chronically absent from school during the 2014-2015 school year. The findings in the results displayed that there was a correlation between chronic absenteeism and the three variables (GPA, Referrals, and Retention). The results are further discussed as well as those limitations and implications of the research. Recommendations for further studies are explored as well.

*Keywords:* Chronic Absenteeism, Grade Point Average (GPA), Referrals, and Retention

### Attendance Works: The effects of Truancy on Student Success

Chronic absenteeism is a prevalent issue in the United States. It is estimated that 5 to 7.5 million students in the United States miss nearly one month of school each year (Ginsburg, Jordan, & Chang, 2014; Chang & Romero, 2008; Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Montana and New Mexico reported that 25 percent of their students in fourth grade missed three or more days of school per month. A middle school in Detroit reported that their eighth graders reported that they missed three or more days each month. Students who fail to attend school regularly at an early age are more likely to still have attendance issues when entering the high school. Lastly, a study showed that chronic absenteeism was as high as 15.8 percent in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and 22.6 percent in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, 2015). Problems related to chronic absenteeism include a decrease in GPA, an increase in negative behaviors, and student retention (Byrnes & Belfanz, 2008; Ready, 2010). Chronic absenteeism is often defined as students who miss either 20 or more days of school both excused and unexcused, or 10 percent of the school year (Ginsburg, et. al., 2014; Chang & Romero, 2008; Olson, 2014; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

### **Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A study completed by The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago in 2007 reported that 40 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders (e.g. Chicago) missed more than a month of school during their first year of high school. Amongst those 9<sup>th</sup> graders, their average GPAs were between 70-79 percent (CCSR, 2007). Another study showed that students who missed three or more days prior to taking an assessment in reading and math given by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) performed lower than those who did not miss school at all (Black, Seder, Kekahio, 2014; Ginsburg et. al., 2014). As a



result there appears to be a direct relationship between student absences and academic struggles (e.g. 70-79 GPA)

### **Student Behavior**

In addition to having an affect on grade point averages, chronic absenteeism can also impact student behavior. Such behaviors may include poor study habits, truancy, skipping class, and verbal or physical altercations amongst peers (Rosenkranz et. al., 2014; Lochmiller, 2013; Ready, 2010). Rosenkranz et. al. (2014) found that classroom and school wide behavioral management systems decrease in the high school compared to the middle school. Behavioral management systems are ways staff (e.g. Teachers, Administrators, Security Guards) handle students misbehaving during classroom lessons, and or when in the hallways skipping or being tardy to class. One student explained that security guards failed to address students in the hallways because they assumed they were in lunch or had a study hall (Rosenkranz et. al, 2014). In addition, students explained in middle school there was more staff in classrooms than high school making it easier to misbehave, or not participate in class. Student behaviors such as skipping class or being truant effect students academic success because they are unable to learn the appropriate material, ask questions, and this leads to them being retained (Ready, 2010).

### **Retention Rate**

In Maryland a study conducted in 2008 reported that 25 percent of their 9<sup>th</sup> graders (e.g. 3000 students) would have to repeat the grade. In addition, the United States reported that 21 percent of students had to repeat their senior year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). A study by Rosenkranz et. al. (2014) showed that students who failed one or two classes in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade are more likely to never graduate. A study in Houston found

that out of 12,000 students, all of who took the State of Texas Assessment Academic Readiness (STAAR) English 2 exam, 38% of them failed. Out of those students, each one had met the criteria for being chronically absent (Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, 2015).

### **Interventions**

Early interventions can be implemented in schools to help target students who are chronically absent, and need the support. In New Britain, Connecticut, the school district focused on attendance in elementary schools, and reduced chronic absenteeism by double digits. Additionally, Head Start programs implemented in Florida helped reduce students from being absent by educating parents and students about why going to school is important. Moreover, pediatricians promoted “Reach out and Read” that stressed early literacy, and now the program incorporates attendance into its services (Byington, Hobson, Olson, Torres-Nielsen, Winter, Ortiz, & Buchi, 2008; King, Muzaffar, George, 2009). Providing awareness for the importance of attending school to both families and students is pivotal in decreasing the likelihood of students becoming chronically absent. Additionally, studies showed that students who struggle with attendance at an early age and do not receive help have an increased chance of dropping out (Rosenkratz et. al., 2014; Chang & Romero, 2008; Ginsburg et. al.; 2014; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). Successful interventions begin with schools developing a school wide data collecting system, addressing the needs of those students who are chronically absent, and educating community members on the importance of attending school.

### **Attendance Works**

Chronic absenteeism is a prevalent issue that is affecting the students at Brockport High School. The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism and determine the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate. The author reviewed secondary data provided by Brockport High School to determine the relationship chronic absenteeism has with the three variables (GPA, Referrals Received, and Retention). As stated in previous sections the criteria for chronic absenteeism is students missing 20 or more days of school, both excused and unexcused. Belfanz and Byrnes (2012) concluded that students who are chronically absent are less likely to succeed academically than those who are not. Academic success can be defined as performing well in the classroom, behaving according to rules and regulations of the school, and moving on to the appropriate grade each year. In addition, determining the correlation between absences, GPA, referrals, and retention can potentially provide Brockport High School with proper information to prevent students from becoming chronically absent while in high school.

### **Literature Review**

Attendance Works (2014) is an established research organization that has focused on the importance of students attending school regularly. Research has found that chronic absenteeism is a national challenge that affects students as early as pre-kindergarten leading up until high school (Connolly & Olson, 2012). Chronic absence is defined as a student missing 3 or more school days within a month, 20 days in a school year, or 10 percent of the academic year both excused, and unexcused (Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Ready, 2010; Chang & Romero, 2008; Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Change et. al., 2015). Moreover, these numbers only exacerbates the problems that succumb from being chronically

absent: an increase in achievement gap that affects academic performance, behaviors such as tardiness, truancy, failure to complete homework, and altercations with other peers, and student retention (Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Rosenkrantz et. al; 2014; Chang & Romero, 2008; Ready 2010). When high schools address chronic absenteeism it is statically proven that the number of missed days decreases (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012). For example, a middle school in Baltimore went from 34 percent of their students being chronically absent in 2007 to only 16 percent in 2011 when they began addressing chronic absenteeism, and implementing specific interventions (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). These findings help suggest that the chronicity of absenteeism amongst high school students is an impediment to their academic performance, retainment, appropriate behavior, and potential graduation from high school.

### **The Effects of Chronic Absenteeism**

In the United States, 15 percent of students are chronically absent (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Connolly & Olson, 2012; Ginsburg et. al., 2014). In addition, there are 61 high schools in Maryland who have 250 or more students who are chronically absent (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Research has found that as truancy in students increased GPA decreased, those students act out negatively in school, are retained more, and decrease graduation rates (Chang & Romero, 2008; Ginsburg et. al., 2014). Academic success can be defined as a student's GPA, and how it progresses over the course of their high school career. Behaviors that occur when students are chronically absent are truancy, tardiness, or verbal or physical altercations towards others (Byrnes & Belfanz, 2012; Ready, 2010; Rosenkranz et. al., 2014). Lastly, students fail to move on to the appropriate grade and or fail to graduate from high school.

**GPA**

A student's GPA, defined by Lindsay (2015), is a measure of student's success and progress. The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago (CCSR) claims that course grades are the best predictors of test score gains, and graduation. Belfanz and Byrnes (2012) found that increased absences correlate with lower test scores in math. If a student misses up to 2 months of school they are likely to see a 40-point decline in test scores (Rosenkranz et. al., 2014). Additionally, a study in a Chicago high school revealed that out of all the students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class more than half them failed a course, 40 percent of them missed more than a month in their first year, and their average GPA was lower than a 75 percent. In conclusion, what is known about students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is that if they receive a GPA of a 75 or lower during their freshman year they are more likely to drop out and never graduate from high school (Rosenkranz, et. al., 2014). When students become chronically absent it is apparent that their academics suffer.

**Retention Rate**

According to Roderick, Kelley-Kemple, Johnson & Beechum's (2014) study attendance was used as an indicator to determine if students were on track to graduate after the ninth grade. Using attendance as one of their identifying factors they found that one in four adolescents in the United States would not make it to graduation (Roderick, Kelley-Kemple, Johnson, & Beechum, 2014). Rosenkranz et. al. (2014) determined that ninth grade academic success is a better indicator on retention and graduating. Their study concluded that if 9<sup>th</sup> graders fail two or more courses in their freshman year they are at risk of never graduating. In addition, it was found that students attend less school in

the ninth grade, lack motivation, and receive lower marks compared to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, the factors presented in prior results conclude that students who are chronically absent are more likely to be retained and or not graduating. Ready (2010) claimed that chronic absenteeism is a better indicator of students being retained or not graduating. The Georgia State Department of Education (2011) determined that there was a convincing correlation between attendance and graduation rate. The findings in the results showed that students in the high school who missed 6-10 days of school had a 7-10 percent decrease in graduation rate. Additionally, if students missed 11-14 days of school it resulted in 11-14 percent drop in graduation rates. Lastly, if compared to students who missed between 0 and 5 days to those that missed 15 or more days there was a 50 percent drop in graduation rate (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Therefore, these findings indicate that when students are chronically absent they increase their chances of being retained, and decrease their chances of graduating.

### **Behaviors When Chronically Absent**

Students who are chronically absent not only suffer academically, but their behaviors become tougher to manage in school. Belfanz and Byrnes (2012) reported that students would not attend school in order to “avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment and embarrassment” (Belfanz & Byrnes, p. 4, 2012). In addition, Rosenkranz et al. (2014) interviewed students who addressed that in the high school there were fewer supervisors both in class and in the hallways. This resulted in students skipping class more frequently, bullying other students, and made it difficult for teachers to manage classroom behaviors.

“[In ninth grade] you have a choice either to go to class or you don’t go to class, and nobody’s going to be on you to go to your classes in high school.” (Rosenkranz et. al., p.

6, 2014).

In high school, Rosenkranz et. al (2014) claim, students are pushed to become more responsible. Therefore, high schools give students more freedom and fewer reminders to get their work done, behave, and participate in class.

“I give them time every day to do the [class] work. I don’t accept if they come in the next day and say I didn’t get it, because it’s their choice. That’s their part of the responsibility. They have 20 minutes to decide if they want to do their work and get a good grade or if they want to mess around. And that’s ok, so you’re going to take a zero, that’s your choice” (Rosenkranz et. al., p. 7, 2014).

This notion illustrates that high schools are less structured by default in order to teach students how to become more independent and responsible. A study by Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Nagaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum (2012) revealed that high school environments involve significant and intentional effort to voluntarily put forth effort. Therefore, students are more likely to miss school, cut back on studying, and fail to complete their assignments.

### **Interventions Presented in High Schools**

Chronic absenteeism has been a concern for all educators (e.g. teachers, School Counselors, Social Workers, Administrators), and community members. Interventions can be presented in High Schools that can provide the appropriate support for students who are chronically absent. Students described that they are absent for multiple reasons. Therefore, providing interventions that can aid students in multiple ways can be most effective (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Such interventions are implemented in high schools, in the community, and at the district level.

A study in New York City, presented by Attendance Works (2014), determined that students who were chronically absent and received support were 54 percent less

likely to become chronically absent the follow year. Therefore it is prevalent that high schools take the necessary steps such as collecting data and developing school wide systems that acknowledge those students who are chronically absent, or students who are at risk for becoming chronically absent (Ginsburg et. al., 2014). For example, interventions that provide mentors to students, providing incentives to students for attending school, and family engagement programs to educate parents and the community have shown success (Chang, Davis, Smith, 2015; NYC Success Mentor Corps, 2014; Ginsburg et. al, 2014, Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

There are various interventions that focus on student engagement in order to prevent chronic absenteeism. In 2009, NYC public school system reported that there were over 10,000 students who were chronically absent. In 2013, an organization called Attendance Works followed a NYC mentor program known as Success Mentors. Success Mentors paired one mentor up with a group of chronically absent students, and met with them three days a week for a total of fifteen hours. Following the study, students who had mentors and who were chronically absent the year before attended 92,277 additional days of school compared to those students who were chronically absent without mentors (NYC Success Mentor Corps, 2014). In addition, an organization known as “reach-out-and-read” has aided students where English is there seconds language, or students with some type of literacy inadequacies. A study by Finck (2015) concluded that students become most disengaged in the classroom when they fall behind academically, or have some type an achievement gap. This can increase the likelihood of those students being truant, skipping, and or being absent from school. Involving students to the “Reach-Out-and-Read” program helped them catch up academically, focuses on parents being more



involved, and increases community engagement. This program has shown success for student's academics, but it also has shown an increase in students attendance rate (Byington, Hobson, Olson, Torres-Nielsen, Winter, Ortiz, & Buchi, 2008; King, Muzaffar, George, 2009).

In addition, schools can provide incentives to reward their students for meeting specific attendance requirements. Dever-McCormack K-8 School provided their students with an "AttenDANCE" for attending ninety-five days during the second quarter of the school year . Belfanz & Byrnes (2012) reported that the students expressed their excitement for the incentives, and were more motivated in school. This exhibits that in school incentives can help decrease the amount of days students miss in a school year.

High School can also provide additional support to families who have children who are chronically absent. For example, there are over 30,000 students who receive "get-up and get-to-school" calls from celebrities such as Michael Jordan and Whoopi Goldberg (Byrnes & Belfanz, 2012). "Get-up and Get-to-School" is a service that reaches out to families to make sure their child is awake, and preparing to go to school. Schools have also provided "ROBO" calls and sent letters home to let parents know when their child failed to attend school. In addition, the letters that are sent home provide information that describes the affects of being chronically absent from school, and how it will inhibit their child's academic and personal growth. Lastly, there are "Community walk-to-school programs" that provide students with community members who walk them to school if parents are unable to get them up in time. Chronic absenteeism is still in the early stages of development, but interventions that are specific to decrease chronic absenteeism have shown success in the United States (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, students who are chronically absent struggle to succeed in school. The literature suggests that when students miss upwards to 20 or more school days they struggle academically, are tougher to manage in school, and are retained more frequently resulting in dropping out of high school (Rosenkranz et. al., 2014). Chronic absenteeism can affect student of all ages, but if students are provided with the proper support it can help increase their attendance. Belfanz and Burns (2012) recognized that when children begin missing school chronically at a young age their academic development begins to decline. Attendance Works (2014) found that when chronically absent students are provided with school support they have a 54 percent chance of not becoming chronically absent the following year. By implementing support programs and interventions it can help students and families feel more engaged, educate parents and community members on why attending school matters, and most importantly decrease students chances of being chronically absent.

The goal of this project is to conduct a secondary data analysis on attendance collected by Brockport High School over the 2014-2015 academic year. The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism and determine the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate. Evaluation of this data will help provide critical information about the deleterious effect of chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more school days) in a suburban school.

## **Methods**

This study was designed to identify the effects of chronic absenteeism at the high school level. The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism and determine

the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate at Brockport High School during the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Research Site**

The researcher interned at Brockport High School as a school counselor during the 2014-2015-school year. Brockport High School is located in Brockport, New York, and is populated by 1,200 ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. Chronic absenteeism has affected 5 to 7.5 million students in the United States (Ginsburg et. al., 2014). Chronic absenteeism can be defined as students missing 20 or more days in a school year, excused or unexcused (Chang et. al., 2014; Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Chang & Romero, 2008; Finch, 2015). Brockport reported that during the 2014-2015 school year, they acquired 140 students who were chronically absent. The researcher attended staff meetings that addressed that there has been an increase in absences amongst students at the high school. Attending these meetings helped ensure that providing a data report on the effects of chronic absenteeism would be beneficial in helping Brockport High School decrease chronic absenteeism amongst students. The feedback would show the correlation of being chronically absent, and the effects it has on students GPA, referrals received, and retention.

### **Participants**

The study consisted of 140 total students that comprised of 27 ninth graders, 29 tenth graders, 31 eleventh graders, and 53 twelfth graders. The age of participants ranged from 14 to 19 years old. The data was retrieved from a secondary data report that was given to the head researcher by the School Psychologist. The data report consisted of the grade level, interventions used, referrals, gender, the number of present days, the number

of absent days, and the number of enrolled days during the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, the head researcher also retrieved separate data from counselors in the office in regards to those students who failed to graduate, and those who were retained.

### **Instrument**

The instrument used to retrieve the data was a school wide system known as infinite campus. Infinite campus is accessible by any school staff member (e.g. Administrators, School Counselors, Administrators, and teachers). Infinite campus is a data collection system that provides information related to students' personal background information, past and current grades, referrals received, and attendance.

### **Procedure**

During the spring of 2015 the head researcher attended various CHAT (Counselor High School Administration Team) meetings held at Brockport High School in regards to any school or district update pertinent to the high school. A CHAT meeting was a bi-weekly gathering of school staff (e.g. Administrators, School Counselors, Social Workers, and School Psychologist) members to inform one another what they were working on. In many cases staff reported on students they were working with, programs being utilized (e.g. Response Team Interventions, FACT Referrals, and CPS), and data reports such as attendance rates. Many of those meetings addressed how could each entity improve student well-being and safety. The topic at many of these meetings was chronic absenteeism. The School Psychologist provided the data report used by the head researcher to conduct the study. The report consisted of student's name, attendance, GPA, and referrals received (if any).

In addition, the researcher met with staff members such as school psychologists and other counselors in the school in regards to chronic absenteeism. The original data report did not have students who were retained during the 2014-2015 school year including seniors who did not graduate. Therefore, the researcher confined in School Counselors on students who failed to graduate from high school during the 2014-2015 school term. After meeting with the counselors and searching infinite campus, the author was able to retrieve those students who were retained, and failed to graduate. Lastly, the researcher met with the School Psychologist one on one to get a deeper understanding of chronic absenteeism as a whole, and how it has been affecting Brockport High School students.

Prior to conducting the study the researcher had to get the study approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB application was created during the summer time when students and staff were on summer recess. When school began in September of 2015, the head researcher received permission from the IRB, and could conclude the remainder of the study. The data was analyzed on SPSS to determine the correlation between chronic absenteeism, students' GPA, referrals received, and retention rate. In SPSS the author ran descriptive statistics that helped perform a Pearson Correlation to determine the correlation between absenteeism and student GPA, referral rate, and retention. Once the descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation was ran the author saved the file on the student drive provided by Brockport College to ensure the information would be safe, and readily usable when addressing the results.

## **Results**

The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism and determine the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate. Data was collected on students who were chronically absent during the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, the researcher examined those students GPA, whether or not they received a referral, and if they moved on to the appropriate grade for the 2015-2016 school year. Based on raw data and the descriptive statistics ran on SPSS a Pearson Correlation was ran to determine the linear relationship of chronic absenteeism and the three variables (e.g. GPA, Referrals received, and Retention).

**Descriptive Statistics.** When looking at the raw data and the descriptive statistics it was clear that chronic absenteeism was affecting how students performed academically, the amount of referrals received, and whether or not they were being moved on to the appropriate grade. Table 1 below shows that out of the 140 students who were chronically absent the average absences was 41.95 (21.95 days over the definition of chronic absenteeism) days; students GPA was a 73.12%; at least one referral was received (.9286); lastly, there was only .1214 students who were retained. In addition, 27 out of 140 (19.29%) students failed to move on to the next grade the following year.

*Table 1. SPSS Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Retained	140	.00	1.00	.1214	.32780
GPA	140	16.26	92.40	73.1158	13.96959
Number of Behaviors Absent	140	.00	13.00	.9286	2.10051
Valid N (listwise)	140	19.17	148.72	41.9468	28.78288

**Pearson Correlation.** Figure 2 represents the Pearson correlation. The Pearson Correlation displayed that there was a significant correlation between absences and GPA  $r(N=140) = -.647, p < .001$ , and absences and retention  $r(N=140) = .432, p < .001$ . The results demonstrated that there is a statistically significant moderate to strong relationship between student absences and student GPA. In addition, the results displayed that between student absences and retention there is a statistically significant weak - moderate positive correlation.

The Pearson Correlation in table 2 displayed that there was not a significant correlation between absences and behavior  $r(N=140) = .148, p < .001$ . The results demonstrated that there is a statistically significant weak positive correlation between absences and behavior. Although the results were not statistically significant  $r(N=140) = .148$ , the Pearson Correlation was approaching significance. Therefore it could be stated that there is some significance between absences and behavior.

Table 2. SPSS Pearson Correlation

		<b>Correlations</b>			
		Absent	Number of Behaviors	GPA	Retained
Absent	Pearson Correlation	1	.148	-.647**	.432**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.082	.000	.000
	N	140	140	140	140
Number of Behaviors	Pearson Correlation	.148	1	-.276**	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.082		.001	.523
	N	140	140	140	140
GPA	Pearson Correlation	-.647**	-.276**	1	-.671**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001		.000
	N	140	140	140	140
Retained	Pearson Correlation	.432**	.054	-.671**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.523	.000	
	N	140	140	140	140



### Discussion

The purpose of the study was to review chronic absenteeism and determine the correlation between students GPA, the referrals they received, and retention rate. The findings in the results are consistent with other studies that expressed that when students miss school at a higher rate their academics worsen (Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Rosenkranz et. al., 2014; Belfanz & Burns, 2012; Chang, Davis, Smith, 2015). As the research presented, students who are absent from school are not able to learn the material, receive extra help, and are missing assignments due to being chronically absent (Chang & Romero, 2008). Therefore, being chronically absent play a role in why student's GPA's suffer.

The correlation between chronic absenteeism and retention showed a significant moderate to strong relationship. Furthermore, when absences increased so did the likelihood of those students being retained. Moreover, the results showed that ninth graders were retained the most compared to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade (e.g. 13 students) . This coincides with studies such as Belfanz and Byrnes (2012) that stated students in the ninth grade who are chronically absent are more likely to be held back than students in other grades. Ready (2010) claimed that ninth grade was the make it or break it year, and those students who are retained are at a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Lastly, because chronic absenteeism and behavior had a weak positive correlation the data was not significant. Although, the data was approaching significance concluding that as chronic absenteeism increases students are more likely to receive an increased amount of referrals. The levels of behaviors in Brockport High School ranged from

verbal and physical altercations, skipping class, bullying, and harassment. In the high school, students experience more freedom, and have less supervision in the classroom and hallways. With less supervision in classrooms students are able to behave inappropriately because teachers are unable to manage their entire classrooms (Chang & Romero, 2008). In addition, less supervision in the hallways allows students to be truant more frequently, and or skip class (Indiana Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, studies have described that when students become chronically absent from school and suffer academically they can sometimes become frustrated due to not receiving the information while they were absent (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Ready, 2010; Chang & Romero; 2008; Finck, 2015). Therefore, when this occurs students act out verbally and sometimes physically towards school staff, and or students. In conclusion, when students are chronically absent there are factors that can cause them to receive more referrals than those students who attend school regularly.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The information acquired only addressed the three variables due to the limitations found while conducting the study. The limitations are a result from the time constraints the author was under, methods of conducting the study, and the data collecting process. Each of these limitations will be examined further.

**Time Limitations.** Time played a roll in the amount of information obtained, and how the study was conducted. The study was to be conducted in a 4-month time frame so the researcher had to propose a study that could be concluded in the required time. In addition, limited research was conducted because being in a high school students have breaks throughout the year (e.g. Thanksgiving Christmas, Summer Recess etc.) During

the longest break of the year, summer recess, collecting data was not possible when school was not in session. It was difficult to obtain the appropriate data because that information was only attainable at Brockport High School. Therefore, the author began collecting data at the start of school year.

**Restrictions at the High School.** The majority of high school students are minors' so conducting a study involving students requires parent consent. The author originally planned to organize a study that involved incoming ninth graders, and the goal was to formulate a group based on students who were chronically absent the previous year. In order to conduct a group with minors, parent approval is mandated. Due to summer recess it was very difficult to receive permission from parents in a suitable time frame that would allow the author to run a group, and collect appropriate data. In addition, running a group during the school day involves taking students out of core classes. As a school counselor, they must be conscious of students academic which does not allow them to take students out of class as frequently as they would like (ASCA, 2015). This also was a limitation to trying to conduct a group with such a small time table.

**Study Approval.** In order to begin the research the author needed approval from both the IRB, and the site the study was to be conducted at. The IRB ensures that the project is appropriate, and addresses the issues that are being explored. Due to summer recess at the College of Brockport, and the limited times the Board meets it took the duration of the summer to receive approval. Without approval, the head researcher was unable to begin the project. In addition, the author did not receive approval from Brockport High School until early September. Due to obtaining approval so late the study

had to be shaped in a way where the data could be collected, addressed, and concluded in the time frame the author was given.

### **Implications for Future Research.**

There are over 5 million students in the United States that are chronically absent from school (Ginsburg et. al., 2014). The evidence from past research and the data retrieved from Brockport High School concludes that when students are chronically absent they have a higher chance of failing academically, receiving a referral, and ultimately not graduating from high school. Moreover, this is substantial evidence why school districts, administrators, teachers, and school counselors should do what it takes to decrease the amount of students who are chronically absent from school.

Brockport High School has implemented interventions to aid students who struggle with attending school regularly, are receiving poor academic marks, and are behavioral. Furthermore, what the author noticed was that Brockport High School does not track whether or not their current interventions are successful. Due to the limited time the author had, addressing if the school did track the success rate of their interventions could not be completed. As a suggestion, Brockport High School should develop a system to determine whether or not their interventions are successful.

Studies have shown a correlation between chronic absenteeism and students who receive free and reduced lunch, are from a minority group, and have siblings who have been chronically absent (Ginsburg et. al., 2014; Chang et. al, 2015; Byington et. al., 2008; Smink, & Reimer, 2005). If Brockport High School continues researching the above topics it could allow for schools to provide early interventions to aid those students when their high school career begins. Providing early interventions could be crucial in helping

a student transitioning into high school, and succeed.

Lastly, High Schools are significantly different than elementary and middle schools. Moreover, students succumb to more freedom in the high school, undergo higher-level course work, acquire an increase in workload, and have social adversities to deal with. The author suggests formulating a group and or developing a mentoring program to help incoming ninth graders who have a history of being chronically absent transition into the high school. These interventions have the potential to help struggling students succeed in the high school.

**Implications for High Schools (e.g. School Counselors, Administrators, Teachers,  
and District Office)**

Strategies to improve attendance, truancy, and dropout rates have been seen as a multidimensional model. Smink and Reimer (2005) report that students express a variety of reasons for missing school. Therefore, in conducting interventions that are effective addressing them at each level in the school district can be beneficial.

**School Counselors.** In order to make this study more successful the author could have conducted a focus group for students who are chronically absent. School counselors could develop a focus group consisting of incoming ninth graders who were chronically absent during eighth grade. In order to measure if the group was effective the author could provide pre and post assessments that looked at overall well-being. School counselors can implement this group because it is their roll in the high school to formulate groups for students who could benefit from interaction of that nature (ASCA, 2015). As stated before, interventions that involve mentors have shown great success (NYC Success Mentors, 2014). Furthermore, high schools such as Brockport can develop

a mentoring program with community members that assist students who are chronically absent. Moreover, school counselors are trained to help students of all backgrounds. Therefore, with their help and assistance they can train and or provide insight to other staff members, community members, and families on how to deal with certain issues high school students may be undergoing (ASCA, 2014).

**Administrators.** As research showed, mentor programs that focus on attendance has displayed success in helping students attend school more regularly (NYC Success Mentors, 2014). A suggestion for future interventions could be a collaboration with Brockport College where college students take on a group of students who are chronically absent. In those small groups, the lead mentor can implement activities that focus on issues students may be dealing with, and addressing why attending school is important. Habegger (2008) described one of the roles of an administrator is engaging the community. Therefore, administrators in the schools can initiate this program with the college, and present it to school staff to begin coming up with a plan of action to move forward. In addition, developing a system where elementary, middle, and high school staff communicate more clearly the needs of students entering a new building. Chang, Davis, and Smith (2015) saw disparities in attendance rates starting as early as preschool and kindergarten are contributing to achievement gaps, and high school dropouts. This can bring awareness to other staff, local colleges, and communities to help prevent students from being chronically absent.

**District Office.** Lastly, the author was not able to address all of the interventions utilized for students who are chronically absent, and also how accurate Brockport High Schools data collecting system is. Determining the success rate of each intervention could

allow for Brockport High School to keep what is working, but also develop new interventions that could be more successful. After meeting with staff members it was clear that teachers have a difficult time determining whether or not their students are chronically absent. The author suggests for Brockport High School and the district address their data collecting system to determine the accuracy. Moreover, providing teachers with insight to when their students have missed an excessive amount of classes can allow them to reach out to those students to help them succeed academically.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine the correlation between chronic absenteeism and GPA, referrals received, and retention. In concluding the findings of the results it is clear that chronic absenteeism effects students academic success in the high school. In addition, studies have shown that analyzing students at the kindergarten and sixth grade level can be better indicators for determining if a student will become chronically absent (Chang & Romero, 2008; Smink, Reimer, 2005; Chang, Davis, Smith, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative for school districts to develop collaborations amongst one another (e.g. elementary, middle, and high school) in order to track students to provide them with the appropriate services.

Additionally, interventions that have shown signs of success are schools with an extensive student tracking model on attendance and mentoring programs (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Research states that in ninth grade students who are chronically absent has a much higher chance of failing their current grade, and ultimately dropping out. Moreover, data tracking systems should begin all the way at the elementary level so students and families can be provided with the appropriate interventions to allow for the

student to succeed throughout their academic career.

Community engagement has also shown great success in helping students overcome being chronically absent. Brockport High School is connected to the College at Brockport, and developing a mentoring program where college students take a small group of students who are chronically absent could be healthy for both parties. With the help from school counselors, those mentors can be trained in order to help students of various backgrounds. This can also increase the awareness on chronic absenteeism, and how important it is for students to attend school regularly

Lastly, due to the time constraints of the authors tenure at Brockport High School formulating a group for incoming ninth grade students who were chronically absent was difficult to devise. Transitioning into the high school is extremely difficult because of the freedom provided, level of academic performance needed to succeed, and the social abnormalities presented in the high school (Chang & Romero, 2008). Providing those students with time to address their personal issues could be beneficial to their achievement. Therefore, it is highly suggested to employ a focused group for ninth grade students who have been chronically absent in the past.

Chronic absenteeism is an issue affecting school districts, students, and families all over. Providing awareness could be the best intervention overall. Families need to know how important attending school is for their child, and what could happen if they reach the threshold of 20 or more missed days in a school year. Teachers and staff in schools need to be aware of those students who are chronically absent in order to reach out to them before it is too late. It is clear this is not an overnight solution, but through data collecting, collaboration amongst schools and community members, and providing



awareness the number of students who are chronically absent can slowly start to decline.

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