

2017

A Study of the WV Judges' Truancy Program Used in Eight WV Counties from 2012-2015

Lori Gibson Comer
lcomer@k12.wv.us

Follow this and additional works at: <https://mds.marshall.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Comer, Lori Gibson, "A Study of the WV Judges' Truancy Program Used in Eight WV Counties from 2012-2015" (2017). *Theses, Dissertations and Capstones*. 1131.
<https://mds.marshall.edu/etd/1131>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu, beachgr@marshall.edu.

**A Study of the WV Judges' Truancy Program Used in Eight WV
Counties from 2012-2015**

A dissertation submitted to
Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by

Lori Gibson Comer

Approved by

Dr. Louis Watts, Committee Chairperson

Dr. Cynthia Kolsun

Dr. Edna Meisel

Dr. Terry Mullins

Marshall University

December 2017

SIGNATURE PAGE

I hereby affirm that the following project meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by my discipline, college, and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With my signature, I approve the manuscript for publication.

Project Title: A Study of the West Virginia Judges' Truancy Program used in Eight West Virginia Counties from 2012-2015.

Student's Name: Lori Comer

Department: Leadership Studies

College: Marshall University



Committee Chairperson

10/10/2017

Date

@2017

Lori G. Comer

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful family that has supported me through this entire journey. I wish to thank my husband Steve for encouraging me to pursue my dreams. He has been patient and understanding. To my five children, Tyler, Laurel (and Kory), Lindsay, LydiaBeth (and Tristan), and Leah I wish to thank them for allowing mom to be a student too! I hope I was still able to be a mom to all of you throughout this journey. It was difficult to juggle being full-time principal, mom, wife and doctoral student. During this process, we have gone through high school graduations, college visits, college graduations, employment changes, moving our children (countless times), engagements, weddings, and I hope that I have been there for you through all of your milestones. My love to each of you.

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my parents, Shirley and Richard Gibson. They instilled in me the importance and love of education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my committee that agreed to be a part of this adventure with me. You each have contributed in this work and in my life. I certainly could not have produced this document without your help, understanding, and guidance. Dr. Terry Mullins began to inspire me as a senior in high school when he taught my senior government class. It was years later that we reconnected- he as a college faculty member and myself as a principal. I knew I wanted him to be a part of this process. He has watched me go from high school diploma to terminal degree. I have enjoyed the journey and have proudly presented at several conferences with him. Dr. Cynthia Kolsun was instrumental in helping me to know that this degree was the right path for me. As a professor in one of my early classes, she exhibited leadership by doing—as she took our class to the superintendents’ conference. This was not just a conference to sit and watch, but one that had meaningful assignments that helped me to grow. I thank her for her willingness to continue on my committee after her official retirement. Dr. Edna Meisel has been an amazing teacher. She taught me statistics when I was terrified, but somehow made it enjoyable and understandable. She has also been a tremendous asset in helping to prepare the statistics for this document. I also wish to thank Dr. Louis Watts, who has served as my dissertation chairperson. He has been kind, understanding, and patient. He was a favorite professor and I most enjoyed his class on leadership styles. He helped to solidify what my leadership style is today. He was willing to work with me on countless edits, re-writes, and sometimes just helping me re-think my words.

For all of you I will be eternally grateful for this experience, and I am blessed to have you as a part of it.

CONTENTS

List of Tables-----	ix
Abstract-----	x
Chapter 1-----	1
Introduction-----	1
Related Literature-----	1
Problem Statement-----	4
Research Questions-----	4
Purpose of Study-----	5
Significance of Study-----	5
Limitations-----	5
Data Analysis-----	6
Summary-----	6
Chapter 2-----	7
Literature Review-----	7
Background of the Truancy Problem-----	7
Various Types of Truancy Diversion Programs-----	10
Judicial Involvement in the Truancy Program in West Virginia-----	15
Chapter 3-----	18
Methods-----	18
Research Design-----	19
Population-----	19
Instrumentation-----	20

Data Collection and Analysis-----	20
Chapter 4-----	21
Survey Responses-----	21
Results—Effect of Judges’ Truancy Program on Attendance, Dropout Rate, and Graduation Rate-----	22
Questions Related to Participants Perceptions of the Judges’ Truancy Program and Perceived Role of Various Stakeholders-----	27
Chapter 5-----	35
Introduction-----	35
Purpose of the Study-----	35
Methods-----	36
A Summary of the Findings-----	37
Conclusions and Discussions from Findings-----	38
Concluding Remarks-----	47
Limitation-----	48
Recommendations for Further Study-----	49
References-----	50
Appendix A: Letter from Institutional Research Board-----	52
Appendix B: Survey-----	53
Appendix C: Comments for Strengths of Judges’ Truancy Program-----	56
Appendix D: Comments for Weaknesses of Judges’ Truancy Program-----	57

Appendix E: Comments for Suggestions for The Judges' Truancy Program-----58
Vita-----59

LIST OF TABLES

1	Average Attendance Rate, Dropout Rate and Graduation Rate-----	22
2	ANOVA Data for Attendance, Dropout and Graduation Rates -----	23
3	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Attendance Rates to Attendance Rates of Three Program Year-----	24
4	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Dropout Rates to Dropout Rates of Three Program Year-----	25
5	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Graduation Rates to Graduation Rates of Three Program Year-----	26
6	Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program-----	27
7	Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness in Five Categories-----	28
8	Chi-Square Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness in Five Categories-----	29
9	Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspective of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Influence of Stakeholders on Truant Youth-----	30
10	Chi-Square Comparing Perspective of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Influence of Stakeholders on Truant Youth-----	31
11	Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Responses Identifying Strengths of the Judges' Truancy Program-----	32
12	Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Responses Identifying Weaknesses of the Judges' Truancy Program-----	32
13	Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Responses Identifying Suggestions for Improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program-----	33

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the West Virginia Judges' Truancy Program used in eight counties from 2012-2015. The study compared attendance rates, dropout rates and graduation rates prior to the implementation of the program and the three years of program implementation, as well as perceptions of those using the program. While much research can be found concerning the topic of truancy and some research on different types of truancy diversion programs, no research has been found on this particular program used in West Virginia.

In this study data were collected from the West Virginia Department of Education public site to determine graduation rates, dropout rates, and attendance rates on all counties within the state of West Virginia. A survey was also sent to judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators to gather data related to their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program. The survey was delivered via Qualtrics and the link sent electronically to the individuals. Statistical testing was performed on the data gathered from the West Department of Education. Statistical testing was also performed on the data gathered from the surveys.

The data showed significant differences in the attendance rate, dropout rate, and graduation rate during the time period studied. The perspectives of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators were not significantly different in the areas of effectiveness of the program including: increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate and changing student attitude about school. There was also no significant difference in the perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators on the relative influence of various stakeholders on success of truant youth. Principals, counselors, parents, teachers, and juvenile probation officers were rated as high level of influence on truant youth.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Truancy has been an issue in public schools since the beginning of compulsory attendance. Compulsory attendance began as the common schools reform movement introduced the concept of every child attending school. Goldstein (2015) stated that Massachusetts was the first state to mandate compulsory attendance in 1852. In the late 1800's it was the goal to have students removed from the factories and farms and attend school as mandated. Every state had a mandatory school attendance law by 1918. Once compulsory attendance began so did the truancy problem. Stoll (1990) defined truancy as being absent from school without a legitimate reason. Truancy not only affects the student who is absent from school, but also creates negative outcomes that affect society. Truant students are more likely to have lower grades, have greater discipline problems, and be more likely to drop out of school. Dropping out of high school increases the risk for poverty, increases criminal behavior, increases prison rates, and lowers the income of the person in the future. It can also lead to other issues such as delinquency, lowered educational attainment, drug involvement, as well as criminal activity (Gleich-Bope, 2014).

Related Literature

Kearney (2008) reported that various student factors affecting truancy include (a) underdeveloped social and academic skills; (b) trauma; (c) race; (d) age; (e) problematic relationships with authority figures; (f) pregnancy; (g) low self-esteem; (h) history of absenteeism; (i) learning-based re-enforcers of absenteeism; (j) grade retentions and (k) externalizing symptoms/or psychopathology. He also stated that several parent factors affect truancy, such as inadequate parenting skills, single parent homes, low expectations of school

performance and attendance, poor communication with school officials, poor involvement and supervision. Peer factors that Kearney (2008) listed included participation in gangs and gang-related activity, peer pressure, proximity to deviant peers, victimization from bullies, and support for alluring activities outside of school, such as drug use.

Ovink (2011) completed a qualitative study at Midvale Truancy Center where she spent 18 months volunteering in the center. She completed numerous hours of participant observation and interviews. She stated that the responses to truancy are complex and that it is more than just an individual or family problem; truancy exists in an undefined space between child's play and criminal behavior. She described the truant student as one that needed help rather than labeled as an offender. She suggested that further research including exploring the intentions of schools and institutions be done as the truancy problem is targeted.

One form of truancy intervention and prevention program is zero tolerance. In one study Gage, et al (2013) conducted a case study of a zero-tolerance program where grade points are deducted for unexcused absences. They found that the zero-tolerance policy appeared to be contributing to increased point loss of students already failing and receiving instruction in the lowest levels. Many students had IEP's and/or were receiving free/reduced lunch. This program did not prove to be effective for students that were already at risk.

Teasley (2004) shared the importance of multiple agencies being involved in the issues of absenteeism and truancy. She stated that no one group, agency or organization can correct the truancy problem alone, and that collaborative efforts are necessary. Haight, Chapman, Hendron, Loftis and Kearney (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary truancy diversion program (TDP). The multidisciplinary approach included psychological, educational, and social/criminal justice organizations. Results showed significant decreases in separation anxiety,

generalized anxiety, social phobia, and depression. The results also supported the hypothesis that students completing this program would show significant decreases in oppositional, hyperactive-impulsive, attention deficit hyperactivity, and cognitive-attention problems. The last finding was based on an agreement by the graduates and parents agreed that grades improved.

Ming (2004) completed a study in 43 local educational agencies in England and Wales. The local agencies implemented a program where parents of truant children were prosecuted. The study, conducted over a three-year time period, revealed that the higher numbers of prosecution did not link to lower truancy rates.

Hendricks et al (2010) found in an evaluation of a truancy court intervention program in four middle schools that the program was most effective with the most severe cases. The study was conducted by dividing the subjects based upon the degree of their truancy: severe, moderate, or mild. A two-way, repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA; three levels of truancy severity x three semesters of attendance) was conducted to determine if the truancy court improved attendance. The semesters studied were: pre-court, the semester with court in place, and the follow up semester. No significant difference was found in the follow up semester with the mild and moderate groups. A significant difference was found in the severe category during the court semester, and the severe category did maintain attendance levels during the follow up semester.

In the State of West Virginia there are eight counties that used a judicial-based truancy program. This judicial based program is a multi-disciplinary approach. The school district attendance director files a petition on a student who becomes truant. The truant student must appear before a circuit court judge in court, and if adjudicated, the student is typically put on an improvement period probation. The truant student is appointed a juvenile probation officer

(JPO) and guardian ad litem. The multi-disciplinary team (MDT) consisting of JPO's, the student, parents, school staff, attorneys, and Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) representatives work together in regular meetings to develop a plan to help the student attend school successfully.

Problem Statement

There is much national research on the topic of truancy and the negative impact that truancy has on society. Limited research is available on the topic of truancy specific to the state of West Virginia. No research could be located specific to the Judges' Truancy Program. Currently there are eight counties of the 55 in the state of West Virginia that use the Judges' Truancy Program Model. There is much to learn about the effectiveness of these programs. Some counties have had the program for more than three years, while others are only in the first or second year of existence. According to Reid (2009), there is a need for further research in the areas of inter-agency and multi-agency practice. He also stated that more research is needed in the area of good practices. This proposal recognizes the lack of research available and the need for further research in this area.

Research Questions

1. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the attendance rate in counties implementing it in West Virginia?
2. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on decreasing the dropout rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia?
3. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the graduation rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia?
4. What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program as

held by judges, attendance directors, and school administrators in the counties implementing the program?

5. What are the perceptions by judges, attendance directors, and school administrators of relative influence of various stakeholders on successful student attendance at school?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to add to the body of literature about truancy intervention/prevention programs in the state of West Virginia. More specifically, the significance of this study will be to determine if the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia is effective in its intended purposes and a program that other counties may wish to consider.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that the problem of truancy is affecting society in many ways. One way that eight counties in West Virginia are dealing with the truancy issues in their districts is the implementation of this judicial based program. No research could be located on this particular program. This study will examine the dropout rate, attendance rate, and the graduation rate in the eight counties. The perceptions of the judges, attendance directors and building level administrators will be compared as to the effectiveness of the program and the implementation. The perceptions of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators will also be compared to the level of influence that various stakeholders have on student successful attendance.

Limitations

The limitations to this study include that it included only eight counties in the state of West Virginia. The fact that there are only eight attendance directors and 15 judges within the

eight counties to be studied creates an unbalanced sample size. Another limitation was that some counties that initially implemented the program have discontinued the program, therefore only a three-year time frame could be examined.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through various statistical methods. For research questions one, two, and three, a two-sample t-test will be used to examine data prior to the implementation of the program and the first three years of the program. The graduation rates, drop-out rates and attendance rates in the eight counties being studied will be examined. For research questions four and five, a Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance will be used to compare the perceptions of judges, attendance directors and building level administrators of the Judges' Truancy Program. The Kruskal-Wallis test one-way analysis of variance will be used due to the small sample size. A chi-square test will be used for further analysis.

Summary

The main purpose for this study is to examine perspectives of judges, attendance directors and principals regarding the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia. Secondary purposes include searching to discover if the programs have affected the attendance rates, graduation rates, and the dropout rates. Truancy is an issue that contributes to poverty, crime, incarceration, and dropout rate. The information derived from this study could prove to be valuable to teachers, administrators, judges, probation officers, and attendance directors.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature relevant to the study of the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia. The study reviewed data on drop-out rate and graduation rates for the counties and schools involved in the program. The study will also examine the perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators regarding the judicial based truancy program in West Virginia. The literature review is divided into three sections. Section one will examine the background of the truancy problem. Section two will discuss various truancy diversion programs that are in use. The third section will review the judicial truancy program in West Virginia.

Background of the Truancy Problem

Truancy has been an issue in public education since the beginning of compulsory education. Goldstein (2015) wrote that the common schools reform movement from the nineteenth century originally maintained the goal of requiring parents to enroll their children in school to develop a more educated population. As early as 1898, juveniles were being arrested and placed in jail for not going to school. And by the year 1918, every state in the union had a compulsory attendance law. Ming (2004) reported that compulsory education was only meant to last for one generation in the belief that future generations would comply because it would be accepted as a natural part of growing up. However, the truancy issue extended beyond that first generation.

Researchers define absenteeism as a period of not attending school. Researchers have determined that absenteeism is often influenced by lack of community support or resources, an unsupportive school environment, overcrowded classrooms, psychosocial stressors within the

family, dysfunctional family dynamics, inclement weather, transportation problems, personal issues, and poor physical or mental health (Mueller, Giacomazzi, & Stoddard, 2006; Teasley, 2004).

One study conducted by Dimmick, Correa, Liazia, & McMichael (2011) identified the factors that typically influence truancy such as family environment, living situation, caregivers' access to social resources, severity and duration of substance abuse, and peer victimization (bullying). The 20 students that were studied were 12 boys, six girls, and two with no stated gender. Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between each of the six contributing factors (family environment, living situation, community involvement, severity of substance abuse, duration of substance abuse, peer victimization) and attendance percentage. It was reported that none of these factors were significantly related to truancy. However, when examining the tardy issue, it was found that peer victimization (bullying) was associated with tardiness.

Henry (2007) studied a group of eighth and tenth graders for correlations between truant eighth and tenth graders and various factors. The results indicated school related variables of poor academic performance and low perception of the likelihood of graduating from high school as well as the use of drugs had direct correlation on attendance rates. It was determined that the students who are disengaged from school and using drugs have the highest probability of truancy.

Rogers (2014) stated that chronic truancy is often seen as a prerequisite or by-product of more serious criminal involvement. A multidisciplinary type approach is recommended using both the school districts and the juvenile court system to address the truancy issues. A multidisciplinary approach that includes mentoring helps increase attendance, decrease dropout

rate, builds students' self-esteem, increases better student academic performance, promotes accountability, and reduces delinquent acts within the community.

Reid (2006) completed a study of 431 education social worker/education welfare officers and found that these workers indicated a need for more vocational/alternative curriculum to address the truancy issue. It was reported that the five issues perceived as most seriously handicapping successful management of truancy and non-attendance were: (a) parents condoning their children's absences; (b) socio-economic factors; (c) parents taking students out of school for vacations during school terms; (d) the lack of alternative or vocational curriculum; and (e) pupils' low self-esteem and low expectations.

Another issue with truancy is the likely encounter with the law enforcement and the court system. Monohan, VanDerhie, Bechrold, & Cauffman (2014) conducted a study with 1,354 serious juvenile offenders in two major metropolitan areas. The study tested how being suspended or expelled from school (or not) and being truant from school (or not) were associated with being arrested in a given month. When suspended or expelled from school, the student was 2.10 times more likely to get arrested that month compared to months when the adolescent was not suspended or expelled from school. In months when a youth was truant from school, he or she was 2.42 times more likely to be arrested compared to months when he or she was not truant from school.

Shute (2015) found that while many problems with truant students lie with the students and their lack of interest in acquiring an education, there is a population of truant students that identify the curriculum, teacher, and pedagogy as perpetuating truancy. Students stated that they skipped classes due to being bored, perceptions that the adults were uncaring, having poor

relationships with the teachers, and some students even felt as if they were being bullied or embarrassed by their teachers.

Havik, Bru, & Ertesvag (2015) completed a study to determine why students miss school. In this study it was reported that there is a difference in school refusal and truancy. Truancy was more associated with the student not going to school because of having more fun things to do, being bored with school, more appealing activities outside of school, or too tired after playing games late into the night. School refusal was more associated with feelings about school such as being afraid or worried about something at school, avoiding unpleasant situations at school, feeling sorry or sad if they went to school. The study also found that most high school students used a subjective health complaint such as headache, stomach ache, or just not feeling well as a reason not to attend school.

Various Types of Truancy Diversion Programs

While there are many different types of truancy diversion programs, one particular type is the multidisciplinary approach. With this approach, stakeholders such as school administrators, school-based and/or clinical based counselors, truancy officers, guardian ad litem, attorneys, judges, probation officers, and child protective service workers collaborate together along with the parent to develop a plan for the student to improve attendance. Another type of diversion program is a punitive version where the student and/or the parent would be prosecuted.

According to Zalaznick (2015), 15 school districts in Texas launched a program that included stakeholders such as judges, elected officials, and a prosecutor. The goal was to solve as many truant cases outside of the judicial system as possible and handle them on campus. Truant students were assigned a case worker who worked with the student and family. Other services that were available through the program were counseling, substance abuse assistance,

and health care for chronic illness. The district leaders also felt it was important to address truancy at an early age, therefore the kindergarten and first grade students were provided support from the multidisciplinary team. The first year the kindergarten chronic absence rate was 30% while the next year with the intervention, the chronic absence rate dropped to 18% and the third year dropped to 13%. The first year the first grade chronic absence rate was 24% and the next year, with the intervention, the chronic absence rate dropped to 13.5%, while the third year dropped to 9.5%. This type of multidisciplinary approach was responsible for the school districts' best attendance rate ever.

A successful truancy diversion program in Colorado called for before-and-after school tutoring, group and peer counseling, and daily monitoring of homework completion as reported by Trujilloal (2006). There was also a tiered system of interventions in place before court intervention. These interventions included (a) letters mailed home documenting and monitoring student's attendance; (b) a student plan signed by the student, parent and school official; (c) collaboration with outside agencies; (d) intervention from the district level attendance officer, and, (e) a district-level hearing before being referred to the court system.

Brooks (1975) completed a study on 40 high school students with students selected randomly for a control and experimental group. In this study, the experimental group signed contracts and completed a daily check-in with the guidance office as well as obtained a teacher signature on a daily card each time they attended class. Small rewards were offered for completing the tasks. This program was similar to a positive rewards type program. Six thirty-minute meetings were held with the experimental group. A standard z-test for significance of difference between the control group and experimental group was administered. The control group began the study with a mean of 21.9 days absent. The mean days absent for the

experimental group was 22.3 truant days. After the intervention time period, the control group had a mean truant days of 29.3 days. The experimental group after the intervention time period had a mean truant days of 7.1 days.

Teasley (2004) reported that schools that have a plan in place to deal with the truancy issue are more effective at reducing truancy. He also suggested different types of intervention such as individual intervention, peer tutoring and mentoring, school intervention which would include meeting the needs of individual needs of all students, and interventions with families who place low value upon education and display school apathy. Neighborhood and community intervention is another type of diversion that involves truant students being mentored in the community with community volunteers.

Another form of a multidisciplinary approach to reducing the truancy numbers in a school district was the traffic light approach used on a trial basis in 2003. This approach included the monitoring of all students' attendance. Each student was placed in a corresponding group based upon their attendance rate: Red Group-below 70% attendance rate, Blue Group-71%-84% attendance rate, Yellow Group-85%-95% attendance rate, and Green Group –over 96% attendance rate. It was crucial for students to be aware of their group. It was also crucial for the parent to be aware of their child's attendance and in which group their child was listed. The goal was to move the students in the red to the blue group, the students in the blue group to the yellow group, and the students in the yellow group to the green group. The schools used a visible display both individually for students and parents and school wide for teachers and administrators. Schools reported gains in attendance between 5 and 8% (Reid, 2003).

Ming (2004) completed a study in 43 local educational agencies in England and Wales. The local agencies implemented a program where parents of truant children were prosecuted.

The study, conducted over a three year time period revealed that the higher numbers of prosecution did not link to lower truancy rates.

Hendricks et al. (2010) found in an evaluation of a truancy court intervention program in four middle schools that truancy court intervention was most effective with the most severe cases. The study was conducted by dividing the subjects based upon the severity of their truancy: severe, moderate, or mild. A two-way, repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA; three levels of truancy severity X three semesters of attendance) was conducted to determine if the truancy court improved attendance. The semesters studied were: pre-court, semester with court in place, and follow up semester. No significant difference was found in the follow up semester with the mild and moderate groups. A significant difference was found in the severe category during the court semester and the severe category did maintain attendance levels during the follow up semester.

In 2007, Desocio et al. completed a study using Mentoring Relationship and School Based Health Center Enrollment as the intervention model. A Pearson Chi Square test of Probabilities examined the probability of dropping out of school for students assigned to each group. Students in the experimental group were significantly more likely to remain in school and complete the school year than were students in the control group.

A study was completed by Enea and Dafinoiu (2009) assessing the motivational techniques used by counselors with an experimental group to reduce truancy. The techniques included a combination of intrinsic motivational stimulation strategies, (such as motivational interviewing, objective and solution-oriented counseling), and extrinsic motivational stimulation, (such as successive approximation of behavior, behavior contract, and reinforcement strategies).

The truancy percentage decreased by 61% in the experimental group while no change was observed in the control group.

In 1984, Duell found that though the perceptions of judges, probation officers, and school administrators varied 3%-10% whether chronic absenteeism is a symptom of home and school problems, they all agreed that a school-court program was effective in reducing truancy. In this study Duell noted that judges, probation officers and school administrators indicated that truancy is typically found in conjunction with other problems. In 2010, Hendricks et al. stated that a more rigorous evaluation of truancy court was warranted to further understand the effects of the intervention on student achievement, behavior, and truancy.

Dalun, Katsiyannis, Barrett, and Willson (2007) conducted a study of 12,464 juveniles who were drawn from a cohort in South Carolina. Each subject in the sample had been referred to the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice on at least one occasion. A comparative study was conducted concerning students who had been referred only for truancy as compared to being referred for other offenses. The study indicated that youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system for truancy represent a group of juvenile offenders distinct from youth who are referred for other more serious offenses. The group that was referred for truancy tended to be referred at a younger age than those referred for other offenses. These students showed a tendency to have less serious later offenses than the non-truants.

Another type of punitive program was the penalty notices used in 150 local education authorities in the United Kingdom. Zhang (2007) reported that penalty notices were used as a punitive method towards parents of truant students. The results showed no meaningful association between the Local Education Agencies (LEA's) average penalty likelihood over a period of two years and the change in absence rates in the same period.

Fantuzzo, Grim, & Hazan (2005) conducted a study evaluating the effectiveness of a community-based court intervention aimed at reducing truancy in a large urban city. The truant students were placed in one of three categories: no court referral, traditional court referral, and court referral with community-based services. During the first 30 days, both the traditional court referral and the court referral with community-based service showed a significant drop in absences post court. The students not referred showed no change throughout the study. During the next 30 days the community-based services court referrals maintained the reduced rate while the traditional court group showed higher truancy levels.

In summary, the effects of truancy are wide spread and impact students' lives. There are different types of truancy programs, including the multidisciplinary approach which includes many stakeholders involved in assisting the student and the family, and a punitive approach that tends to punish the student or the parent or both. The multidisciplinary approach is more widely used and the structure of this program can vary as well as the implementation.

Judicial Involvement in the Truancy Program in West Virginia

In the State of West Virginia eight counties are using or have used a judicial-based truancy program between 2012 and 2015. The Judges' Truancy Program entails a school district attendance director filing a petition in circuit court on truant juveniles. Once the youngster appears in court before the judge, the juvenile is adjudicated and placed on probation. The student is assigned a probation officer and a guardian ad litem. An attorney is also provided for the student and parents. The student is typically given an improvement period where he/she has the opportunity to improve attendance. The judge will be looking at attendance, behavior and grades. The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) is also involved in the case to provide in home services as needed. The student is then serviced through

a multi-disciplinary team approach consisting of juvenile probation officer, school officials, parents, attorneys, guardian ad litem, Department of Health and Human Services, and other outside agencies as needed.

In Cabell County, West Virginia the system was first used in 2013, as shared by Attendance Director S. Woods (Personal Communication, November 10, 2016). Two high schools and one alternative middle school/high school are involved in the program. The school based probation officer works directly with the middle school students. Two judges are involved with this program. In Greenbrier County, West Virginia, the program has been implemented since 2011, according to Attendance Director P. Burdette (Personal Communication, November 9, 2016). The county incorporates the use of a school based juvenile probation officer. There are two high schools in the county and two judges that work directly with the program.

Nicholas County, West Virginia was one of the first systems to start the judicial truancy program, as related by Attendance Director V. Nutter (Personal Communication, November 9, 2016). A school based probation officer was hired for the school system and the county has one judge that works with the program. In Raleigh County, West Virginia the program was implemented in the 2013-2014 school year as indicated by Attendance Officer P. Bryant (Personal Communication, November 10, 2016). Four high schools and one judge are currently involved with the program. In Mercer County, West Virginia, the program began in 2011-2012 and is currently still being used according to Attendance Director R. Lippencott (Personal Communication, November 8, 2016). There are juvenile probation officers hired to work strictly with attendance issues in four high schools; three judges work with this program.

The program in Barbour County, West Virginia, did not have an agreement with the Supreme Court nor was the juvenile probation officer hired by the Supreme Court as related by

Attendance Director G. Sweet (Personal Communication, November 9, 2016). The program was funded entirely by the county. The judge in this county decreased the amount of truancy work after the 2015 legislative session when the law was changed so parents could write notes for any reason and have students excused (G. Sweet-Personal Communication, November 9, 2016). The county has one high school and the judge is shared with another nearby county. In Taylor County, West Virginia, the juvenile probation officers do not work directly within the school reported Attendance Director J. McCarthy (Personal Communication, November 9 2016). There is one high school and a judge is shared with a neighboring county.

Fayette County was one of the first in the state to implement the program. They began in 2004 using the juvenile court system to assist with truant students. There was one judge that heard truancy cases.

While the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia can vary somewhat by school district, the premise is the same that the truant student who does not attend school can be petitioned before the court, found guilty as a status offender, and placed on probation. This study examined the effectiveness of this program as perceived by judges, attendance directors and principals and data on attendance, graduation, and dropout rates in the counties involved.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The Judges' Truancy Program began as an effort to curb the truancy problem in the State of West Virginia. Prior to July 1, 2015, students with 10 or more unexcused absences were considered truant by law. Beginning July 1, 2015, a student was considered truant when he/she accrued five or more unexcused absences. Attendance directors would file juvenile petition against truant students. The prosecutor in each county would then present evidence in court that the student was indeed truant. Judges would rule the truant student as a status offender in juvenile court. This would require court supervision through a juvenile probation officer and frequent review hearings in court. The program included a multidisciplinary team approach with stakeholders from the family, the court system and the school system. The Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia has been utilized by the following counties at some point in the last five years: Cabell, Greenbrier, Nicholas, Raleigh, Mercer, Fayette, Barbour, and Taylor. The counties of Cabell, Greenbrier, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Mercer have school based juvenile probation officers that are employed by the State Supreme Court with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local board of education.

After the new law in July 2015, some counties were forced to cease the program once circuit court judges refused to hear the cases because of a clause that stated that student could have unlimited parent notes for illness. For the purpose of this study the data from the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school terms were examined. The attendance rates, the dropout rate and the graduation rates were examined. The 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school terms were considered baseline data. The raw data were gathered from the West Virginia Department of Education.

A survey was sent to judges, county/district level attendance directors, and building level administrators in the counties that have implemented the program. The survey measured perceptions of the judges, attendance directors, and administrators of the effectiveness of the program. The survey was delivered via Qualtrics. The data for research question number one, number two, and number three were gathered from the West Virginia Department of Education and a two-sample t-test between percentages was conducted to determine significance. Research question number four and number five was answered with data collected from a survey that was sent to judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators. A Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to compare the perceptions of judges, attendance directors and building level administrators of the Judges' Truancy Program. The Kruskal-Wallis test one-way analysis of variance was used due to the small sample size.

Research Design

This study was a mixed methods study. The design was a simple non-experimental study that measured the perceptions of judges, attendance directors and building level administrators regarding the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia. A two-sample t-test to examine the attendance rates, drop-out rates, and graduation rates in the eight counties being studied was also conducted. A Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to compare the perceptions of judges, attendance directors and building level administrators of the Judges' Truancy Program. The survey contained three open-ended questions for qualitative study.

Population

The population surveyed was circuit court judges, attendance directors, and school level administrators in the counties that have implemented the program. The number of judges varied by county. Each county had at least one judge and some counties had as many as three judges.

Fifteen judges, eight attendance directors, and 21 building administrators were invited to participate in the survey. In addition, data was collected from the West Virginia Department of Education concerning attendance rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates. Statistical testing was administered to determine significance.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered from the West Virginia Department of Education to obtain attendance rates, graduation rates, and drop-out rates as well as the baseline data. A researcher created survey consisting of 24 questions was delivered electronically via Qualtrics to answer research questions four and five.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first three research questions were examined through data obtained from the West Virginia Department of Education. This data was tested through a two-sample t-test between percents. Data for research questions number four and number five was collected through a survey administered via Qualtrics. The data was then exported to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and statistical testing was done. Due to the low sample size a Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to analyze participant responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study examined the graduation rate, dropout rate and attendance rates for the 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 school terms in eight West Virginia counties implementing the Judges' Truancy Program compared to data for two years prior to program implementation. These data were collected from the West Virginia Department of Education. A survey was also sent to judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators in the same eight counties to gather the perspectives of those individuals on the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program and the perceived relative influence of various stakeholders on students' successful attendance.

Survey Responses

Surveys were sent via Qualtrics to 15 judges, eight attendance directors, and 21 building level administrators in eight counties in West Virginia using the Judges' Truancy Program. The judges had a return of 40% with six of 15 judges returning the survey. The attendance directors had a return of 50% with four of eight attendance directors returning the survey. The largest number of responses was from building level administrators with a return of 42.85% (9 of 21 principals returning the survey). While this is a small sample size, the study only included the eight counties where the program was implemented for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. This provided a limited number of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators who were involved in the program. The initial survey request prompted a return of 14 responses. A follow-up email request was sent and five more responses were collected. A second reminder email was sent and resulted in two more responses. Two respondents did not identify their role or complete any of the questions. As a result, the sample size included six

judges’ responses, four attendance directors’ responses, and nine building level administrators’ responses.

Results—Effect of Judges’ Truancy Program on Attendance, Dropout Rate, and Graduation Rate

The attendance rates, dropout rates and graduation rates in the eight counties of West Virginia implementing the Judges’ Truancy Program were analyzed. The data were gathered from the West Virginia Department of Education website. The academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12 were used as baseline data to compare to before the implementation of the program. The data for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 represent the duration of the time period under consideration in the study. Attendance rates were consistent for the two baseline years and the first two program years. However, for the last year studied, 2014-2015, the attendance rate did show a slight decrease of 4.23% from the previous year. According to WV Code Chapter 18 Article 8, 2014-2015 was the first year that the West Virginia attendance policy allowed parents to write unlimited parent notes as excused absences for students. The dropout rate did decrease steadily over the two baseline years and three year implementation period. The graduation rate also increased steadily over the two baseline year and the three year implementation period. See Table 1.

Table 1

Average Attendance Rate, Dropout Rate and Graduation Rate

	Baseline 2010-2011	Baseline 2011-2012	1 st year 2012-2013	2 nd year 2013-2014	3 rd year 2014-2015
Attendance	96.89%	97.05%	96.91%	96.60%	92.37%
Dropout	2.58%	1.81%	1.55%	1.26%	1.18%
Graduation	74.23%	76.93%	80.89%	85.10%	86.69%

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze these data. Salkind (2010) stated that a one-way analysis of variance looks for differences between the means of more than two groups. This study included two baseline years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, prior to the program implementation in 2012-2013, and data for the three implementation year of 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. The results from the ANOVA showed that in all three areas (attendance, dropout rate, and graduation rate) there were significant differences between the rates for the five years. See Table 2.

Table 2

ANOVA Data for Attendance, Dropout and Graduation Rates

	F	p
Attendance Rate	46.164	.000*
Dropout Rate	6.099	.001*
Graduation Rate	10.446	.000*

*Significant at $p < .05$

Research Question 1: The first research question asked what effect, if any, the West Virginia Judges' Truancy Program had on differences in the attendance rates in counties implementing it in West Virginia. The attendance rate was analyzed through the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA test resulted in an F score of 46.164 with a p of .000 indicating that some significant differences did occur between the years. However, though differences exist, there is a need to determine where those differences occur. As the result, the Bonferroni Post Hoc was used to compare the multiple years being studied and to determine where the differences occurred. "The Bonferroni adjustment is a flexible post hoc method for making post hoc comparisons that ensure a family-wise type II error rate no great than .05 after all comparisons are made" (Additional ANOVA Topics, 8/19/2006, page 13.5). The first baseline

year of 2010-2011 was compared to the 2nd baseline year of 2011-2012, and no significance difference was found between the two baseline years. Next, the first baseline year of 2010-2011 was compared to the three implementation years of 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015, and a significant difference (at a p value of .000 at the $p < .05$ level) was found only for 2014-2015. The only significant differences found with the second baseline year of 2011-2012 was with 2014-2015 (a p of .000 at the $p < .05$ level). No significant differences were found for the 2011-2012 baseline year and the first two program years (2012-2013, 2013-2014). In comparing the Bonferroni results for the three program years, no differences were found between 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 in attendance rates, but a difference was found between both years and 2014-2015 (.000 at $p < .05$). See Table 3.

Table 3
Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Attendance Rates to Attendance Rates of Three Program Year

	p	p	p	p	p
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
2010-2011		1.000	1.000	1.000	.000*
2011-2012	1.000		1.000	1.000	.000*
2012-2013	1.000	1.000		1.000	.000*
2013-2014	1.000	1.000	1.000		.000*
2014-2015	.000*	.000*	.000*	.000*	

*Significant at $p < .05$

Research Question 2: The second research question asked what effect, if any, the West Virginia Judges' Truancy Program had on differences in the dropout rates in counties implementing it in West Virginia. The dropout rate was analyzed through the one-way analysis

of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA test resulted in an F score of 6.099 with a p of .001, indicating that some significant differences did occur between the years for which data were collected. The Bonferroni Post Hoc was used to compare the multiple years being studied and to determine where the differences occurred. The first baseline year of 2010-2011 was compared to the second baseline year of 2011-2012, and no significant differences were found. The first baseline year of 2010-2011 was compared to the three implementation years of 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15, and significant differences were found in all three of the implementation years. No significant differences were found between the second baseline year and any of the other years studied. See Table 4.

Table 4
Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Dropout Rates to Dropout Rates of Three Program Year

	p	p	p	p	p
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
2010-2011		.232	.030*	.003*	.001*
2011-2012	.232		1.000	.984	.559
2012-2013	.030*	1.000		1.000	1.000
2013-2014	.003*	.984	1.000		1.000
2014-2015	.001*	.559	1.000	1.000	

*Significant at $p < .05$

Research Question 3: The third research question asked what effect, if any, the West Virginia Judges' Truancy Program had on differences in the graduation rates in counties implementing it in West Virginia. The graduation rate was analyzed through the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA test resulted in an F score of 10.446 with a p of .000 indicating that

some significant differences did occur between the years. The Bonferroni Post Hoc was used to compare the multiple years being studied and to determine where the differences occurred. The first baseline year of 2010-2011 was compared to the second baseline year of 2011-2012, and no significant difference was found. Next, the first baseline year of 2010-2011 was compared to the three implementation years of 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15, and while no significant difference was found in the first year of implementation in 2012-2013, significant differences were found in the last two years of the implementation when compared to the first baseline year (.000 at the $p < .05$ level for both years). There were significant differences in the second baseline year of 2011-2012 compared with the last two years of the study, 2013-2014 (.012 at $p < .05$) and 2014-2015 (.002 at $p < .05$). No significant differences were found between the three program years. See Table 5.

Table 5

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons using Bonferroni Comparing Pre-program Graduation Rates to Graduation Rates of Three Program Year

	p	p	p	p	p
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
2010-2011		1.000	.066	.000*	.000*
2011-2012	1.000		.953	.012*	.002*
2012-2013	.066	.953		.767	.168
2013-2014	.000*	.012*	.767		1.000
2014-2015	.000*	.002*	.168	1.000	

*Significant at $p < .05$

Questions Related to Participants Perceptions of the Judges’ Truancy Program and Perceived Role of Various Stakeholders

Research Question 4: Research question four asked judges, attendance directors, and school administrators to indicate their perceptions of the effectiveness of the Judges’ Truancy Program. Due to the small sample size and the low return rate, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to analyze this data. “The Kruskal Wallis test is a non parametric test... the test determines whether the medians of two or more groups are different” (What is the Kruskal-Wallis Test, n.d., para 1 retrieved from www.statisticshowto.com/kruskal-wallis/). A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to determine if there were significant difference in responses from judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators in rating the level of satisfaction concerning the overall effectiveness of the Judges’ Truancy Program. The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of effectiveness on a scale of one to six with one indicating little or no effect and six indicating great effect. No significant differences were found between the perceptions of these individuals. See Table 6.

Table 6

Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness of the Judges’ Truancy Program

Overall Effectiveness	Mean Rank		Kruskal-Wallis	p value	
	Judges	Attendance Directors			
	9.67	12.17	8.50	1.127	.569

p<.05

In the area of effectiveness, the participants were asked to rank the effectiveness of the program in relation to the following: (a) increasing attendance; (b) increasing academic performance; (c) increasing graduation rate; (d) decreasing dropout rate; and (e) changing student attitude about attending school. Respondents were asked to rate each category of

effectiveness on a scale of one to six with one being little or no effect and six being great effect.

No significant differences were found in their responses. See Table 7.

Table 7

Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness in 5 Categories

Category	Mean Rank			Kruskal-Wallis	p value
	Judges	Attendance Directors	Administrators		
Increasing Attendance	11.42	9.67	8.17	1.452	.484
Increasing Academic Performance	10.83	8.00	9.11	.695	.706
Increasing Graduation Rate	10.50	9.17	8.94	.337	.845
Decreasing Dropout Rate	9.25	9.11	8.15	.040	.980
Changing Student Attitude About School	10.33	10.83	8.50	.676	.713

Significant at $p < .05$

While no significant differences were found in responses from judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators regarding the areas of effectiveness in the Kruskal-Wallis analysis, a Chi-square test was completed to further investigate possible areas of agreement. “The Chi-Square test of Independence is used to determine if there is a significant relationship between two nominal (categorical) variables. The frequency of one nominal variable is compared with different values of the second nominal variable” (Chi-Square Test of

Independence, n.d., para.1 retrieved from www.statisticssolutions.com/non-parametric-analysis-chi-square/). Respondents were asked to rate each category of effectiveness from one to six with one being little or no effect and six being great effect. Frequencies of participants' responses to the one through six rating scale were compared. Results showed there were no significant differences in the frequencies of responses. While no significant differences were found, when collapsing the scale into two parts, grouping one, two, three scale frequencies and four, five, six frequencies, some patterns do emerge. In the category of increasing attendance 12 of 18 respondents indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect on increasing attendance. In the category of increasing academic performance, 10 of 18 respondents indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect on increasing academic performance. In the category of graduation rate, 13 of 18 participants indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect on increasing the graduation rate. In the category of dropout rate, 11 of 17 participants responded that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect on decreasing the dropout rate. Likewise, 11 of 18 participants indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect on changing student attitude about school. See Table 8.

Table 8

Chi-Square Comparing Perspectives of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Effectiveness in Five Categories

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	n	Chi-Square	p value
Increase attendance	1	1	4	1	4	7	18	10.00	.075
Increase academic Performance	3	1	4	6	2	2	18	5.00	.377
Graduation rate	1	0	4	4	5	4	18	2.55	.653
Dropout rate	0	2	4	2	6	3	17	3.29	.510

Attitude about School 3 1 3 5 2 4 18 3.33 .649

P<.05

Research Question 5: Research Question Five asked the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators to provide their perspectives regarding the relative level of influence that various stakeholders have in ensuring successful attendance at school by truant youth. A Kruskal-Wallis test was administered to measure if there were significant differences in judges’, attendance directors’, and building level administrators’ perceptions of the level of influence that various stakeholders have on ensuring successful attendance at school for truant youth. The respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions of influence on a scale of one to six with one indicating little or no influence and six indicating great influence. No significant differences were found. See Table 9.

Table 9

Kruskal-Wallis Comparing Perspective of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Influence of Stakeholders on Truant Youth

Stakeholder	Mean Rank			Kruskal-Wallis	p value
	Judges	Attendance Directors	Administrators		
Principal	8.00	9.38	11.61	1.752	.416
Assistant Principal	7.42	10.38	10.62	1.467	.480
Counselor	9.92	10.88	9.67	.147	.929
Teacher	8.50	11.50	10.33	.887	.642
Parent	8.17	11.50	10.56	2.500	.287
Juvenile Probation Officer	10.33	13.00	8.44	2.183	.336

Guardian ad Litem	11.38	7.38	9.94	1.587	.452
Attendance Director	8.67	12.38	9.83	1.133	.568
Judge	9.42	9.88	10.44	.142	.931

*Significant at $p < .05$

In order to determine if there were areas of possible agreement, a Chi-Square test was performed to determine if significant differences existed in the frequency of response concerning respondent perceptions of the influence of the various stakeholders. The respondents were asked to rate each stakeholder one to six with one being little or no influence and six being great influence. Of the nine stakeholders listed, significant differences were found for five stakeholders' influence as reported by the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators. The Chi-Square test showed significant differences in the role of principal (.037 at the $p < .05$ level), counselor (.037 at the $p < .05$ level), teachers (.004 at the $p < .05$ level), parent (.000 at the $p < .05$ level) and juvenile probation officer (.003 at the $p < .05$ level). See Table 10.

Table 10

Chi-Square Comparing Perspective of Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Regarding the Perceived Level of Influence of Stakeholders on Truant Youth

Role	1	2	3	4	5	6	Chi-Sq	p
Principal	1	0	3	2	4	9	10.21	.037*
Assistant Principal	1	1	2	3	5	6	7.33	.197
Counselor	1	0	2	3	4	9	10.21	.037*
Teachers	1	0	2	1	5	10	15.47	.004*
Parent	0	0	1	1	1	16	35.52	.000*
Juvenile Probation Officer	0	1	1	1	7	9	16.00	.003*

Guardian ad Litem	1	2	2	4	4	6	5.31	.379
Attendance Director	0	2	2	3	6	6	4.42	.352
Judge	0	3	1	0	6	9	7.73	.052

P<.05

Open Ended Question 1: The first open-ended question asked the respondents to identify strengths of the Judges’ Truancy Program. There were 14 total responses. The responses were categorized into the following areas: keeping students in school, accountability, multi-disciplinary teams, improving attendance/decreasing truancy and other. See Table 11.

Table 11

Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators’ Responses Identifying Strengths of the Judges’ Truancy Program

Category	Number of Responses
Keeping students in school	3
Accountability	3
Multi-disciplinary Team Approach	3
Improving attendance/decreasing truancy	2
Other	3

Open Ended Question 2: The second open-ended question asked the respondents to identify weaknesses of the Judges’ Truancy Program. There were 14 responses. The responses were categorized into the following areas: parent accountability, earlier intervention, follow-up/follow-through, DHHR issues and other. See Table 12.

Table 12

Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Responses Identifying Weaknesses of the Judges' Truancy Program

Category	Responses
Parent Accountability	4
Earlier Intervention	2
Follow-up/follow-through	2
Department of Health and Human Resources Issues	2
Other	4

Open Ended Question 3: The third open-ended question asked the respondents to identify suggestions for improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program. There were 10 respondents with two respondents providing more than one suggestion. The responses were categorized into the following areas: parent accountability, funding, juvenile probation officers accountability, student accountability, earlier intervention, DHHR follow through, and other. See Table 13.

Table 13

Judges, Attendance Directors, and Building Level Administrators Responses Identifying Suggestions for Improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program

Category	Responses
Parent Accountability	4
Funding	2
Juvenile Probation Officer Accountability	1
Student Accountability	1
Earlier Intervention	1
Department of Health and Human Resources Issues	1

Summary: This study found significant differences in the attendance rates in the last year of the study compared to the other years. In the area of dropout rate, there were significant differences in the three years of implementation compared to the first baseline year, but not the second baseline year. In the area of graduation rate, there were significant differences in the last two years of the implementation. There were no significant differences in the responses of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators when rating the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program. There were also no significant differences found in the areas of effectiveness of the program in increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate or student attitude about school. When asked to rate the relative influence of various stakeholders, the respondents' responses indicated that several stakeholders had significant influence on student attendance, dropout rate, and graduation rate. Parents were rated the most influential, with juvenile probation officers being second in order of importance, followed by teachers, principals and counselors. Among the strengths of the program as listed by respondents, were that it helped keep students in school and increased accountability. A couple cited to improve the lack of parent accountability and follow-through as weaknesses. When asked for suggestions to improve the program, respondents listed more parent accountability and the need for more funding as the two greatest needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter includes the purpose of the study, the summary of the research conducted and conclusions related to the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators regarding the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program in Eight West Virginia Counties in which it was implemented from 2012-2015. The chapter concludes with limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the Judges' Truancy Program in West Virginia was effective in its intended purposes of keeping students in school and obtaining a high school diploma. Data were collected from the West Virginia Department of Education (<https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp>) for the attendance rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates in the eight counties studied from 2010-2015. The data from 2010-11 and 2011-12 provided a baseline for comparison to the three years of program implementation (2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15). In addition, the study examined the perceptions of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators of the overall effectiveness of the program and the specific areas of effectiveness of the program on increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate, and changing student attitude about school. The study also compared the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators of the level of influence of various stakeholders on successful student attendance. The research questions for the study were:

1. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the attendance rate in counties implementing it in West Virginia?

2. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on decreasing the dropout rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia?
3. What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the graduation rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia?
4. What are the perspectives of the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program as held by judges, attendance directors, and school administrators in the counties implementing the program?
5. What are the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and school administrators of the relative influence of various stakeholders on successful student attendance at school?

Open ended questions that were asked included:

1. What are the strengths of the Judges' Truancy Program?
2. What are the weaknesses of the Judges' Truancy Program?
3. What are suggestions for improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program?

Methods

For the first three research questions concerning the attendance rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates, data were retrieved from the West Virginia Department of Education website (<https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp>) Data for the last two research questions were obtained from a survey sent via Qualtrics to 15 judges, eight attendance directors, and 21 building level administrators. This was a small sample size due to the limited number of counties that were implementing the program. The respondents were asked to answer the questions based upon the three years of the program implementation, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. The survey was sent via email and prompted a return of 14 responses. A follow-up email was sent and five more responses were received. A third and final email was sent and two

more responses were gathered. Two of the respondents did not identify their role nor complete the questions. The final sample size included six judges', four attendance directors', and nine building level administrators', providing a return rate of 43%.

A Summary of the Findings

When an ANOVA was performed on the attendance, dropout, and graduation data for the eight counties in the sample, significant differences were found for each: (a) $F= 46.164$, $p = .000$ was calculated for differences in the attendance rate; (b) $F= 6.099$, $p= 6.099$ for dropout rate, and (c) $F=4.446$, $p =.000$ for graduation rate. As a result of these findings, post hoc tests were conducted using the Bonferroni Post Hoc Test to determine the nature of the differences. The study found significant differences in the attendance rate in the 2014-2015 year of the study (the rate dropped to 92.37% from rates ranging from 96.60% to 97.05% in previous years) compared to both baseline years and the other two program years, though no significant differences were found for the first two program years compared to the baseline years. In the area of dropout rate, there were significant differences in the three years of implementation compared to the first baseline year (2010-2011), but not the second baseline year (2011-2012). There were also significant differences in the graduation rate for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 years when compared to the two baseline years. No significant differences were found in the responses of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators when rating the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program, nor were any significant differences found in their perceptions of the specific areas of effectiveness of the program in increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate or student attitude about school. When asked to evaluate the relative influence of various stakeholders on student attendance, judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators indicated that parents,

juvenile probation officers, teachers, principals and counselors had significant influence on truant youth.

Conclusions and Discussion from Findings

Research Question 1: What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the attendance rate in counties implementing it in West Virginia? After the ANOVA showed significant differences in the attendance rate for the program years, further analysis of the raw data using the Bonferroni Post Hoc Test did not indicate any significant differences in the average attendance rates from the first baseline year 2010-2011 for the program years of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, but did show significance for 2014-2015. The last year, 2014-2015, the attendance rate exhibited a decline to 92.37%. The post hoc comparisons using Bonferroni comparing pre-program attendance rates to attendance rates of the three year program found significant differences in the attendance rate in the 2014-2015 year of the study compared to both baseline years and the other program years, but the attendance rate declined for that year.

In considering this decrease in the attendance rate, the researcher found that the academic year 2014-2015 was the first year that parents could write an unlimited number of parent excuses for student absences according to WV Code Chapter 18 Article 8. Though further study would be needed to confirm this as the primary reason for the decline in the attendance rate, it would provide a possible explanation for this occurrence. However, based on the lack of any significant increase in attendance for the years of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 when compared to the two baseline year and the decrease in the attendance rate for the 2014-2015, the program did not have any significant effect on increasing the attendance rate in the counties studied.

Research Question 2: What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on decreasing the dropout rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia? According to the data obtained from the West Virginia Department of Education, the dropout rate did decline over the five year period studied, including the two baseline years. The dropout rate in 2010-2011 was 2.58% and declined to 1.18% by the last year of the study. The post hoc comparisons using Bonferroni comparing pre-program dropout rates to dropout rates of the three year program found significant differences in the three years of implementation compared to the first baseline year (2010-2011), but not the second baseline year (2011-2012). The dropout rate showed a steady decline from the first baseline year of the study 2010-2011, until the last year of the study, 2014-2015. The post hoc multiple comparisons using Bonferroni showed significant differences in the last three years of the study.

The Judges' Truancy Program was only one variable, and it is unknown whether the counties implementing the program were using any other types of incentives. However, in most cases, the judge would order the student under court supervision to attend school until 21 years old or receipt of the high school diploma. Therefore, this court order would prevent the student from dropping out of school.

Based on the steady decrease in the dropout rate over the program years, it may be concluded that the Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on preventing some students from dropping out of school who may have done so without the judicial intervention. However, exact numbers of students who participated in the program are not known to the researcher, nor can it be determined if other factors in addition to the Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on decreasing the dropout rate. It can be stated that during this time the program was in effect, the dropout rate for the eight counties studied declined. In this regard, the program was effective in

decreasing the number of students dropping out of school in the counties where it was implemented.

Research Question 3: What effect, if any, has the Judges' Truancy Program had on increasing the graduation rate in the counties implementing it in West Virginia? The graduation rate rose from 74.23% in the first baseline year to 86.69% in the last year of the study. The post hoc multiple comparisons using Bonferroni showed significant differences in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 compared to both baseline years of the study. The first year of implementation of the program 2012-2013 did not show any significant differences with any of the other years. During the 2012-2013 academic term the graduation rate was 80.89%, increased to 85.10% in 2013-2014, and to 86.69% for 2014-15.

The graduation rate showed a steady increase using the raw data collected from the West Virginia Department of Education. When comparing multiple years using Bonferroni, there were significant differences found in all years except 2012-2013, the first year of the implementation. It should be noted that the method in which the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate was calculated in the state of West Virginia changed in 2012-2013. According to the *West Virginia's Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate: Questions and Answer Guide*, the following students are not counted as a graduate in the four year adjusted cohort graduation rate:

1. Students who graduate in more than four years are not counted as a graduate in the four-year graduation rate.
2. Home school students who enroll part time in high school to receive an advanced course or specialty course are not counted as a graduate in the four-year graduation rate.

3. Students participated in alternative programs such as Mountaineer Challenge Academy and received a General Education Diploma (GED) are not counted as a graduate in the four-year graduation rate.

4. Special education students who received a modified diploma are not counted as a graduate in the four year graduation rate.

Considering the implications of the data, the data show an increase in graduation rate despite the policy change in calculation of the rate that could have had a negative effect upon the graduation rate. However, since the study did not collect data on the counties not implementing the Judges' Truancy Program no conclusion can be drawn that the Judges' Truancy Program itself increased the graduation rate. Additional information would be needed to know to what degree the program itself increased graduation rates, but for the data available do show an increase in the graduation rate for the years studied.

Research Question 4: What are the perspectives of the effectiveness of the Judges' Truancy Program as held by judges, attendance directors, and school administrators in the counties implementing the program? A Kruskal-Wallis comparison of perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators indicated no significant difference between the perspectives of the respondents about the program's effectiveness. This indicates that all of the groups surveyed had similar views of the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, when asked specifically about the effectiveness in the various categories of increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate and changing student attitude about school, there were no significant differences in their perspectives as indicated by a Kruskal-Wallis comparison of respondent's perspectives.

Again, there was consistency in terms of how the respondents believed the program affected these elements.

No significant differences were found in the perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators concerning the effectiveness of the program when the frequencies of responses were analyzed. However, all groups rated the program as effective in each area of consideration. The respondents were asked to rate the following categories of effectiveness from one to six, with one being little or no effect and six being great effect. In the category of increasing attendance, 67.7% of the respondents stated that Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on increasing attendance. It should be noted that the Judges' Truancy Program is only one area being studied, and it is unknown to the researcher if there were other incentives being used to help increase attendance. In the category of increasing academic performance, 55.6% of the respondents answered that the Judges' Truancy Program had some effect. In the category of graduation rate, 72.3% of the respondents stated that the Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on the graduation rate. In the category of dropout rate, 64.7% of the respondents indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on the dropout rate. Finally in the category of student attitude about school, 61.1% of the respondents stated that the program had an effect on student attitude about school. Since a majority of those surveyed stated that the Judges' Truancy Program had an effect on increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing the dropout rate and changing student attitude about school, it may be concluded that the participants felt that the program was effective. Likewise, Duell (1984) found that judges, probation officers, and school administrators all agreed that a school-court program was effective. Rogers (2014) suggested that a multidisciplinary type approach is recommended using both the school districts and the juvenile

court system to address truancy issues. The study completed in 2014 found that a multidisciplinary approach that includes mentoring helps increase attendance, decrease dropout rate, builds students' self-esteem, increases better student academic performance, promotes accountability, and reduces delinquent acts within the community.

Research Question 5: What are the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and school administrators of relative influence of various stakeholders on successful student attendance at school? The Kruskal-Wallis comparison between perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators found no significant differences between the perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators on the perceived level of influence of stakeholders on truant youth. Again, the respondents were consistent in their identification of the influence of the different stakeholders. Further analysis, using a chi-square to compare perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators found significant information regarding their views of the relative importance of various stakeholders' influence. The stakeholders that most influence student success for truant youth, according to respondents, were, respectively: parents, juvenile probation officer, teachers, counselors, and principals. In research question five, respondents were asked to rate their perspectives of stakeholder influence from one to six, with one being little or no influence and six being great influence that each stakeholder had on truant youths. The data indicated that 94.7% respondents perceived that parents had the greatest influence on truant youth. The other stakeholders that were key stakeholders were juvenile probation officers (89.5%), counselors (84.2%), teachers (84.2%) and principals (78.9%). Although the data indicated that 78.9% of the respondents perceived that judges had an influence on truant youth the chi-square p value = .052 did not reach the level of significance. This was partially due to three participants responding

with a score of two and one participant responding with a three whereas, in the area of principal three respondents delivered a response of three (See Table 10).

With the combination of the perceived influence of these stakeholders and, including the parents, one can see where the multidisciplinary approach is crucial. The different roles identified here show that according to the perceptions of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators, no single individual is responsible for making students successful. It can be concluded that the multidisciplinary team is effective in helping truant students. It can also be concluded that the members of the multidisciplinary team such as parents, the principal, teachers, counselors, and the juvenile probation officer are all key components to helping truant youth become successful at school attendance. The large number of responses that indicated parents as key stakeholders in a student's successful attendance at school is evidence that the respondents believe that education and the value of education begins in the home. While Duell (1984) reported though the perceptions of judges, probation officer and school administrators varied 3%-10% that chronic absenteeism is a symptom of home and school problems, they all did agreed that a school court program was effective.

Open Ended Question 1: What are the strengths of the Judges' Truancy Program?

Of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators who responded to this question 21.4% indicated that the Judges' Truancy Program was instrumental in keeping students in school. Comments included: "the program also helps increase the attendance of some students", "the program has been beneficial in keeping students in school and engaged" and "it keeps students in school that might would normally drop out". A strength of the program, as indicated by the recipients, identified that students staying in school is one of the main purposes

of the program. The program was designed to keep students in school and eventually result in students graduating with a high school diploma.

In addition, 21.4% of the respondents specified that the program helped with accountability. These comments included: “Makes students and parents accountable”, “more pressure on the parents to keep the attendance at higher levels, and bringing excuses in”, and “supervision”. Three respondents indicated that the multidisciplinary approach was helpful in keeping students in school. These comments included: “MDT’s can be the most beneficial”, “supportive of the school and close monitoring of the students”, and “early identification and response to student family dysfunction, contributing to truancy”. Teasley (2004) shared the importance of the multidisciplinary approach. She stated that no one group, agency or organization can correct the truancy problem alone, and that collaborative efforts are necessary.

Based on these responses, one can conclude that accountability is an area that the respondents saw as a strength of the Judges’ Truancy Program. Respondents believed that putting more pressure on parents to see that students stayed in school was important, and the Judges’ Truancy Program allowed that to happen.

Open Ended Question 2: What are the weaknesses of the Judges’ Truancy Program? The respondents to the survey indicated that the program needs to have a stronger parent component that would hold parents responsible for their child attending school. These comments included: “with this program it is targeted more towards the students and the parent is not being held accountable”, “parents are not really held responsible”, “a fine and court costs do not make parents do what they should have been doing anyway”, “parents”. This is an interesting theme as the respondents also identified the parents as having the most relative influence on successful attendance in Research Question Five. In addition, 14.28% of the

respondents indicated that earlier intervention is needed. Comments included: “earlier intervention before admitting to the judicial system would be beneficial,” and “making sure the program has enough people to make the contacts with parents and students and making sure interventions start early in the school year”. The students that are assigned to these programs are typically young adults of high school age. Unfortunately, by this age the parents can feel helpless as to how to enforce behavior such as school attendance. Furthermore, the program is designed for the older youth, and while two respondents suggested earlier intervention, the districts may wish to consider a diversion type program before the truant youth is placed in this particular type of judicial program. Kearney (2008) stated that several parent factors affect truancy, such as inadequate parenting skills, single parent homes, and low expectations of school performance/attendance, poor communication with school officials, poor involvement and supervision.

In addition, 14.28% of the respondents stated that more help/involvement with Department of Health and Human Resources is needed. The weaknesses identified were: “there should be more involvement with DHHR for both younger and older students,” and “need more help with DHHR”.

Just as accountability was seen as a strength by some who made comments, it is evident that others saw the need for greater accountability. And, since parents were considered to have the greatest influence on whether students stayed in school, respondents believed they needed to be given great accountability.

Open Ended Question 3: What are suggestions for improvement of the Judges’ Truancy Program? The judges, attendance directors and building level administrators indicated that more parental responsibility is needed in this program with 40% of the responses

indicating this. These comments included: “find a way to make parents more accountable”, “but what I would love to see is a parenting component”, “students and parents need to be held accountable without delay”, and “parents need to be held more accountable especially for primary and middle school aged students”. The conclusion can be drawn that parents are an integral part of a child’s education and that the parent component is one that should not be ignored. Paired with the suggestions for improvement and the identification of the parent as the most influential stakeholder, it would be beneficial to have a stronger parental component. It could be helpful if a parent would complete a parenting class before the truant youth be released from the program. Twenty percent of the respondents indicated that more funding is needed: “the program needs to have full funding from the state and not cost county funds”, and more probation officers”.

Concluding Remarks

This study found significant differences in the attendance rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates in the eight West Virginia counties where the Judges’ Truancy Program was implemented. The last year of the study, 2014-2015, the attendance rate was significantly different than all other years of the study. The dropout rate declined progressively each year of the study and significant differences were found between the three implementation years, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the first two years of the study, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. The graduation rate steadily increased during the five-year period studied. The final two years of the study, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, significant differences were found compared to the other years of the study. While only this program was studied, there were possibly other factors that contributed to these differences. The perspectives of the judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators were not significantly different in the areas of effectiveness of the

program including: increasing attendance, increasing academic performance, increasing graduation rate, decreasing dropout rate and changing student attitude about school. There was also no significant difference in the perspectives of judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators on the relative influence of various stakeholders on success of truant youth. Principals, counselors, parents, teachers, and juvenile probation officers were rated as high level of influence on truant youth.

A common theme of keeping students in school was indicated by judges, attendance directors, and building level administrators as a strength of the program. A weakness of the program was the lack of parental responsibility in the program. And lastly, suggestions for improvement in the program were centered primarily on the topic of more parental involvement being needed.

While the Judges' Truancy Program was the only variable studied during this research, the attendance rates, graduation rates, and dropout rate did show improvement. The three groups of respondents did not show significant differences in their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program or in the level of relative influence, but did indicate that various stakeholders (parents, counselors, etc.) did possess great influence on truant youth

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study, including a small sample size, only eight counties being studied rather than the attendance rate, dropout rate, and graduation rate of all 55 counties within the state of West Virginia. Another limitation to this study was only three years of implementation were studied. It was a short term study. A third limitation was that the Judges' Truancy Program was the only program studied and other truancy diversion type programs were not considered. This study also only included the perspectives of judges,

attendance directors, and building level administrators. There was no study of the parent or student perspectives.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since this study only included the eight counties that were implementing the program during this time, it could be useful to compare the attendance rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates of the other 47 counties within the state of West Virginia. It would also be a consideration to conduct research on what other incentive type programs were used in the eight counties that were studied. Another consideration could also be to study various types of truancy diversion programs being implemented in the state of West Virginia. Further study could also be completed to compare the attendance rates, dropout rates, and graduation rates in most recent years after 2014-2015; specifically 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. It could be of further use to interview the judges, building level administrators, attendance directors, parents and students for a qualitative study.

References

- Brooks, B. (1975, Spring Issue 3). Contingency Management as a Means of Reducing School Truancy. *Education*, pp. 206-211.
- Dalun, Z., Willson, V., Katsiyannis, A., Barrett, D., Song, J., & Jiun-Yu, W. (2010). Truancy Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System: A Multicohort Study. *Behavioral Disorders*, 229-242.
- DeCosio, J., VanCura, M., Nelson, L., Hewitt, G., Kitzman, H., & Cole, R. (2007, Spring Vol 51 Issue 3). Engaging Truant Adolescents: Results From a Multifaceted Intervention Pilot. *Preventing School Failure*, pp. 3-9.
- Dimmick, J., Correa, Y., Liazia, A., & McMichael, H. (2011). "Playing Hooky": Examining Factors that Contribute to Adolescent Truancy. *Sociological Viewpoints*, 2715-23.
- Duell, R. A. (1984). *The Evaluation of a School-Court Program that Deals with Chronic Absenteeism of Middle School Students*. Retrieved from University Microfilms International.
- Enea, V., & Dafinoiu, I. (2009). Motivational/Solution-Focused Intervention for Reducing School Truancy Among Adolescents. *Journal of Cognitive and Behavioral Psychotherapies*, 185-198.
- Fantuzzo, J., Grim, S., & Hazan, H. (2005). Project Start: An evaluation of a community-wide school-based intervention to reduce truancy. *Psychology in the Schools*, 657-667.
- Gage, N. A., Sugai, G., Lunde, K., & DeLoreto, L. (2013). Turancy and Zero Tolerance in High School: Does Policy Align with Practice? *Education and Treatment of Children (36) 2*, 117-138.
- Gleich-Bope, D. (2014). Truancy Laws: How are They Affecting Our Legal Systems, Our Schools, and the Students Involved? *Clearing House*, 110-114.
- Goldstein, D. (2015, 246(2/3)). Inexcusable Absences. *New Republic*, pp. 32-37.
- Haight, C. M., Chapman, G. V., Hendron, M., Loftis, R., & Kearney, C. A. (2014). Evaluation of a Truancy Diversion Program at Nine At-Risk Middle Schools, . *Psychology in the Schools*, 779-787.
- Havik, T., Bru, E., & Ertesvag, S. (Jun2015). Assessing Reasons for School Non-attendance. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 316-336.
- Hendricks, M. A., Sale, E. W., Evans, C. J., McKinley, L., Delozier, C., & Carter, S. (2010). Evaluation of a Truancy Court Intervention in Four Middle Schools. *Psychology in the Schools February Vol 47 Issue 2*, 173-183.
- Henry, K. (2007). Who's Skipping School: Characteristics of Truants in 8th and 10th Grade. *Journal of School Health*, 29-35.
- Kearney, C. A. (2008). An Interdisciplinary Model of School Absenteeism in Youth to Inform Professional Practice and Public Policy. *Educational Psychology (20)*, 257-282.
- Ming, Z. (2004, 22(2)). Time to Change the Truancy Laws? Compulsory Education: Its Origin and Modern Dilemma. *Pastoral Care in Education*, pp. 27-33.

- Monohan, K., VanDerhie, S., Bechrold, J., & Cauffman, E. (2014). From the School Yard to the Squad Car: School Discipline, Truancy, and Arrest. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 1110-1122.
- Mueller, D., Giacomazzi, A., & Stoddard, C. (2006). Dealing with chronic absenteeism and its related consequences: The process and short-term effects of a diversionary juvenile court intervention. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 199-219.
- Ovink, S. M. (2011). "This Ain't My School!" Criminality, Control, and Contradictions in Institutional Responses to School Truancy. *Qualitative Sociology* (34), 79-99.
- Reid, K. (2003). Strategic Approaches to Tackling School Absenteeism and Truancy: the traffic lights (TL) scheme. *Educational Review*, 305-321.
- Reid, K. (2006). The views of education social workers on the management of truancy and other forms of non-attendance. *Research in Education*, 40-96.
- Reid, K. (2009). Finding Strategic Solutions to Reduce Truancy. *Research in Education No. 84*, 1-18.
- Rogers, L. T. (2014). Absenteeism and Truancy Issues: Are Mentoring Program Funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention the Answer. *Children and Schools*, 185-188.
- Shute, J. W., & Cooper, B. S. (2015). Understanding in-school truancy. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 65-68.
- Stoll, P. (1990). Absent pupils who are officially present. *Education Today* 40 (3), 22-25.
- Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia*. (2017, February 5). Retrieved from www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/probation/truancy/html:<http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/probation/truancy/html>
- Teasley, M. L. (2004). Absenteeism and Truancy: Risk, Prevention and Best Practice Implications for School Social Workers. *Children and Schools* (26) 2, 117-128.
- Teasley, M. L. (2004). Absenteeism and truancy: Risk, protection, and best practice implementations for school social workers. *Children and Schools*, 117-128.
- Trujilloal, L. A. (2006). School Truancy: A case study of a successful truancy reduction model in the public schools. *U. C. Davis Journal of Juvenile Law and Policy*, 1-13.
- Zalaznick, M. (2015). How Schools are Tackling Truancy. *Education Digest*, 44-48.
- Zhang, M. (2007). School Absenteeism and the Implementation of Truancy-Related Penalty Notices. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 25-34.

References
APPENDIX A: APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205

IRB2 #00003206

March 13, 2017

Louis Watts, Ed.D.
Leadership Studies, MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 1038287-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Watts:

Protocol Title: [1038287-1] A Study of the WV Judges' Truancy Program Used in 8 WV Counties from 2012-2015

Expiration Date: March 13, 2018

Site Location: MUGC

Submission Type: New Project APPROVED

Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire March 13, 2018. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Lori Comer.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Survey of Judges, Attendance Directors and Building Level Administrators

Section A Background Information

Please provide the following information:

Please identify your role:

___ Judge

___ County/District Level Attendance Director

___ Building Level Administrator

Total years in this position _____

Please mark the following that best describes your county:

___ The Judges Truancy Program is still being implemented in my county.

___ The Judges Truancy Program is no longer being implemented in my county, (Please specify when the county discontinued the program _____)

If you marked that you were no longer using the Judges' Truancy Program in your county, please answer the following questions:

If you are no longer using a judicial based truancy program, please list the reason or reasons as to why the program has been discontinued.

If you are no longer using a judicial based truancy program, please describe your thoughts about the discontinuation of the program:

Section B: Influence

Questions 1-9

Below is list of stakeholders that are involved with ensuring a student's successful attendance at school. Using the scale provided rate the degree of influence in your school/district for a child to successfully attend school. One being no influence and six being high level of influence.

	1 Little or No influence	2	3	4	5	6 High Level of Influence
Principal						
Asst. Principal						
Counselor						
Teacher						
Parent						
Juvenile Probation officer						
Guardian ad Litem						
Attendance Director/officer						
Judge						

10. Please rate the level of satisfaction that you have concerning the implementation of the program:

1. Very Dissatisfied					2. Very Satisfied

11. Please rate the overall effectiveness of the program:

1. Very Dissatisfied					2. Very Satisfied

Questions 12-16

Please rate the program effectiveness in the following areas:

	1 No effect	2	3	4	5	6 Great effect
Increasing attendance						
Increasing academic performance						
Increasing graduation rate						
Decreasing dropout rate						
Changing student attitude about attending school						

In short answer, please complete the following questions:

17. Please identify strengths of the judges' truancy program.
18. Please identify weaknesses of the judges' truancy program.
19. Identify any suggestions for improvement of the judges' truancy program.

APPENDIX C:

COMMENTS FOR STRENGTHS OF JUDGES' TRUANCY PROGRAM

Q9 - Please identify strengths of the Judges' Truancy Program

Please identify strengths of the Judges' Truancy Program

The program has helped to keep some students in school and assure that the student graduates. The program also helps increase the attendance of some students and potentially that would help improve the academic performance.

Effective for a period of time

The program has been beneficial in keeping students at in school and engaged. The

It keeps students in school that might would normally drop out.

Hiring of school based juvenile probation officers. Implementation of truancy diversion programs as a step to keep students out of court.

Makes students and parents accountable

The judges' truancy program has put protocols ion place and are followed. The program is also consistent. Having four judges to work with the truancy issues, you would feel that each would have a different way of doing things. They don't. They are consistent with the students.

MDT'S can be the most beneficial

Supportive of the schools and close monitoring of the students

More pressure on the parents to keep the attendance at higher levels, and bringing excuses in.

Early identification and response to student/family dysfunction contributing to truancy

It helps the law work the way it should by giving it "teeth". People will not listen unless if affects the financially.

Supervision

For kids in program it substantially reduced their absences.

APPENDIX D:

COMMENTS FOR WEAKNESSES OF JUDGES' TRUANCY PROGRAM

Q10 - Please identify weaknesses of the Judges' Truancy Program

Please identify weaknesses of the Judges' Truancy Program

With this program it is targeted more towards the students and the parent is not being held accountable.

Need to remain in contact with truant student and family for the remainder of the year

Earlier intervention before admitting to the judicial system would be beneficial.

Parents are not really held responsible.

18 year old students with no programs that will take them. There should be more involvement with DHHR for both younger and older students. This program tends to be reactive, not proactive.

Need more help with DHHR

The judges are wonderful when dealing with the students. Often, they are at a loss with the parents. A fine and court costs, do not make the parents do what they should have been doing any way.

JPO's abilities to timely hold students responsible for their own actions and attendance

Not always familiar with school rules and policies and try to enforce things that are not always possible at the school level

Not enough follow through. Strength depends too much on the probation officers.

Limited ability to provide necessary structure for at-risk students

Making sure the program has enough people to make the contacts with parents and students and making sure interventions start early in the school year.

Parents

Not all judges treated the cases the same in the same county

APPENDIX E:

COMMENTS FOR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE JUDGES' TRUANCY PROGRAM

Q11 - Identify any suggestions for improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program

Identify any suggestions for improvement of the Judges' Truancy Program

Find a way to make parents more responsible.

Attendance directors "wearing too many hats" to keep up with attendance. The program needs to have full funding from state and not cost county funds.

Make DHHR actually follow through with orders that are given to them.

This far-fetched, but what I would love to see, is a parenting component. Often it is the parents, who are the problem. When students are placed on probation or placed out of the home, the students do great. They are released; do well for about a month.... They lose the structure, the coping skills, and then have no one to motivate them to continue doing well. When a student is placed on probation or out of the home, the parents should be court-ordered to complete a parenting program. It needs to be a structured program with homework, projects, i.e. chore charts, schedules, etc. Parents could also be given the option of completing the parenting skills instead of receiving a fine or for a 2nd offense - going to jail.

Students and Parents need to be held accountable without delay. Giving more and more opportunities does nothing

Make the Probation officers more accountable. Parents need to be held more accountable especially for primary and middle school aged students.

Daily reporting and assessment opportunities to specifically target student's needs.

I think it is important to have consistent enforcement and make sure interventions start early in the year.

More probation officers

Restore our ability to place children in staff-secure facilities.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Lori G. Comer

Principal

Princeton Senior High School

1321 Stafford Drive

Princeton, WV 24740

ACADEMIC DEGREES

SALEM INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Educational Leadership Certification, 2001

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY, M.A.Ed, Music Education-Curriculum and Instruction, 1986.

BLUEFIELD COLLEGE, B.A., Music Performance, 1984.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Head Principal, Princeton Senior High School, 2013 to Present. Duties: Instructional Leader, Management of AAA High School, Supervision of 100+ employees, Budgeting and Finance.

Principal, Princeton Primary School, 2010-2013.Duties: Instructional Leader, Management of 600 student primary school grades K-2, Supervision of 70+ employees, Budgeting and Finance.

Principal, Whitethorn Primary School, 2007-2010. Duties: Instructional Leader, Management of 200 student primary school grades K-2, Supervision of 30+ employees, Budgeting and Finance.

Teacher, Princeton Middle School, 2004-2007. Duties: Teach Show Choir, Concert Choir, and General Music. Served as county level chairperson for Choral Music and Handbell Music. Organized and planned the county festivals.

Teacher, Bluefield Middle School, 2000-2004. Duties: Teach Show Choir, Concert Choir, Piano, and General Music. Served as county level chairperson for Choral Music and Handbell Music. Organized and planned the county festivals.

Teacher, Montcalm Elementary, 1994-2000.Duties: Teach General Music, Concert Choir, Show Choir, and Handbells. Served as county level chairperson for Choral Music and Handbell Music. Organized and planned the county festivals.

Teacher, Montcalm High School, 1987-1994. Duties: Teach Choir, General Music and Piano.

Long-term Substitute Teacher, Montcalm High School, 1986-1987, Duties: Teach Choir, General Music and Piano

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Association of Secondary School Principals

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Southern Regional Education Board College and Career Readiness Standards Networking Conference, July 2017, Nashville, TN. Conference presentation: *Literacy in the High School Classroom: A Principal's Perspective.*

Professional Development Schools National Conference, February 2017, Myrtle Beach, SC. Conference co-presentation: *PDS Schools Early Field Placements: Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century Classroom* (Presentation with Dr. Terry Mullins, Concord University, Dr. Anita Reynolds, Concord University, Laura Presley, Princeton Senior High School, Jeseca Sowder, Princeton Senior High School).

Southern Regional Education Board College and Career Readiness Standards Networking Conference, July 2016, Louisville, KY. Conference co-presentation: *LDC and MDC: From Organized Implementation Through Long-Term Success* (Presentation with Jeseca Sowder, Princeton Senior High School).

SRCEA Conference, September 2012, New Orleans, L.A. Conference co-presentation: *The Keystone Program: An Answer for Elementary Alternative Education?* (Presentation with Dr. Louis Watts and Dr. Cynthia Kolsun).

COMMUNITY SERVICE

ORGANIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR, IMMANUEL LUTHERN CHURCH, BLUEFIELD, WV. 2016-Present.

ORGANIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR, FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, PRINCETON, WV. 2003-2014

